

Patrick Henningsen: How a U.S. Defeat Makes Iran a World Power

Patrick Henningsen discusses how the defeat of the U.S. has launched Iran into the ranks of world powers. Watch Patrick Henningsen, Like & Subscribe to him on YouTube: www.youtube.com/@21stCenturyWireTV Also visit Patrick's Substack here: patrickhenningsen.substack.com See all of Patrick Henningsen and his team's work here: www.21stcenturywire.com Follow Patrick's daily shorts on Instagram: www.instagram.com/21wire_media/ Follow Prof. Glenn Diesen: Substack: <https://glennDiesen.substack.com/> X/Twitter: https://x.com/Glenn_Diesen Patreon: <https://www.patreon.com/glennDiesen> Support the research by Prof. Glenn Diesen: 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 to the program. We are joined today by Patrick Henningsen, a journalist who is following the Middle East as well as the conflict in Ukraine extremely closely. So, thank you for coming on the program.

#Patrick Henningsen

Great to be with you, Glenn.

#Glenn

I wanted to discuss these escalations against both Iran and Russia. I don't think people always appreciate how much they've gotten out of control. But yeah, let's start with Iran because only now, over the past 24 hours, we've seen the U.S. attacking Iran, including at least two water reservoirs, which has cut off tens of thousands of people from water. And Iran retaliated against U.S. bases in Bahrain, Kuwait, and Jordan, if not more. How do you make sense of this new round of escalation? Because the United States already fought Iranians in this 39-day war. The U.S. was in a very difficult position. They wanted this ceasefire badly, and we know this. This is why Trump accepted Iran's 10-point plan as the point of departure for talks. Yes, he walked it all back later on, but how do you make sense of what the United States is doing here?

#Patrick Henningsen

Well, that's not easy. That's not easy. You need some special superpowers to be able to do that these days. But one thing that makes this conversation complicated is that I'm not fully convinced, having studied this president for many years, having studied his coterie of foreign policy advisors and the Trump administration in general. I'm not convinced that they want a ceasefire, despite the rhetoric that you might hear from Trump and the way the media really has kind of conformed to this pace that's set by the Trump administration through his tweets, the reactions, the actions, and the outrage. And then the resolution comes, and then another falter and another outrage.

This incredible control of the media cycle. So I'm not convinced that the U.S. actually wants a ceasefire. I'll go even deeper than that, Glenn. Yeah. I'm not convinced that the current administration understands what a ceasefire is in a traditional diplomatic framework. And so they talk about – and they've got the media on board with this internationally as well. They're saying, oh, we're close to a deal. Oh, we want a deal. They want a deal. We want a deal. Everybody wants – we're close to a deal. A deal. A deal is not a ceasefire. A deal is not an accord. And a deal is definitely not a treaty. And that's the problem. They've recast the language on this, which kind of precludes any meaningful negotiated settlement.

And if you look at the track record, Glenn, you mentioned Russia, Ukraine, you mentioned this situation with Iran, and I'll add Gaza and the Israeli-Gaza thing, which the U.S. came straight in with — this administration was trying to broker from the minute that he was inaugurated. They have failed completely on every single front, and it's ended in disaster. And one would argue, is this by design? Because does this administration have any intention of doing what it takes in terms of statecraft, in terms of diplomacy? It seems like there's a non-diplomacy policy here with this White House, this government. And this is reinforced by a very hawkish Republican and Democratic Congress and Senate, and a media that I think is somewhat bamboozled. There are a few intelligent people out in the media that maybe are saying what I'm saying, but not many.

So that's one of the problems with this conversation, Glenn, is I don't think there's any chance for what I'm calling a negotiated settlement or a peace agreement, which other people are calling a deal. A deal is, to me, at this point, we should all sort of agree that a deal in Trump lingua franca is of no use to anybody. It doesn't exist. It's ephemeral. It doesn't mean anything. And look at the Russia-Ukraine situation. I mean, how many potential deals, or "we're close to a mineral deal," "we've got this deal," "the Alaska summit," and "oh, it's looking great"—and it's all going nowhere. And I think the exact same thing is happening here, and it's the same thing that happened with Gaza and any other theater that pops up. It's going to be the same. That's my sort of black pill analysis of this.

#Glenn

Yeah, there's another element to this. This is the U.S. ability to present itself as a mediator. I find this to be quite extraordinary because, as you said, with the Ukraine war, people forget that for

years the United States was the one that was pumping in all these NGOs, trying to build up, you know, this anti-Russian opposition. And it was America that led the coup in 2014. It was the Americans who undermined the Minsk agreement for seven years while building up the Ukrainian army, training it, preparing for this war, targeting Donbass. It was the U.S. who helped to essentially reverse the election results of 2019. They're the ones who sabotaged the Istanbul peace agreement in April of 2022. And they're still the country that has most of the war planners positioned there in Germany.

