

Dimitri Lascaris: Inside the US-Israeli War Against Iran & Lebanon

Dimitri Lascaris is a lawyer and a journalist, reporting from the ground in Iran and Lebanon. His work can be followed on <https://x.com/dimitrilascaris?lang=en> and <https://www.youtube.com/@reason2resist> Follow Prof. Glenn Diesen: Substack: <https://glennDiesen.substack.com/> X/Twitter: https://x.com/Glenn_Diesen Patreon: <https://www.patreon.com/glennDiesen> YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/@GDiesen1> Support the research: PayPal: <https://www.paypal.com/paypalme/glennDiesen> Buy me a Coffee: buymeacoffee.com/gdieseng Go Fund Me: <https://gofund.me/09ea012f> Books by Prof. Glenn Diesen: <https://www.amazon.com/stores/author/B09FPQ4MDL>

#Glenn

Welcome back. We are joined today by Dimitri Lascaris, a lawyer turned journalist and one of the few Western journalists to actually report from the ground in Iran, including on the Strait of Hormuz. But now you are in Beirut, in Lebanon, where the humanitarian situation is only getting worse, but also a place where we see quite interesting geopolitics playing out. So thank you for coming on the program. I thought perhaps a good place to start would be, what are you seeing on the ground today in Lebanon? Because again, I hear a lot, read a lot of articles from journalists, but they are usually, you know, in a neighboring country or even further away. So what is it that you're observing over there?

#Dimitri Lascaris

Well, first of all, let me thank you for having me on your program, Glenn. I watch your program frequently, and you do outstanding work. I learn a great deal from watching you and your guests discuss these issues. Thank you for inviting me. What I've seen on the ground depends on where you are in the country. During the time I've been here on this trip—I've been here six times during the genocide in Gaza, seven times in total—I've always gone to the south on every one of those trips. On this trip, although I've been based in Beirut, I've been to the South Bekaa Valley. I was there yesterday. I've been to Sur, which is about 20 kilometers from the border of occupied Palestine, on the Mediterranean coast of Lebanon.

I was in Saida twice and several other places. And during the time that I have actually been physically present in Beirut, I have not seen, witnessed, or learned of a single attack. The only time during my presence here when there was an attack was when we were out in the field yesterday in the South Bekaa Valley. That's when Israel struck in Dahia, the southern Beirut suburb, which the corporate media loves to describe as a Hezbollah stronghold, and killed numerous civilians. That is the one strike of which I'm aware. As far as I can tell, there has not been any strike today at all in

Beirut. In these other parts of the country, I've seen carnage and terrorism, and that's the only way one can describe it.

So, for example, yesterday I witnessed an attack on a Lebanese village called Sokhmor, just in the very southern tip of the Bekaa Valley. We were present for about an hour before that airstrike occurred, and we had a clear view of Sokhmor. We were a few kilometers away, and there was absolutely no military activity in the village, which has been evacuated. So as far as we could tell, there was no military justification for the airstrike. I was in a village called Saksakiya two or three days ago, several hours after the Israelis murdered a grandmother and her daughter and injured four children. Members of the family, including two grandchildren, were also killed in a separate airstrike in the same village, along with three Syrian workers.

That, too, there was no conceivable military justification. I visited a hospital, the Jabal Amel Hospital in Sur, where the Israelis destroyed the parking lot right across the street from the hospital, killing at least four civilians and injuring over 100, and putting large segments of the hospital out of action. And I could go on and on. So what I'm seeing here outside of Beirut—I'm just talking, Glenn, about the time that I've actually been physically present over the past five days—is a campaign of terror in the south. And in Beirut itself, the Israelis have shown uncharacteristic restraint, I think, because of the threats of Iranian retaliation.

