

# Amb. Chas Freeman: The Era of Impunity for Israel & the US in West Asia Is OVER

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## #Nima

Hi, everybody. Today is Friday, June 12th, 2026, and our dear friend, Amb. Chas Freeman, is here with us. Welcome back, Ambassador.

## #Chas

Glad to be with you, Nima.

## #Nima

And let's start with what's going on between the United States and Iran. Last night I talked with Larry, and we thought that, from what I've learned from Iranians, they said that they have prepared a text and they're communicating with the United States. And Larry was mentioning that his sources were telling him that maybe the United States is going to attack Iran. So we didn't know last night what would happen. And it was somehow, you know, attacking, talking, something like that. And the reason we were, you know, somehow speculating on that is because you remember the Qatari delegation was in Iran when the United States attacked Iran. And the whole night they were there. And then, you know, the day after, they left Iran. So what's going on right now?

We had this new report in the Iranian media. Basically, they're saying that a 14-point plan, you know, \$20 billion in frozen Iranian assets being released, sanctions being lifted, or \$300 billion for reconstruction in Iran. And from what Donald Trump came out and said, these are all, you know, fake. And J.D. Vance said, we're not going to give anything to Iran in terms of money, he said. And the Iranian foreign minister, moments before coming to this live, mentioned that the Islamabad memorandum of understanding has never been closer. Pending its finalization, the media should refrain from entering speculation about its content. In line with our responsible and transparent approach, all details will be shared with the public in due course. Ambassador, where are we right now?

## #Chas

Only God knows, I think. And even he may be confused by all this. So I think there are a number of factors here. First, Donald Trump first threatened renewing the warfare against Iran and then backed down. I think there are many reasons for his backing down. He claims there is progress. Again, he keeps saying that we're very close to an agreement. That has been fantasy foreign policy. But based on what Iran has just said, perhaps there is something finally to it. I think Iran has made it very clear, throughout the indirect negotiations moderated by Pakistan and Qatar, that it is not prepared to sign anything unless some portion, half at least, of the roughly \$24 billion in frozen assets are released and the sanctions against Iran are suspended.

And there is an agreement on a process to end the war in West Asia completely. So Iran has been very consistent. I don't see any basis for assuming that it has varied from this approach. I want to make a number of points here because I think what's happened in this war is very, very important. Basically, West Asia has been an Israeli and American military playground in which Israel and the United States, but mostly Israel, could do whatever it wanted because it had a qualitative edge militarily and was backed by the United States. So it could bomb its neighbors, it could murder people, conduct massacres in Lebanon and so forth with no fear of effective retaliation. But that era is over.

Iran has now declared openly that it will retaliate for any attack on the elements of the resistance that it supports. This includes Ansar Allah and the Houthis in Yemen, who have now reinstated, they say, a blockade against Israeli-affiliated shipping in the Red Sea. It includes Hezbollah in Lebanon. It includes Hamas, which is in Gaza. Meanwhile, of course, Israel is conducting a very aggressive ethnic cleansing campaign in the West Bank. And we've just been informed that the number of Palestinians who have been murdered by settlers over the past two years is unprecedentedly large.

It's over 1,200 people, about one-fifth of whom are children. So Israel now faces retaliation for anything it does. And the United States, which has been aiding and abetting Israel, also faces retaliation. So when the helicopter was shot down in the—if it was shot down, I think it was—in the Strait of Hormuz, the helicopter was part of an operation aimed at helping certain ships get through the Iranian blockade. And it was shot down by an Iranian drone, very likely. It's possible that it was a false flag operation by Israel because Israel wants the war to resume. So Donald Trump intuitively bombed Iran, not to much effect. Iran's retaliation was swift, and it began with the destruction of a key radar in Bahrain, which is essential to the defense of Bahrain and Kuwait and American military operations in the region. And it also bombed Israel.

And so what we now have is a clear pattern where any aggressive action by either Israel or the United States will be subject to retaliation. And not just any retaliation. Iran has basically adopted the Israeli standard. International law says you have a right of reprisal. If you are attacked, you may counterattack, but you can only do so proportionately. Israel has never respected that limitation. It has always attacked disproportionately—in other words, trying to do much more damage to those

who attacked it than it itself suffered. But that too is over now. Iran has adopted a disproportionate retaliation system in the interest of deterrence. And so I'm just talking about the way this so-called ceasefire, which is not a ceasefire—it is an agreed de-escalation. We need a word for that, perhaps a better word. I would say a ceasefire with Israeli characteristics.

## **#Nima**

I think that's the perfect description of what's going on.