They provide the intelligence, the weapons, the targeting, all of it. And yet they present themselves as mediators. And now I saw two days ago or something, another article saying, oh, well, the U.S. will try to broker a deal between Israel and Iran. It's like, really? I mean, it is a little bit impressive, but it seemed that this worked with the Russians because they thought that the United States... they genuinely saw some hope that Trump would do something very different, that he actually wanted to put an end to this war, that he kind of saw that there was a new distribution of power, that the U.S. and Russia didn't really have to be adversaries, that he could stop this NATO expansion on Russian borders because this consumed too many U.S. resources and was pushing Russia too far toward China.

They really thought this is what America wanted, but it appears that all he did was take a high-intensity war and, well, push it over to the Europeans and Ukrainians, kind of distancing themselves a little bit and essentially making themselves into a mediator. Now, do you think there's something similar they might be doing in Iran? Because there they don't seem to want to have any peace. I don't think any peace agreement would be acceptable to them either. But it appears that the goal is to take a high-intensity war and make it into a low-intensity one, where it can be managed, where they can gradually strangle the Iranians without running out of weapons or seeing all their allies burned to the ground. I'm wondering what the strategy is, to make a big question short.

#Patrick Henningsen

Sure. I mean, I'll bounce back and forth between those two because there's a lot of points that you brought up there. One of them is the U.S. has no choice but to string out a semi-low-intensity conflict with Iran. Why? They don't have the munition stock. Missile defense stocks are down. They're having to borrow from Peter to pay Paul right around the globe in terms of U.S. military supplies. It's going to take years for them to recover to sort of these pre-war levels, if you want to call it that, and ditto for Israel as well. So that kind of suits them, and I wouldn't be surprised if that's the mode that they're clicking into right now. The biggest deception is, as you pointed out, this idea that the U.S. is neutral, is a neutral party, that they're separate from Israel.

No, they're absolutely not. If they wanted to wield real leverage, they would just, you know, threaten to stop supplying Israel. It's not just supplying them with deliveries; it's all of the technical support that the United States provides on a minute-to-minute basis inside of Israel—U.S. personnel, joint command centers that they run together. People don't realize how deeply enmeshed the United

States and Israel are, including the whole Iron Dome system, which is effectively a U.S. system, or at least it began like that. There are Israeli components to it now, but the United States used to supply, operate, and man the entire Iron Dome system up until a certain point, where Israel is much more involved in it now, but not without U.S. involvement. That's just one example.

That's to say nothing about the air-to-air refueling support that the United States is providing to Israel. And in fact, it looks like they provided it to Israel this past couple of days over Saudi Arabian airspace, as reports suggest, F-35s being refueled by the U.S. over Saudi airspace to strike Iran. So that's a serious issue, of course. But they're not separate. They can't pretend to—not credibly. They can within the U.S.-Western political media conversation. People are naive enough generally in the West to not understand the level of nefariousness that the U.S. is operating on here. But the rest of the world is not fooled. A perfect example—we'll go back to Russia and Ukraine. I think a lot of people, Russia analysts in the West, will say that they've been duped by Washington.

And I've seen some Russian analysts in Russia say this as well, that they've been duped by Trump, that they're not serious about doing any sort of serious negotiations with the U.S. I don't believe that's the case. I believe that Russia has recognized—very cynically recognized—that you can't really do any real diplomacy or negotiations with the U.S. So I think Russia has very skillfully managed Trump. And Russia's just consigned to the reality that they have to do what they have to do on the ground, get out of whatever interactions with the U.S. they can possibly extract in terms of benefit for themselves, keep the United States happy. And a perfect proof or evidence of this is the U.S. deployed a fake diplomatic corps that doesn't even have positions with the State Department—Steve Wyckoff and Jared Kushner. What did Russia do?

They deployed their own fake diplomat. He's not a fake diplomat, but he's not an official Russian diplomat—Kirill Dmitriev. I think I got that name right. But based in the U.S., very good with U.S. PR, understands the U.S. political scene. So he's managing the relationship. And this works for Trump. It works for Russia. It's not ideal. It's not ideal, but they've consigned themselves. So you have to ask yourself, when the foreign minister Araghchi or Pezeshkian travels to Moscow to meet the delegation from Russia, what do you think they're talking about? I can tell you a portion of the conversation is going to be, how do we manage the United States?

So Russia has priced in this erraticism and what Sergei Lavrov coined a couple of years ago, which is that the U.S. is not agreement-capable. That's a bold, amazing, historic statement. And that signals a paradigm shift in international relations between these powers. I think Iran has also priced in the United States now. They're managing the U.S., but they're doing it in probably a much more complex way because they're currently at war with each other. But they're still doing that, and I think they're doing it well. Iran's taking this Russia doctrine of always leaving the door open to talks.

Why? It's not only for their interest, but to signal to the rest of the world and to other powers, including China and other potential allies and neutral parties, that Iran is a reasonable, normative power in the international system. And if you look at the behavior of Iran in terms of consistency

and being able to back up their deterrence or threats or statements, and acting very adroitly as opposed to the U.S.—totally erratic, completely inconsistent, hypocritical, going back on their own statements constantly—the U.S. is no longer a normative power in the international system.