#Glenn

Yeah, this is something I found to be quite extraordinary. That is, Iran essentially extending its deterrence to Lebanon, not just in rhetoric, but the fact that they actually struck Israel now, despite Israel not hitting Iran directly, but again, is arguing that Lebanon is part of the ceasefire and essentially retaliating on their behalf. But the political situation within Lebanon is, well, let's say complicated at least. That is, the actual government is engaged in these talks and ceasefire with the Israelis, while it's Hezbollah that is actually fighting. How do you see or understand Hezbollah's place within Lebanese society as well as politics? Because I think there's a lot of confusion around that. Usually, you know, in the media, they're just dismissed as a terrorist organization, and, well, that's the end of it.

#Dimitri Lascaris

Well, Hezbollah was born as a reaction in the 1980s to Israeli occupation and aggression, and it has remained fundamentally a resistance movement. It has not occupied illegally or even legally any land recognized as being part of Israel under international law. The civilian casualties it has inflicted on Israel are a tiny fraction of those that Israel has inflicted upon Lebanon during the time of Hezbollah's existence. As far as I can tell, Hezbollah is very restrained. It has very significant support among the Lebanese population. It's hard to gauge the degree to which it has support in the Christian and Sunni communities. I think it's fair to say that the overwhelming majority of the Shia support it.

And based on my interactions with Lebanese, I would say quite a significant proportion of the Sunni and Christian communities also support Hezbollah, although there's less support in those communities. And what the Lebanese government did over the past 48 hours, I think, has really made a mockery of the sovereignty of the country. They entered into a so-called ceasefire agreement with Israel, a third ceasefire agreement with Israel since the genocide began in Gaza, that is supposed to cover Lebanon. And that ceasefire agreement did not require Israel's troops to withdraw from Lebanon. That ceasefire agreement did not require Israel's troops to stop destroying civilian infrastructure in the parts of the south that they temporarily occupy. It actually called for the disarmament of Hezbollah without calling for the disarmament of Israel, which, frankly, I regard as the greatest obscenity of all.

How can you say, whether you're talking about Hamas, Islamic Jihad, Hezbollah, Ansar Allah, any resistance group in this region, how can any reasonable person with a sense of fairness and decency say that these groups must be disarmed, divested of their light weapons, while Israel, which is carrying out these monstrosities, can remain armed to the teeth, including with nuclear weapons, while it is not a member of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty—the only state in the region that is not a member of the NNPT? This is an absurdity. And if people want to talk about disarming resistance groups, whether it be Hezbollah or any other group in the region, first they must ensure that Israel has been divested of its weapons, and particularly its weapons of mass destruction.

#Glenn

Yeah, well, how sustainable, though, is this fight for the Israelis? Because on one hand, we keep seeing these news stories that are supposed to build confidence in the IDF. On the other hand, we hear the heads of the IDF itself arguing that the Israeli army is extremely overstretched. And the issue of technology seems to come in as well. That is, the introduction of drones into the battlefield is something that the Israelis are having a hard time adjusting to. Again, for anyone who's following these Telegram videos, these channels, there are a lot of reports coming out, which are confirmed also, even in the Israeli media, about all the difficulties they're having with this. But how do you see this campaign going? Because, you know, don't get me wrong, Israel obviously has much more firepower, but it's not going as expected, one gets the impression at least.

#Dimitri Lascaris

Well, I follow assiduously the commentary of the resistance groups in this region. And Hezbollah is quite methodical in documenting its attacks on Israel. It provides regular video reports telling you exactly where the attack occurred, when it occurred, by what means it was effected. It gives a daily report of its military operations, providing all of those pieces of information with respect to each of its military operations. And just sort of at a high level, a number of the important things that have

emerged from these reports, some of which are corroborated, by the way, by the Israeli media, is that Hezbollah has taken out quite a few of the Israeli Iron Dome launchers, potentially in excess of 25 of them. And again, these have been documented, many of these strikes with video evidence.

