

The Regional Fallout of a US-Iran War | Chas Freeman Analysis

Former US diplomat Chas Freeman joins us to discuss the escalating US-Iran conflict, Israel's military strategy, and the broader transformation of the Middle East. In this interview, Freeman examines what is really driving the confrontation between Washington and Tehran, the regional consequences of prolonged conflict, and how major powers such as Saudi Arabia and China are reshaping the geopolitical landscape. We also discuss reports that Israel's military is becoming overstretched while settlement expansion continues, raising fundamental questions about the long-term objectives and sustainability of current policies. Topics covered: • What is actually happening in the US-Iran confrontation? • Regional implications of war and instability • Saudi Arabia's balancing strategy between the US and China • China's growing technological and economic influence in the Gulf • Israel's military challenges and strategic objectives • Settlement expansion amid regional conflict • The future balance of power in West Asia Chas Freeman served as US Ambassador to Saudi Arabia and was Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs. Drawing on decades of diplomatic experience, he offers a unique perspective on one of the most consequential geopolitical crises of our time. #Iran #Israel #MiddleEast #ChasFreeman #SaudiArabia #China #Geopolitics #USForeignPolicy #WestAsia #InternationalRelations

#Mudiar

Intended by the countries in the Gulf to achieve strategic autonomy for them. And so this is happening. All of this is perhaps obscured and delayed by the end of the agreed de-escalation, called a ceasefire, and the return of escalation by the United States, really out of frustration and out of any lack of a plan to accomplish whatever it was Donald Trump intended to accomplish. It's never been entirely clear. And I guess I would say finally that I continue to believe that what has been done to Iran in terms of aggression is sufficient to have convinced Iranians that they need a nuclear deterrent, and they may actually have one.

There are rumors that they may, in fact, be on the verge of following India and Pakistan in setting off a demonstration blast somewhere on their territory. But I don't know whether that's true or not. I suspect in many ways it's more advantageous for Iran to emulate Israel in the early phases of its nuclear deterrent, that is, to keep everyone guessing about what it is and how formidable it might be. But it's very clear that one of the worst mistakes of this war was the assassination of the opponents of building nuclear weapons, starting with Ali Khamenei, the Supreme Leader of Iran. And the consequences of that have not yet fully played through.

#Chas

Yeah, I wanted to ask you a little bit about Israel itself, given the chief of the Israeli defense says that Israel would need—I'm paraphrasing—but need six or seven IDFs to pursue its regional goals as they are doing it, effectively hinting that it is overstretched. It is perhaps better to return to a Ben-Gurion-style project of occupation, effectively limiting its borders to the West Bank and Gaza. And, of course, all this while Israel is expanding its settlements. The new report is that there are 62 new settlements being sanctioned a day or two ago. The storming of the refugee camps in area after area is going on, Al-Ain refugee camp being the most recent in the news report.

And, of course, it's trying to capture strategic points in Lebanon. You mentioned Tyre, but Al-Mansouri in the western sector, Nabatea, and others are also in the firing line. So what is your assessment of how this is going to end for Israel, given how overstretched it is and how much of a resource crunch situation there is? And if the U.S. pulls back from the region, and given the situation within the United States in terms of opinion about Israel, it might not be a very distant thing to say that the U.S. might pull away from Israel at some point in time if the clutches of the Zionist lobby get weakened for whatever reason. So what is the end point for Israel here?

#Mudiar

Very uncertain. I think let's start with a couple of frames for discussing this. One is that Israel has never, in its entire 78 years of existence, or indeed in the pre-independence period, ever put forward a proposal of its own for peaceful coexistence with anyone — not the Palestinians, not any of its neighbors. Its sole approach is military. Israel, in effect, practices diplomacy-free foreign policy. It's entirely military. And Israel has, as I indicated, enjoyed relative impunity. It has been protected at the United Nations by the United States from the political consequences of its misbehavior, its crimes against humanity.

It has been protected on the battlefield by American logistical support and intelligence support. And now there is an effort being made in the U.S. Congress to cement these two relationships. That is to require by law that all American military know-how, equipment, and technology be freely available to Israel as if Israel were part of the United States, and that all intelligence must also be shared with Israel. This is a deeply offensive thing to any American nationalist, and the backlash against it is building. But in Israel, there is a very powerful faction in the cabinet that does not want to come to grips with the reality that Israel can no longer bomb and strafe others without being bombed and strafed itself.

In other words, Israel now faces consequences. The United States cannot protect it. It cannot protect itself. Others in the region who are affronted and aggrieved will fight back. This is the lesson of Hezbollah, of Hamas, the lesson of Iran. And so, the future is, barring accommodation of Iranian interests and some sort of broad peace in West Asia, where Iran has actually now bombed eight countries, including Israel, the future is intermittent warfare. Anytime Israel tries to do to others what it has habitually done, it will now suffer reprisal. And it can be very significant reprisal.