But what you see in international relations is, if you look at it as a whole, traditionally in IR studies, within that unit, which is the world, the system tends to bend in favor of normative powers over time. And that's why I think the United States has really isolated itself. By tethering itself to the likes of Israel or Ukraine or some of their other allies, it's not going to go in their favor. The results are simple here. Look at where the U.S. is now in June. Compare that to where they were on February 27th. Compare it under these three categories: militarily, politically, domestically/geopolitically, internationally, and economically, domestically/internationally, economically. They're in horrible shape in just three months.

And a lot of that, I will argue, is part of their failure, their inability to understand where their position is, what they're doing, who their allies are, who their enemies are, what their strategy is. So Iran is showing absolute strategy. And we can talk about the strategic victories of Iran and just the genius under pressure—the genius that Iran has shown to the region and the world. And you see a normative strategic power emerge. And with the U.S., you're seeing a terminal death spiral of a former hegemon that's mired in tactical ambiguity and maneuvering and has lost complete control over its own portfolio in terms of foreign policy and decision-making.

#Glenn

Well, I think the Russians, ever since they met with the Americans in Anchorage, started to lose a bit of trust in the ability of the U.S. to make any deals. I think that was really the straw that broke the camel's back. And then, of course, they've been looking towards Iran as well, the lessons they've had. And, yeah, all this talk, you know, every once or twice a week, about how close they are to a deal before, you know, Trump threatens to annihilate them again—it puts things in context because it's more evidence essentially complementing the U.S. interactions with Russia.

I think they are reaching the conclusion now that it's just a bunch of nonsense. And as you say, it's okay to talk with the United States, see if anything can improve. But meanwhile, it doesn't affect anything on the battlefield. This continues as if what the Americans are saying is all nonsense. But it appears that the Europeans also, though, their diplomacy is nonsense too, it seems. I mean, well, if you look at the Ukraine issue, keep in mind that when the NATO countries destabilized Ukraine at the end of 2013, the Europeans signed up as guarantors for a unity government if Yanukovich would then accept a new government to be formed.

And they betrayed this within the first few hours. And then, of course, they had the Minsk Agreement for seven years. They betrayed this as well. They did nothing when the Istanbul Agreement was repealed. And now, of course, after boycotting diplomacy for more than four years, the Europeans, or at least some of them, have put out these five conditions for peace, which just

read as a capitulation. I mean, how do you see these five conditions for negotiating with Russia? Is this essentially faking diplomacy, managing the narrative that Russia doesn't want to talk, or how do you make sense of this?

#Patrick Henningsen

Oh, absolutely. If you look at it, there's been a real concerted push. Look at the press coverage, also the statements by various leaders. I would say I started noticing this about four weeks ago, which is all this reporting that Ukraine has magically turned the tide on the battlefield. They're in the ascendancy. They're winning. And then the letter from Zelensky to Putin and the rebuff from Russia, and then the reaction in the Western press, of course – it was basically, oh, it's a perfectly good opportunity to come to the table, and Russia's rejected it. And only the stronger party is going to make that overture for peace. So Russia is the losing party.

Of course, they're going to reject it. So they've found a way to kind of run this narrative again, like they have at multiple points over the last four years, that Ukraine's winning. And by doing that, you can then accuse the other side of saying no to opportunities for peace. And so this is the virtual war. It's not the real war; it's the virtual war. And it's the war that the Europeans have been playing, going around in circles with this, trying different iterations of it now for four years. And as you rightly pointed out, Glenn, nobody wants to talk about pre-February 24th, 2022, all of the events that led up to that. And they will not listen to anything Russia says along these lines.

There's been a memory wipe about UN Security Council Resolution 2202. Doesn't exist. Never happened. Never happened. There were no Minsk Accords. What are you talking about? That's just a conspiracy theory. Nobody wants to discuss that, because when you start to discuss that, and even going back to Yanukovich and the EU agreements prior to Maidan, when you start putting it into a wider perspective, it's very clear who started a civil war in Ukraine. It was a civil war. It was violent. And when you have violent civil wars in countries, something happens in history — that is, states break up. And often it has to do with the neighboring countries.

It often has to do with ethnic enclaves. This is no surprise in history. This is no surprise in international relations either. But the Europeans and the Westerners have taken this convenient view to not want to see any of that. History began on February 24th, 2022. And then they'll start their narrative again from there, and that's that Russia's been adamant that we need to address the root causes. And until you address the root causes, which are the things that you mentioned, and also what Ukraine has done in the interim, which is to attack Russia and kill Russian civilians and strike Russia's nuclear deterrent, and many other examples I could give.

Once that sort of phase of hostilities started, then, you know, you don't have any moral high ground anymore. This is war. And anything about, oh, well, Russia is in violation of Ukraine's territorial sovereignty and they annexed Crimea, and they'll go on and on about this stuff. These are no longer relevant arguments. In the real world, the world that we used to think was the real world, in the

new virtual world, you can kind of selectively, you know, compartmentalize all of these things and just stay on this one sort of public relations propaganda track that the West is on in order to frame this as, you know, the evil Russian empire hell-bent on expanding Russia, overrunning Ukraine, and then on to Europe, on to Calais.