It has taken out hundreds of armored vehicles, most of which are Merkava tanks. Again, much of this is documented with video evidence. It has inflicted very severe casualties, including on senior commanders within the Israeli military and commandos of its most elite brigades, and a lot of those casualties have been acknowledged by the Israeli media. The Israeli military leadership is talking about a potential collapse of the Israeli military, with up to 80,000 to 90,000 reservists refusing to show up for duty. There is a PTSD and suicide crisis in the Israeli military. I'm sure you know, Glenn, this military was not constructed for wars of attrition. It was constructed for very short-term, intense conflicts, and we are now well beyond the boundaries of what this military force was constructed to do.

And it has been conducting, throughout this period, a multi-front war. So I think the Israeli military is in very serious trouble. And the one thing that I've learned — I've been to Palestine five times, including in 2024 — so I've had a lot of opportunity to interact with both Israelis and with people who are opposed to Israel in the broader region. And I don't think that the Israelis have nearly the tolerance for casualties and suffering that the indigenous peoples of this region have. And it's really quite remarkable. So even though — and I don't dispute this for a second — Israel's casualties are substantially less than those of the resistance groups that they oppose — I think that they are reaching the limit of their tolerance for casualties in Israeli society and in the military, and we're seeing the impacts of that on the battlefield.

#Glenn

I've heard that same comment, that their losses are lower, but the ability to absorb those losses is a lot lower as well. But how do you assess the Western support here? Because, well, one should almost be careful to say Western support, because one doesn't really hear much at all. That is, there are a lot of gruesome attacks now. Usually the media, which would otherwise be quite emotional and whip up the humanitarian narrative when it's conducive, don't seem to have much interest at all in the massive destruction taking place. And as you said before, a lot of the attacks, whether you have been in Lebanon or without clear military goals, well, they kind of set a clear objective — that is, to drive a lot of the population up north to clear these regions. So there's massive use of military force against the civilian population for the purpose of ethnic cleansing. You would think that this would allow at least some principles to stand to organize the press around. But how do you see this, though — the, I guess, lack of interest in the media?

#Dimitri Lascaris

Well, I want to distinguish between the lack of interest among the media and political elites and the general sentiment in the West. The polling shows, I think, beyond a shadow of a doubt that Israel is

deeply despised now across the world in the vast majority of countries. In the West itself, we see that the majority of citizens in Germany, France, Canada, the United States even, have an unfavorable view of Israel. And the negative sentiment towards Israel is growing. And it will grow even more rapidly if this insane war on Iran results in the kind of economic carnage that many people who are experts in the field of economics and oil are predicting. But we continue to suffer from a grotesque disparity in the West between what people want and what our media and political elites want.

I, for one, am not an adherent of what I would call the Mearsheimer-Walt school of thinking when it comes to the United States government's relationship to Israel. I don't think Israel controls the United States government. I think the United States government controls Israel, and that Israel does precisely what it wants it to do and what we have in the West. I go back all the way to the dire warning that Eisenhower issued to the American people in 1961 when he said that the military-industrial complex is subverting American democracy. And that is exactly what has happened. The war machine has taken over the governments of the West, and they love this genocidal rampage. They love the wars that Israel is conducting.

And there is this huge divide between what the political and media elites want and what the people want, and that divide is growing. And it's going to result, I think, especially if this war on Iran results in the kind of economic carnage that we're anticipating, in potentially huge levels of political instability in the West. We are at a breaking point, as you've covered so well in your coverage of the Ukraine war. Even there, we're starting to see the limits of the patience of the people being tested, particularly in Germany. So we are at a breaking point of political stability in the West, in my view. And what is happening here in the region where I'm currently situated may be the final straw in the Western elite's control of the narrative.