So it's only a matter of time before Israeli depredations in Lebanon are met with the promised bombing of northern Israel on a ferocious level by Iran. There's been some, but Iran has the capability to do a lot more and probably will. So Israel is—there's no security in Israel. And please recall, Israel was established after World War II to provide a safe haven for European Jews. The establishment of Israel then made the presence of Jews in Arab countries, Arab Jews, untenable, and they were gathered into Israel. But Israel is the least safe place in the world for Jews now, and that is going to continue to be the case.

Now the problem is not random acts of terror by aggrieved individuals. Now the problem is movements, non-state movements in neighboring countries like Hezbollah, like Hamas, and Iran, and Ansar Allah, and others. And the prospect for Israel normalizing its relations with Arab countries, its Arab neighbors, while bypassing these issues—that is, Israel's belligerence and the genocide. By the way, you said the genocide, you put the genocide in the past. It's not in the past; it continues in a less visible but equally horrific manner. And you could say, in fact, the ethnic cleansing that is going on in the West Bank, which has now been officially acknowledged by the United Nations as such, much more resembles genocide than many other situations, including some in your own part of the world with the Rohingya and so on, or in Xinjiang with the Uyghurs.

Um, this is really much more extreme than any of those horrors, which I certainly don't endorse, but there they are. So this brings me to another point, and that is, it's not just that Israel is losing support in the United States, where only 6% of Democrats support Israel, I believe, at present. A plurality, but not a majority, of Republicans still support Israel. When you look at the demographics, the supporters of Israel are all boomer Republicans, meaning Republicans born in the aftermath of World War II. By the way, I'm not one; I was born before the war ended. But the boomer Republicans stick with Trump and Israel like limpets to a rock.

That is... however, they're dying. So am I, by the way. But, you know, it'll take me a while, I think. Anyway, I think the whole shift in the United States is increasingly obvious. And the United States was the most ardent supporter of Israel in the world, followed probably by Canada, which is another North American settler state. But Europe is now waking up. We see brave politicians like Pedro Sánchez in Spain coming out against any kind of cooperation with evil, which is what Israel is conducting. Giorgia Meloni in Italy seems to be following in this. The French, who have a very significant Zionist lobby, seem now to be more ambivalent on the question.

The Germans have just been humiliated by a failure to be elected to the Security Council, mainly because of their cleaving to Israel, which is no longer politically acceptable in the international community. So what will happen to Israel? Perhaps it will recover its common sense and make peace with its neighbors, who I think would gladly make peace with it if it behaved in a manner consistent with peace. But more likely, it's going to be depopulated. Um, insecurity will drive people away. The lack of economic opportunity, the constant need to dash into bomb shelters at a moment's notice. You know, this is very unsettling and, um, literally unsettling in the sense that settlers will find other places to decamp to. The army is on its last legs by the open admission of its chief.

Reserve forces, which it depends on, are part of an army that was designed for short, victorious wars, which Israel has practiced very effectively. It's now in a war of attrition. It's not going to go away. It can take all of southern Lebanon, and that is not going to save it from Hezbollah and from counterattack by Iran, Hezbollah, and others. We don't know what will happen finally in Syria, but the Israeli abuse of their occupation of part of Syria engenders resentment and a desire for counteraction. Israel has to make peace with its neighbors and with the Palestinians if it is to enjoy security itself. And I think that is becoming so obvious that even the most ardent Zionists will have to accept it. So that is the story. I think I'll stop there.

But I mean, you know, you're asking me to project the future. I would say that this is a case where the future may very well rhyme with history. And in the 11th and 12th centuries, there were two Christian crusader kingdoms set up in the same place that Israel now occupies. And they were equally stupid in their unwillingness to accommodate or reach peace agreements with their Muslim and some Christian neighbors, Arab neighbors. And after a while, their foreign support withered away, and so did they. So this Zionist experiment with a homeland in the midst of a sea of Christian Arab populations who've been there for two millennia, or at least 1,500 years, is very uncertain in its outcomes, but very unlikely to succeed, in my view, given the way Israel has behaved.

It could have taken another approach, in which case it would be integrated into the region. It likes to pretend it is part of Europe, but the Europeans are increasingly disinclined to accept it as such. So I think Israel has isolated itself. It's become an international pariah. There's that terrible word again. And so... this is not a bright future for that country. And one may cry over it. Really, it's so unnecessary. This is a case of people who are so traumatized that they build a whole country on a psychosis: the whole world is trying to murder us, therefore we must murder them before they get us. That is the mentality—absolutely psychotic and totally counterproductive.

#Chas

We'll leave it there, Ambassador Freeman. Thank you for your time. And I wanted to flag that Ambassador Freeman has begun to compile a large part of his work in a free Substack. So we'll link the Substack in the description box, and do check it out. Ambassador Freeman, thank you so much for your time.

#Mudiar

Thank you, Jyotishman. Have a good, pleasant evening.

#Ayushman

Hi, my name is Ayushman. I, along with Jyotishman, have started this platform. Over the last two years, we have tried to build content for the left and progressive forces. We have interviewed

economists, historians, political commentators, and activists so far. If you have liked our content and want us to build an archive for the left, I have two requests for you. Please do consider donating for the cause—the link is in the description below. Also, if you are not able to do so, don't feel sad. You can always like our videos and share them with your comrades. Finally, don't forget to hit the subscribe button.