So essentially that's what they're running on. And if you're doing this, there's going to be no negotiated settlement. They're abandoning diplomacy. They're in favor of a rearmament of Europe. So, you know, all these signs added up, I don't think there's any chance unless there's some internal political convulsion in Europe. That would be – I always look at the political dimension because there's always a chance. The same with Israel. There are internal political tumultuous factors in Israel that could even temporarily alter the trajectory of Israel's military ambitions, for instance, in South Lebanon. Now, if that happens, that can also transform the entire dynamic of the region.

So, you know, a lot of military analysts aren't looking at the political dimensions, but if you look at Ukraine, it was the political dimensions that enabled, you know, this chain of events that have led us to this horrible geopolitical impasse. So we do need to pay attention to the political dimensions. And there's a lot of changes in Europe right now. Even Bulgaria has peeled off now. A new progressive government has come into power in Sofia. And that's massive. And, you know, what's hilarious about this is when Trump came in and they did that, you know, chainsaw cutting of USAID and everything like that.

I speak to Republicans all the time, and they don't understand what USAID did and what it is, which is a massive Trojan horse for the CIA to go in with soft power in conjunction with the U.S. embassy. They fund all of the media outlets in Bulgaria and Ukraine and half the other countries—Poland, etc. Without USAID, they lost a lot of traction in Bulgaria by defunding some of these programs and not supporting it. So I don't think that's a problem for Bulgaria, but for the U.S. empire, it's a bit of an own goal. But it shows you how out of touch and how uninformed a lot of the current Trump administration is.

They don't even understand how the U.S. managed to get to where it is in the world. In terms of working through multilateral institutions and NGOs, that was a mesh of soft and smart power that is really essential. I mean, once you pull that, you're then left with hard power and intimidation and coercion and sanctions and tariffs and things like that. So it's kind of—I'm laughing to see the situation in Bulgaria because Bulgaria is one of the most important anchors of NATO, because it is nominally, culturally, historically aligned with Russia, nominally pro-Russia, and the U.S. has spent hundreds of millions of dollars to turn it into a pro-NATO, Western-looking country.

But it's always teetering on the balance, and it's really important. So they're no longer supplying arms to Ukraine, the new government. And they're also very much against the boycott or the embargo of Russian energy that Europe is enforcing. So while Orbán falls to the wayside in Hungary, they lose control of Bulgaria. So Central Europe, the Balkans, and these areas are really interesting because that means something, because it's what's on the front line of the Ukraine crisis. To me,

that matters most, despite what they're screaming about in London, Berlin, Paris, and Brussels. And Oslo, by the way.

#Glenn

I know, it's this manipulating reality, essentially, which allows them to take a lot of power. But a lot of this is, you know, it's so done in the open, though. I mean, all the documents from, for example, the establishment of the National Endowment for Democracy — this was established under Reagan in cooperation with the CIA in 1983 to essentially, in their words, instead of doing things covertly with the CIA, they can hide in plain sight by essentially doing all their activities under the guise of democracy promotion. All of this is evident, you know, and after they topple the government in Ukraine, what is the first thing?

Again, the NGOs are used to topple the government, and then they take on a new job afterwards. What do they do afterwards? Well, they finance all the media. This is what was interesting when Trump cut off, for example, USAID, was they found that, oh, well, USAID finances 85 to 90 percent of all the Ukrainian media. And then you had some Ukrainian journalists who received money from this and were asking, how can we do independent reporting now, now that the American intelligence agencies aren't paying us? I mean, you couldn't really make this up. But they also work in these other ways. I mean, I was just in Georgia, in Tbilisi, last week. And, you know, you have the former president of Georgia complaining a lot.

The current ones, the prime minister and president, they were both at the same conference as me. They're warning as well, as always, that the U.S. and other NATO countries are hoping to topple the government there in Georgia with NGOs so they can open a second front against Russia, throwing their young men in the meat grinder. But the former president, when Georgia was under NATO control, she actually entered the country as a French citizen. She was the French ambassador to Georgia, and then after this Rose Revolution, sponsored by the same NGOs, she took Georgian citizenship while she was still the ambassador to Georgia from France. I mean, you can't really make it up.

#Patrick Henningsen

She didn't even speak Georgian. She couldn't even speak it. No.