#Glenn

Yeah, no, I made a lot of comments about this. I think it's not just about Starmer, Macron, and Scholz being very, very unpopular. I think Starmer's last approval rating came in at 15%. So, you know, this is horrible, but it's not just that one leader, because people are also getting the sentiment that once he's removed, they're going to put a new frontman in, and then another one. So a bit of a facelift, but it's not going to actually change policies or change the people in power. So I think that this is quite dangerous. We're moving a bit towards a political legitimacy crisis, as the political and media elites are, as you said, distancing themselves more and more from the public.

And it's quite dangerous. But on the declining popularity of Israel, which I guess saying it's in free fall wouldn't be an overstatement at this point. We did see some splits, though, between the Americans and the Israelis. That is, Iran extended its deterrent to Lebanon. The Israelis ignored it, and Iran struck Israel with many ballistic missiles. Then Trump essentially, well, he went out and

said, you know, he would talk to Netanyahu, there would be no retaliation against Iran. And, well, the Netanyahu government said, well, they would do it anyway, which makes, you know, Trump look either very weak or dishonest — whatever, you know, could be both ways.

But the Israelis appear to be in a difficult spot, because either they can alienate the Americans even more. And we do see something historical, though, in America — that is, how much opposition there is to Israel now. I haven't seen this in my lifetime. And so, at one point, they could risk alienating the Americans, who feed them the money and the weapons, or Netanyahu can walk back this war, but then that would be the end of Netanyahu and his 30-year-long dream of a war with Iran. So how are you reading this? At least in the media, it looks like a tense situation between the Israelis and the Americans.

#Dimitri Lascaris

You know, consistent with the comments I just made about the relationship between the United States government and Israel's government, I don't buy this narrative, which has been largely promoted by Barak Ravid at Axios, that there's tension between Trump and Netanyahu. You know, somebody I follow closely — I admire her work — Caitlin Johnstone in Australia helpfully compiled a list of the articles that Barak Ravid authored about the relationship between Joe Biden and Netanyahu when Biden was in office and the genocide was ongoing in Gaza. And he repeatedly reported, citing unnamed officials, that Biden was very unhappy with Netanyahu and occasionally swore at him. We've been hearing this scam, this whole schtick, for many years. It wasn't just under Biden.

I documented some of this myself going back to prior administrations. What the United States government does is it uses Israel in order to impose its hegemony on this extraordinarily important region and then tries to distance itself from the crimes of Israel by purporting to be upset, purporting to be trying to restrain the Israeli government. But all the while, it continues to arm Israel. It continues to provide economic aid to Israel. It continues to provide legal protection to Israel, rhetorical support for Israel's crimes. And why? Because, as American military planners recognized after the Second World War, this is a region of stupendous strategic value. That's what they called it.

They also called it the greatest material prize in human history, because not only of its oil resources and its gas resources, but other key commodities and its strategically important trade routes. The Americans want to dominate this region, and they want that more than ever because of the rise of non-Western powers, principally China and Russia. And they use Israel as a proxy, a means to do that. And then they seek to distance themselves from Israel's crimes by saying Israel's a sovereign state, we can't tell them what to do, we're not happy sometimes with the way they act. But at the end of the day, we have an obligation historically to defend the Jewish people. This is the story we've been fed.

I don't buy it. I think Trump is completely on board with what Netanyahu is doing. And I see no evidence as of yet that the Trump administration is prepared to use the leverage it has over Israel in order to put an end to this barbarism. When he begins to threaten openly to deprive Israel of the aid that it requires in order to carry out these crimes and get away with it, then perhaps I'll take seriously these reports of dissent between the White House and Tel Aviv. But there's absolutely no evidence, no credible evidence, that the United States government is threatening to withdraw the support upon which Israel relies in order to carry out these crimes. So I go back always to the polling data.

The polling data in the United States shows that a majority of the population is opposed to the war on Iran. The polling data in Israel shows that a majority of the population wants the war on Iran to continue. So it suits both Netanyahu and Trump politically to posture in the way that they're posturing. Trump postures as the person who's trying to restrain Netanyahu, and Netanyahu postures as the person who's determined to pursue this war, even if it means alienating Donald Trump. At the end of the day, their actions are what matter. And their actions are completely consistent with the thesis that they want to dominate this region and are prepared to commit virtually any crime in order to achieve that goal.

#Glenn

Yeah, well, often one does get the impression there is some good cop, bad cop play by the United States. You could draw some parallels to Europe. I mean, the US keeps saying, you know, we'll put pressure on Zelensky and the Europeans to essentially accept what was agreed in Anchorage. But, you know, what exactly is the pressure? The war is being fought with American weapons. It's the American war planners sitting in Germany. It's the American intelligence agencies on the ground still in Ukraine, directing attacks, picking the targets, assisting the direction of drones through NATO territories to strike Russia. And it's kind of convenient that once the war's going on and the Ukrainians and increasingly Europeans put themselves on the front line, the Americans get to play the mediator, even though they are the main actor for the past, well, 12 years now in this war. It's quite extraordinary. But yeah.

#Dimitri Lascaris

Glenn, I'm sorry, I have to just interrupt to say I think you're completely right. You're absolutely right. This is nothing but kabuki theater we've seen in the Ukraine war. Absolutely. It's a total fraud. The United States wants that war to continue. And all of these claims that Trump made, that he was trying to bring an end to the Ukraine war, were nothing but political posturing for domestic consumption.

#Glenn

I think you're absolutely right. We saw something earlier as well with Iran and Israel, when Israel hit the southern powers' gas fields, and Trump kind of stepped back and said, well, no, no, no, this we have not agreed to. You should stop this. You know, it seems like it's a good way of managing the escalation ladder. If you say, well, they did this, we do not approve of it. As long as Iran doesn't retaliate, then we will restrain the Israelis. So always the Israelis, well, and Iranians, and by extension the Russians as well, have this idea that, well, we have to retaliate, but I guess if we do, then we'll pull America into this. It's better to keep America outside. But meanwhile, of course, they are fully wedded to the idea of destroying Iran and Russia for that sake.

But how do you make sense of the Iranian position here, though? Because everyone keeps being surprised that the Iranians are prepared to strike back or retaliate disproportionately. That is, if anyone attacks them, they will, you know, they don't necessarily have to do it in parity. They will then hit back very hard. Again, Trump once made the point that no one could imagine that they would close down the Strait of Hormuz and strike all the U.S. Army bases in the Gulf states. But I hope that was false, otherwise we should be really worried. But how do you make sense of the Iranian retaliation and the overall strategy in terms of fighting both the U.S. and the Israelis? Are they happy with doing this slow, intensive war, or do they see this benefiting the Americans, or how do you see this?

#Dimitri Lascaris

Well, I think up until the strikes that Iran launched a few days ago on multiple U.S. military bases in the Persian Gulf, the Iranians were pursuing a strategy of commensurate retaliation, which is to say that their retaliation would be essentially as severe and as damaging as that to which they were responding. But they realized that that wasn't working. I think they came to that conclusion within the past week. And so first they tested an approach of disproportionate retaliation by striking multiple U.S. military bases when the U.S. attacked Qeshm Island, and I think they might have attacked some other military site in the Strait of Hormuz. And the Iranians attacked very hard in Kuwait and Bahrain. I saw a report also from Trita Parsi that there were attacks on other Persian Gulf military bases, although I haven't been able to confirm that myself.

And then what happened within the past 24 hours, I think, is again an example of the Iranians saying, well, it's no longer sufficient for us to engage in commensurate retaliation. We have to pursue disproportionate retaliation. Because what happened last night, you know, there was wave after wave of Iranian attacks on Israel. As far as I can tell from the reports, they didn't launch four or five missiles and drones. They launched tens of them in four to five waves. And they struck multiple targets across the north of occupied Palestine. And I think at this stage, they're probably going to continue down that course of action going forward. They will not content themselves with commensurate retaliation. They will respond disproportionately. And so far, I'm not sure where this is all going to go.