#Glenn

She didn't need to speak Georgian, but they just gave her citizenship, and then she essentially transitioned into the position of Georgian foreign minister. And then later on she became the president. And so essentially one day you're representing French interests in Georgia, then the next you're representing Georgia itself. Seemingly no problem at all. And, you know, they kind of did the exact same thing in Ukraine. You had Natalie Jaresko, who was, again, a U.S.-born citizen. She

worked for the State Department. She also worked at the U.S. Embassy in Kyiv. So essentially representing U.S. interests in Ukraine after the coup of 2014 by, again, the same NGOs. She then gets, in 2014, citizenship. On the same day, she becomes finance minister of Ukraine. So no longer representing American interests in Ukraine, now she's representing Ukraine. I mean, this is just—

#Patrick Henningsen

Well, she is representing American interests from the inside. But the archetypal avatar of this sort of, let's call it geopolitical gender fluidity, has to be Mikhail Saakashvili, who was parachuted in from a New York law firm to become president of Georgia. And then after, he's then shipped by John McCain to become governor of Odessa and to allow the neo-Nazi elements to fester and manage that instability in the country right around the time of Maidan. And then he's also employed by Edi Rama as a national security advisor for Albania, or economic advisor, I can't remember. He's all over the place. Now, I don't know where he is now. Maybe in a mental institution. Who knows after all of that. But yeah, these are things that would never be accepted years ago.

But for some reason, it's become kind of normalized. Why? Because the Balkans and Eastern Europe, they have big sovereignty problems. And that's one of the things that the United States has done. They've colonized Central Europe, the Balkans to a large degree, Eastern Europe, and with U.S. money through NATO. I mean, if you think about it, forget Georgia and Ukraine for a moment, but we're talking about Poland and some of these other countries. So you're a member of the EU, you're a member of NATO, you're getting direct military occupation by the U.S. I mean, do you have an independent foreign policy at that point? Is it possible to have an independent foreign policy? That's the paradox of it.

But the governments don't have to be accountable under this Russian threat umbrella atmosphere. They just have to say, we're small, we're weak, we need U.S. support. So all accountability goes out the window. And it's all within that sort of crisis framing. And they say, we need the United States, we need NATO. So it's a bit of a self-reinforcing feedback loop that so much of New Europe is caught in. But I'm very, very encouraged that the recent developments in Georgia are hugely encouraging, that people have woken up to this level of subterfuge. And not just in Georgia — pretty much all around the world, a lot of these NGOs are getting blacklisted anyway, even if USAID was temporarily defunded.

#Glenn

Yeah. Well, you mentioned McCain because he's been standing very close to a lot of these NGOs. And that's also the funniest thing of all — the Georgian president, well, the NATO puppet, after she was forced to step down, she took a job for the McCain Institute instead in the U.S. So again, you can't make it up. But at least there, it's a little bit, well, I wouldn't say covert — it's very much in

your face. But our horrible media, they won't report on it because they think it's bad for the narrative, because it undermines whatever they're doing. So they always defend the narratives by pushing reality aside.

But yeah, I know I'm getting a bit sidetracked, but in Bosnia, it's actually run like a colony because when the war came to an end in 1995 with the Dayton Agreement, they then allowed the Bonn powers, which were essentially the powers they were going to use to implement the peace agreement, which was to create a Bosnia with two entities. One was the Bosniak-Croat entity and the other was the Serbian entity. So two entities, half in terms of the territory of Bosnia. And again, so they have these Bonn powers to implement it. Then they outsourced the Bonn powers essentially to the EU, which walks around with two hats.

And the EU then says, you know, instead of using the Bonn powers to implement the entity system, they say, well, actually, the only way Bosnia can be at peace is if it joins the EU, and it can only join the EU if it dismantles the entity system. So now they're using the dictatorial Bonn powers to try to dismantle the entity system. And it was supposed to be in place in two years. It's been 31 years. I mean, they can fire elected politicians, they can scrap laws. I mean, they run it like a colony. And there doesn't seem to be any problem with it because it's under the name of advancing liberal democratic values. It's just, again, you can't really make it up.

Anyways, yeah, I digress. Sorry, I wanted to ask very specifically about the issue in Iran now. That is, as Iran is pushing back so hard against the U.S. and Israel, it kind of took some air out of the whole mirage of the U.S. and Israel being all-powerful. And you even see some rhetoric now coming out of Turkey. I'm not sure if it's because the population is demanding a tougher tone with the Israelis or if they just see a weakness in the armor of Israel. But anyways, do you think this can have an effect on how other countries in the region treat Israel? Because the rhetoric between the Israelis and Turks is kind of extraordinary at the moment.

#Patrick Henningsen

Yeah, well, Naftali Bennett famously said recently, I don't know how many months ago, that Turkey is the new Iran. So he's really laying that right down on the table there. But when you're talking about West Asia and you're talking about Islamic countries, the three important countries in terms of the Ummah, or the global Muslim community, if you will, are Turkey, Saudi Arabia, and Iran. And so Saudi Arabia is the custodian of Mecca and Medina, a very, very important role within the Muslim Ummah. Turkey used to have that position prior to the breakup of the Ottoman Empire. And then Turkey became a secular government with the Mustafa Kemal Atatürk government and that revolution, and took the country in a certain direction for the better part of the 20th century.

When Erdogan came in after being mayor of Istanbul, and the AKP party embarked on a transition, a 30-year plan to bring Islam to the center of Turkish government, civic life, and culture, and away from the more secular, European-facing Turkish society. So that's really important. So Erdogan, that

was his MAGA movement. For Turkey, that was his MAGA movement. And so to be custodian of, let's say, Al-Aqsa Mosque, as an example, the third most holy site in Islam—who is going to be the steward or the custodian of Al-Aqsa Mosque within the Islamic world? Well, the only country that's really stepped up to kind of enforce Islam, the protection of Palestine and the Holy Land, is Iran. So that's created a real problem for Turkey because this wasn't necessarily the case.