The Israeli Defense Minister, Katz, just put out a statement reiterating the position that if Hezbollah attacks Israel, then Israel will attack Beirut. So he's sticking to the line that they were advancing before the retaliatory strikes of the last 24 hours by Iran. But this is a completely untenable position because that basically—if Hezbollah and Iran were to accede to this framework that if you don't attack Israel, we won't attack Beirut—that would leave Israel free to attack the rest of Lebanon. It's absolutely inconceivable that Hezbollah and Iran are going to agree to this. Not only would they be free to attack the rest of Lebanon, they would be free to continue to destroy civilian infrastructure in the parts of the country that they control.

And there would be no obligation on them to withdraw other forces. So if the Israelis are serious about this, if they're serious about attacking Beirut in the case of Hezbollah attacking Israel, we are going to continue up the escalation ladder, and we're going to get up there really fast. Now, I don't know whether they're serious. We'll have to see about this. Within the past few hours, I think there has been a report of Hezbollah striking in the north of Israel. So we'll have to see. But I don't think at this stage that either the Iranians or Hezbollah are going to tolerate any attacks, whether they be on Beirut or the south of the country. I think that their patience has been exhausted.

#Glenn

Yeah, I think this is also an effort by the Israelis to control the escalation ladder, assisted by the Americans, of course, where they kind of make the point, well, we're not going to strike Beirut, but then we're going to take... but south of Lebanon, this is outside, this is acceptable. I mean, I don't see the Iranians accepting them picking the targets like this. Also, it wouldn't be cemented and written in stone because it would be... I think the US does incrementalism very well. You saw that again, parallel to the Ukraine war. They began first with some weapons, they put some self-limits on that constraint that is, okay, here are some weapons, but you're not allowed to use them against the Russians outside of Ukraine's territory.

And then, okay, we're going to give some more weapons, but here are some more restraints, and gradually remove those restraints. And there's a little step-by-step, and eventually you change the rules of the game. And I think Iran has probably looked at the Ukraine war and come to the same conclusion. But on Iran, though, I wanted to ask something else before I forget, which is the toll which the Iranians have set up in the Strait of Hormuz, because... well, I saw a video of you. You were actually on the water there in the Strait of Hormuz. And how do you see this? Is the toll now functioning as it should? I mean, is it up and running, or how is this impacting traffic? Where are we standing on the Strait of Hormuz, because things are developing?

#Dimitri Lascaris

It's very hard to say, Glenn. The Iranians are playing their cards very close to their chest. And I think a big part of the reason for that is any state or shipping line that is revealed to be paying a toll — they call it, I guess, an environmental fee, whatever you call it — paying any kind of fee to Iran is

going to be subject to some kind of retaliatory action by the United States. So Iran doesn't really have any interest in revealing exactly what is going on. And they've been very secretive about this. But my sense from speaking to officials in Iran and experts within Iran — I've spent a lot of time not just on the ground reporting on this but interacting with them on my own program — is that they are almost certainly exacting some kind of fee, certainly perhaps not from their closest allies.

Maybe they're giving them a free pass. But everybody else who's going through the Strait of Hormuz with Iranian consent is paying some kind of fee. And they will continue to insist upon that, because this is the greatest leverage that they have, and it's the greatest prospect that they have for actually recovering some form of compensation for the immense destruction that the United States has inflicted upon Iran, not just during the hot war, but through the sanctions and the freezing of Iranian assets. It's going to be extremely difficult — I think the Iranians understand that — to compel the Americans to pay any kind of reparations to them.

So they're going to extract compensation by some other means. And the best way to do that is to impose fees on ships passing through the Strait of Hormuz. There is absolutely no military solution to that problem. None. If you've been there and you've seen the Strait of Hormuz, you would come to that conclusion very quickly. The Iranians don't need to send massive naval forces into the Strait of Hormuz and set up some kind of military wall to impede the passage of commercial shipping through the strait. All they have to do is increase materially the risk of commercial ships suffering catastrophic damage if they attempt to pass through the Strait of Hormuz without the consent of the Iranian military.