Turkey was kind of in second place, vying for first place prior to these rounds of hostilities. So... now, if you look at the West and Israel, and Israeli media and Zionist-dominated media and political organizations, they always try to characterize Iran through a sectarian lens—Shiite. And they have all sorts of epithets that they add to that in the West, like they're eschatologically obsessed, and they'll die and become martyrs, and that's all they care about. And so, you know, suicide bombers, terrorists, the world's number one state sponsor of terror, etc., etc. But when you listen to the rhetoric of Iranian religious leadership for the total existence of the Islamic Republic, they talk about Islam in universal terms.

So they've always taken that leadership in the Islamic world and put the moral question at the center of state affairs, almost written into their constitution that they must explicitly defend anyone who's oppressed or being bullied in the world. Be that not just the Muslim countries, but it could be Venezuela, could be Cuba, but it's definitely Palestine and definitely Gaza, and definitely the people of Lebanon as well, and the list goes on. People in the West can't—definitely the Gulf states can't—understand how anybody would take such a position because they themselves wouldn't dare or think about taking any position that's based on morality.

Instead, we have all these fake pseudo-imperial cloaks like Responsibility to Protect and all these other sorts of doctrines that we've constructed in the West to make us appear to be moral, defending democracy, etc. And Iran, the Islamic Republic of Iran, actually takes an actual moral position. And it's being characterized by the U.S. and Israel as being terrorist or pro-terrorist or supporting terrorism. And that's how this is framed internationally. That's why the EU has proscribed the IRGC as a terrorist organization, even though they've never carried out a terrorist attack against any European country or any other country that anybody can put their finger on, unless you believe that everything in Iran is terrorist and everything they do is terroristic, which is kind of the general Washington impression of things and what Israel wants to portray to the world.

So that means, Glenn, long story short, Iran has taken the axis of resistance, of the Islamic resistance, is very real and very much alive. And on top of that, Iran has now elevated itself to be, if not the leader of the global Ummah, from a moral point of view, who else stood up for the Palestinians? I'll say Hezbollah too, because Hezbollah attacked Israel to pull Israeli forces away from Gaza after October 7th. You know, that's a huge risk, but they did it on principle. Hassan Nasrallah is very, very clear about their intentions, why they're doing things like this. And so this has not gone on deaf ears for the Muslim community globally.

Uh, and so what has that enabled Iran to do? It's enabled them to not just elevate themselves politically in the Islamic world, and also with Pakistan. Pakistan and Iran have a lot of synergy. They're both Islamic republics. They both have an overlap in terms of the intellectual revolution, if you will, after 1979. A lot of that spread into Pakistan as well. So there's a lot of affinity. Farsi is also spoken by a lot of people in Pakistan, so there's a lot of affinity there. But what they've done is not just take that from being a leader in the Islamic world to a geopolitical power — they've absolutely done that.

And they've earned that through fighting, standing toe to toe against the most powerful conventional military in the world, which is the United States, and arguably one of the most powerful, Israel. They're still standing. And not only are they standing, they have flipped the, I would call it, the pace of the escalation dominance, if you want to use that term. But definitely, Iran's now drawing red lines. And Iran manages the pace of action-reaction. And they did that this week. So there was a lull for a while. Iran enforced a red line regarding Israel and Lebanon, and then everyone reacts.

Well, we know with the benefits that come from this geopolitically, you can't calculate. I'll give you an example. Russia. When Russia entered the Syrian war in October 2015, this changed Middle Eastern geopolitics because all of a sudden, all major decisions had to go through Russia. That wasn't the case before that. So it transformed things, and the geopolitical center of gravity started shifting towards the east. And then you had the Astana conference. And instead of in Geneva, it's happening in Kazakhstan. And other actors are involved in brokering all of that. Now, was it successful in the end? No. You could argue it was successful for a time. It stabilized the situation in Syria, much to the chagrin of NATO and Turkey and Israel and Jordan, who were all conspiring to destabilize and destroy the government in Damascus at the time. Eventually, they got what they wanted, and the black flag is flying over Damascus.

But for a period of time, 2015 to 2024, nine years, it transformed the geopolitical dynamics of the region for the first time in many decades. So the same thing is happening here. Iran is now in a position, and very soon, I would argue, that one of the easiest solutions to this, as the U.S. is waffling around, doesn't know what they're doing, being dragged by Israel by the leash, Iran's in a very strong position now to work with other actors like China, Russia, and other countries to bypass the United States altogether and bypass Israel altogether, because if there's going to be a negotiated settlement regarding the Strait of Hormuz, it's becoming more and more doubtful the United States will be able to do it, much less be able to, I mean, be a credible partner in any kind of agreement, because they started the war to begin with.

So they're kind of disqualified. But Iran has that position now. They can control the pace of actions and reactions, and they're doing it. They've shown it this week, and I will even—well, we can discuss if you want—about including Lebanon in a ceasefire package and what that means, how that mechanism works. But that's also another thing that only a credible geopolitical actor, a normative power that's in the ascendancy in the region, could even demand such a thing. Not only demand it,

but actually execute that. And you're watching that now. If we were having this conversation before February 28th, you would have said, is this possible? And a lot of us would be like, probably, I can't see it happening. But it's happening. That, to me, is the extraordinary thing.

#Glenn

Yeah, that's some of the most extraordinary consequence of this war, not just for Iran to be able to seize control over the Strait of Hormuz and essentially not depend on any peace agreement, but they can essentially use this to construct their own security architecture of the region. They can essentially, yeah, create some gravitational pull for all the countries in the region, but also, quite extraordinary, extend their security guarantees or security umbrella or their deterrence to Lebanon, that is attacking Israel for having attacked Lebanon. I mean, this goes against what the U.S. and the Israelis always do in the region. If you're going to bomb one country, be it Libya, Syria, Iran, Iraq, you always isolate this country completely, make sure everyone stays out, you put all your pieces in place, and then you just pound the country and do what you want.

Iran actually extending its deterrence and hitting Israel with all these ballistic missiles for having attacked—this is, I mean, this is what I meant. Not only is this putting Iran as a world power, but it's also putting a lot of pressure on the countries around because, you know, if you're in Turkey... Yes, Erdogan, he, you know, he talks a lot about caring about the Palestinians and all, but he would never stand up to the Israelis in any significant way—maybe rhetorically, which he did today actually, but not through actions. So it's, you know, this can put out a political crisis. It looks throughout, you know, the Arab states if, you know... I mean, it's quite extraordinary what, you know, one short year or even now a few months have achieved. This must be the worst possible strategic defeat for the U.S., though, if they go down like this. But yeah, just a last question—can you unpack what you meant about Lebanon?

#Patrick Henningsen

Yeah, absolutely. So, if you look at what happened in the immediate aftermath of the beginning of this last three months of war, Iran did something which was brilliant looking back, which is they managed to extend their zone of influence by striking back against the GCC countries as co-belligerents, enabling the U.S. attacks, enabling the Israeli attacks. And what that did was it extended their zone of influence regionally, but it also made it global. It pulled the world into the conflict by the disruption of energy supplies, and then the closure of the Strait of Hormuz further compounded that situation, and they created leverage and allowed them to punch so far above their weight, if you think about it.

And they also absolutely destroyed a good portion of the U.S. military footprint in the Persian Gulf. Now, in history, in the post-Vietnam era—put Vietnam off to the side—the United States has lost more fixed-wing aircraft in the last three months. And I'll add the Yemen adventure to this from last year because I see this as part of the same conflict. There are upwards of 75, around 75 aircraft,

maybe more by the end of this week. And that's the equivalent of what the U.S. lost in aircraft—not counting helicopters, but aircraft—in both Iraq wars, the Gulf War in the early 90s and 2003 to 2010. So think about that.

In just three months, record losses in aircraft by the United States. An unprecedented number of bases either inoperable or unusable. And not only that, drawing fire to the countries that they're supposed to protect. That was a protection racket. That was the sales pitch by the United States. So that's incredible. That's a huge flip in terms of influence, power, and leverage. So that globalized the conflict and brought the world to Iran in that sense. Now, with Lebanon, this then further regionalizes Iran's zone of influence. Only a normative power could draw a moral red line. And the moral red line is Israel attacking and killing civilians in Gaza, in South Lebanon, and also in Iran.

So when we get hit in Iran with Israeli or American aggression and they're killing our girls in schools, that is a deep moral wound. It needs to stop. This is against not just international law, but we're going to enforce that. That's the first thing. So they drew a red line. They then enforce it. And this also breaks up that compartmentalization that you just talked about, Glenn, which is that the United States and Israel want to compartmentalize all of these different pockets so that they're not joined together. And what Iran has done is break that compartmentalization up so that it's going to be treated holistically. And the mechanism of this is not obvious, but we can now see it after the reactions by Israel.

The mechanism is that Iran does not want to allow Israel to use civilians as leverage against itself in negotiations. And Israel did the stupidest thing you could do, which is that after these last missiles that came down a couple of days ago, they cut off aid into Gaza. So that is total vindication of the Iranian position. And then Bezalel Smotrich, the finance minister, goes and threatens to say that we need to take down an apartment block in Beirut for every missile Iran fires. We need to destroy an apartment block in southern Beirut. So another one. Then Ben-Gvir says we need to kidnap women and children.

In order to demoralize Hezbollah and the Iranians to stop what they're doing. So Israel has provided the total case evidence. End of story. And I'll even take this further. This is how crazy it's getting for Israel. They've just announced that the Home Front Command of the northern territory of Israel has announced that they're going to reopen schools again. They want the children to go back to school this week. Can you believe that? So, effectively, they're creating a human shield situation or even using their kids as cannon fodder at a time when there are very much escalated tensions.