And they can do that in a variety of ways. They can do it with drones. They can do it with ship-to-ship missiles. They can do it with land-to-ship missiles. They can do it with mines. They can do it with their Iranian fast attack boats. There's absolutely no military solution to this, and they are going to hold on to that control for dear life. It is their nuclear weapon. And at some point or another, as I've said many times, I think that the United States government is going to have to pay the piper. And that means they're going to have to cede control of the Strait of Hormuz to Iran.

#Glenn

Yeah, I think this is what's missed on many people, that there's very little that can be done. Well, first of all, I think some people fail to recognize that this is an existential threat to Iran, which is why they're willing to absorb this pain, but also how important it is. I mean, with the Strait of Hormuz, they can put these incentives to have neighboring countries remove sanctions, to scale back or even remove the U.S. military bases. It can get to reparations. A lot of things are built in. Again, you call it a nuclear weapon. I don't think that's an overstatement at all. This is a very powerful weapon to hold on to the Strait of Hormuz.

And also that they can't really be deprived of it in terms of material capabilities. I mean, Trump always makes this point that, oh, we destroyed their Navy, their Air Force, their Army. But even if

that was true, you don't need a very sophisticated Navy to shut down that strait. As I said, if you've got some drones, which are relatively cheap to make and they can be decentralized, they can't do anything about this. So it's – I mean, it must be a difficult spot for the Americans because they lose a lot by having the Strait of Hormuz under Iranian control. But if there's nothing they can do, I mean, at some point there, as you said, it's time to pay the piper. This is just the way it is.

But what is a realistic diplomatic settlement between Iran, Israel, and the United States? Because, I mean, I always get the feeling that the Americans have something that Iran wants, and that would be sanctions relief. I mean, even if the Iranians win, they hold on to the Strait of Hormuz, the Americans have to pack up and go home. America can still make life very miserable for Iranians. But if there would be, realistically, a sanctions relief, I mean, could the Americans extract something from the Iranians? Not giving up Hormuz, of course, but do you see any possibility of a diplomatic settlement where both sides recognize some kind of agreement is better than just staying essentially in a de facto war?

#Dimitri Lascaris

Well, when I was in Iran last year, we were given the opportunity to meet with the spokesperson of the Atomic Energy Agency in Iran. And we also were given a tour of the research reactor in Tehran and spoke to some of their nuclear experts there. And without getting into the details of it, because that's a whole other conversation, I don't think there's any hope at all—zero—of Iran giving up its nuclear program. That will not happen under any circumstances as long as this government is intact and Iran is a functioning state. So, would Iran be prepared to accept JCPOA-type restrictions on enrichment for some period of time?

Sure, they would accept that if they were given full-blown sanctions relief and if their assets were unfrozen. But are they going to hand over to Donald Trump the enriched uranium, the 60% enriched uranium? That's not happening. I think they're not even prepared at this point to give it to the Chinese or the Russians to hold in custody for usage by Iran. What they may be willing to do, and they've signaled this, is they may be willing to dilute that enriched uranium—not all the way down to 3.6%, but perhaps down to the level of 20%.

And by the way, to use uranium for research purposes, it has to be enriched well beyond the level—as I understand it, I'm not an expert in this field, Glenn, but based on my discussions with the people in the Atomic Energy Program of Iran—it has to be enriched well above the level of enrichment required for civilian energy reactors, somewhere in the range of 15%, 20%. So I don't think they're going to put up indefinitely with the JCPOA limit of 3.6%, because that would preclude them from using enriched uranium for research purposes. But for some period of time, they would put up with that, and there would have to be a quid pro quo. There would have to be a lifting of sanctions and a lifting or unfreezing of assets.