That, to me, is hugely risky, if not—I question the motivation behind that, quite frankly. That's how desperate they're getting. But all of this is Iran's ability to enforce norms. They're able to at least—look at the interplay, look at the conflict between the U.S. and Israel that this has created. So they've created political tension between their two enemies that are supposedly besties. And so

that's another level of, you could say, genius, or you could just say that's what normative powers can do, because Iran does have power. And they're demonstrating that. It's not just military power; it's political power. And it's a combination of all those things.

And so that's why I think the killing and destruction in Lebanon, in South Lebanon, in Gaza, in Iran, and elsewhere in the region—it's now being viewed by the world. See, if Iran sticks to their guns, if Lebanon had solidarity among the various sectarian factions and Hezbollah, they could, together with their allies, hold off Israel and bring political support from Europe. But because the U.S. and Saudi have done such a good job dividing that country, they're not able to do that. But if Iran sticks to its red lines, eventually European countries and other countries will then begin to increasingly blame Israel for the failure of any peace negotiations. You just have to stick to your guns. And as long as Iran does that, I think that strategy is going to win out in the long run.

#Glenn

For anyone who, you know, was in the universities in the early 2000s, you know, studying or teaching international relations, a key theme was always U.S. soft power. It didn't need to rule by military force. Again, some of this was weakened in 2003 with Iraq, but essentially the U.S. was just this cultural, you know, gravitational force. The whole world just, you know, moving towards it. And the EU was a normative power. Its norms became its appeal and attractiveness. How things have changed now, though. I mean, you have German chancellors saying, oh, the Israelis are doing our dirty work for us, backing attacks on nuclear reactors, supporting genocide, now looking to expel some Ukrainian refugees to refill the trenches in their proxy war as they're going back to war with Russia.

I mean, the United States, it's just, it's quite extraordinary. And Iran... I mean, when I was younger, you know, no one could say one kind word about this country. I mean, this was one of the most demonized countries in the world. Now, I mean, as you said, not only are they becoming a central point in the Islamic world, but again, I talked last night to Colonel Douglas MacGregor. He was making a similar point to you. He was arguing, well, now essentially Iran is becoming the leader of the Islamic world. But not only this, there are people around the world now, the way they view Iran compared to only a few years ago, it's, I mean, it's extraordinary.

#Patrick Henningsen

I think the way the Russians and the Chinese are viewing Iran has transformed. Because Iran has engaged the United States in a war, a full-blown war, and Russia has never even done that, not even throughout the history of the Soviet Union. So Iran kind of stands at the pinnacle of global resistance in a way that is just kind of amazing when you think about it. And ultimately, wars, whatever they are, are usually won economically as much or more than they might be militarily in the long run. And like you said, where the European Union had this power of attraction, it was the biggest market at one point, GDP-wise, maybe, what, 15 years ago? The EU was the biggest single

market that everybody wanted access to, so it could dictate a lot. It could even project its foreign policy into Africa because those African countries wanted access, so you had to comply with the equivalent of, what are they called, the ESGs.

ESGs are these sort of standards of social, economic, and political, you know, woke-type standards that you need to get into the EU market. And all of a sudden, that whole system has eaten itself in Europe. And so the capital is not going into Europe now, and the capital is going eastward. And China is the safest, most stable place to park global capital. And so that means anybody that's allied with that side of the paradigm is ultimately going to be victorious in the long run. And Iran is absolutely anchored eastward.

So I think it's pretty inevitable, unless Europe pulls its head out of its—or pulls itself out of its insanity—that situation is not going to change, and those trends are just going to continue, and it's not good. It's not good for Europe and the West, so... Yeah, but unfortunately, Glenn, there's a lot of risks along the road in front of us right now. And if they come good on their promises of war with Russia by 2029 or 2030, whatever, if that's the way things are going and that's a fait accompli, then there's going to be a lot of problems. But ultimately, it's going to be impossible to reverse these very, very clear economic and geopolitical trends.

#Glenn

Yeah. Well, I think that's one of the key problems, though. As we've been steaming ahead with these horrible, self-destructive, I would say anti-Western policies, the reason why they haven't been able to be reversed or there hasn't been any course correction, any critical assessment, is because they've all, again, ironically, been pushed forward under this big banner of them being pro-Western, pro-democracy, and human rights. So if you oppose these policies—again, what has been done in Ukraine, against Iran, the war there—then you're taking the enemy's side, you're anti-Western. But again, it is amazing what horrible journalism has done. So I'm very happy for the work you're doing out there, and I would recommend everyone follow you. And on that note, where can people follow you?

#Patrick Henningsen

Well, uh, I'll drop you a couple of links afterwards, by email or in the chat, but definitely 21st Century Wire is our main platform, which I founded in 2009. And also I've got a Substack page as well as a YouTube channel, 21st Century Wire TV. So I'll drop those links to you, Glenn. I appreciate the conversation today.

#Glenn

Yep. Yeah, and I will put them in the description. So thank you very much for taking the time.

#Patrick Henningsen

My pleasure.