The problem here—this is the big quandary for the United States—is that if they lift those sanctions and unfreeze Iranian assets, Iran is going to emerge as the most powerful state in the region. The only thing that has really held it back until now is the economic war that has been waged upon Iran. And both the United States and Israel would have to accept that Iran would be the most powerful state in that region. Iran is an extraordinarily well-endowed country. As you know, it's as large as Western Europe. It has tremendous resources.

It has a very large population, a very well-educated population, a high degree of technological sophistication, a topography that is very challenging from a military perspective. It has a stranglehold on the Strait of Hormuz because of its position geographically. So if you take away the economic warfare being waged upon Iran, then you can flush down the toilet Israeli dreams of being the regional hegemon. But that's gone. And I just don't see at this stage any indication that the United States and Israel are ready to accept that reality, which means, I'm sad to say, that I believe this is going to continue to escalate, this war.

This is going to have catastrophic consequences for the global economy. And at some point, the United States government, whether it's Trump or his successor, is going to have to accept that in order to bring an end to the economic carnage, they are going to have to effectively, in some manner, recognize Iran's status in the region and allow it to assume its rightful place in the world. I think we're a long way from that point yet. I hope I'm wrong, but I think that's probably where we're heading. And the consequences for people all around the world are going to be quite negative.

#Glenn

Well, on your visit to the nuclear facilities in Iran, I was there with you, actually. Yes, you were. Yeah, we were both there. It was May last year before the bombing began. The difference, though, is I left before the bombing. You actually stayed during the war and reported on this, which is, yeah, again, it's quite important, which is why I also very much would recommend for people to follow your work, because whatever we get through the media, it's a very distorted picture of Iran. I mean, this was one of my thoughts as well last year when I was in Tehran.

That is essentially what I'd expected to see based on what your average media report in Europe would be. You know, it's a Shia version of the Taliban almost running the country. So it was very different from what I had expected. You know, like, again, in Europe, there's a lot of focus on repression of women, so you assume everyone would walk around in burqas. You know, I didn't expect a large part of women walking around without veils, in T-shirts and jeans. It's interesting. It's a different picture. But just as a last question, I guess, what aspects of Iranian society do you think the foreign audience will really get to see as someone who's there on the ground?

#Dimitri Lascaris

I guess if I could pinpoint one thing that stood out for me more than anything else, it's that the image we've been given of the Iranian people, and particularly their leadership, is that they're extremely aggressive, irrational, and fanatical. My experience of them, both when—my apologies for forgetting about that trip, it seems like an eternity ago, in May of last year—but especially during the most recent visit when we went to seven Iranian cities in 11 days, is that they are peace-loving people. They really, really want to live in peace with their neighbors. They are not aggressive at all. They are not violent. They're not prone to violence.

And they're quite prepared to be reasonable in compromising, but at the same time, this is an ancient civilization of which the Iranian people have much to be proud. And they expect to be treated with respect and for their contribution to the betterment of humanity to be recognized. So this is very similar to what the people in Russia and the people in China feel. They deserve a seat at the table and to be treated as sovereign nations and worthy of our respect. If we give them that, I have no doubt that the state of Iran and the people of Iran can become fully integrated and be productive members of the global community and of West Asia.

#Glenn

Finally, where can people find your work? What's a good place to follow you?

#Dimitri Lascaris

So my primary activity is Reason to Resist. It's my YouTube channel where we publish reports on almost a daily basis. Our focus is on, as we put it, the crime scenes of Western governments. And I also spend probably more time than is good for my health on X, and there my handle is @DimitriLascaris.

#Glenn

Excellent. I'll make sure to leave a link in the description. So everyone, please follow, and thank you so much for the great work you're doing.

#Dimitri Lascaris

Thank you.

#Dimitri Lascaris

You too, Glenn. A pleasure. Take care.