## **#Chas**

A ceasefire in which Israel or the United States do not stop firing, but the other side is expected to stop. And we see this in Gaza, for example, where the so-called ceasefire was to leave Israel in temporary control of 53% of the territory and then to withdraw coincident with the disarmament of Hamas. But Israel has not withdrawn. It first expanded its control to 60%, and now, by order of Prime Minister Netanyahu, it has taken 70% of Gaza. And Hamas has therefore not disarmed. So one-sided ceasefires—ceasefires with Israeli characteristics—don't work. And so we're in constant danger of escalation. That isn't over. I mean, it may be that this is a hopeful moment when Iran says that some progress is actually being made.

And I think, Nima, you can correct me, but I believe this is the first time that Iran has made such a statement—that there actually was progress being made and that there was the possibility of an agreement. I have not heard this from Iran before, so that is hopeful. I don't know where this leaves Donald Trump and the United States. Whatever happens, I think the United States has been humiliated. And more to the point, Israel cannot ever again count on the United States to join it in attacking Iran. The costs are just too high. Why did Trump suddenly reverse his plan to attack Iran? Iran, and he said, take Kharg Island. Very simple, I think. First, if there was indeed some progress in the talks, that would justify holding off. But more important, I believe the U.S. military told him that it would be catastrophic to do what he proposed to do.

There would be huge American casualties in any infantry operation on Kharg Island or elsewhere in Iran. The United States has already lost some 40 aircraft, apparently, in this war without achieving anything. There would be further losses because Iran has upgraded its air defenses, perhaps with Chinese or Russian help—we don't know. But apparently, its air defenses are more effective. And contrary to what Donald Trump has continuously claimed, and to the propaganda that the Israeli government inflicts on the Israeli population, Iran has more missiles now than it did—not at the outset of the war—but it has at least 70% of its missile arsenal intact. The launchers to fire them are there. The openings to underground facilities where the missiles are stored are once again open and ready to go.

Iran will savage Israel as well as the Gulf Arabs if there is a resumption of the fighting. So not only would there be enormous American casualties, which is why Donald Trump, I believe, said the

American public wouldn't stomach the operation—meaning they could not put up with that level of casualties—but the Gulf Arabs are sick and tired of this. There is a story in the Washington Post this morning that at the outset of this war, Qatar tried to cut a deal with Iran. I think you and I probably talked about that possibility at the time. The Gulf Arabs are now faced with a nasty choice. They can make their peace with Iran, and in order to do that, they have to remove American forces from their territory. Those forces can't protect them, and that's now known to them. They're not configured to protect those countries.

They are configured to attack Iran. So Iran insists on the removal of the American presence if there's to be an agreement. The Gulf Arabs have that as one choice. Another choice is to lose their wealth because their petroleum and gas facilities are destroyed. At least for some time they would be out of business and impoverished. Or even Iran might match the stupid CENTCOM attack on water supplies on Qeshm Island, in which case they would lose their viability to exist. And I think the same is true of Israel, which depends heavily on desalinated water. So Iran holds the cards, to parallel the statement of Donald Trump. And that is enough to persuade him that, however bad the outcome is from his point of view, negotiation is preferable to more war.

Iran obviously doesn't want the war to resume. It suffered huge damage. It wants to rebuild. And that brings me to the \$300 billion plan for reconstructing Iran. I think this is Kushner and Witkoff trying to make a profit off Iran's distress. I don't think this has anything to do with reality. The way in which Iran will be reconstructed is through its own efforts, with the benefit of fees for passage through the Strait of Hormuz and with help from other countries—Russia in particular, and Turkey, which has a fantastically capable construction industry. And I think you will see a regional development effort to rebuild Iran. And it may be that the investment opportunities that that generates will be attractive to the Gulf Arabs. I don't think Witkoff and Kushner need to apply. So I'll stop here.

## **#Nima**

When it comes to... yeah.

## **#Chas**

It seems that I can hear... yeah.

## **#Nima**

Ambassador, what has happened with the case of the... Yesterday, Donald Trump said he's going to invade Qeshm Island as part of the operation. Then... because you have to have some sort of support, at least within the Republican Party, to do that. It doesn't seem that the Republican Party, you know, the hardcore of the Republican Party, is supporting that. We had Republican Senator John Kennedy saying that this is little by little turning into a new Vietnam if they do that. And if they do

that, they have to go ahead and send more and more, and this is a recipe for disaster for the United States. Then he said, but he doesn't have the intelligence that Donald Trump has. But it doesn't seem that he has any sort of intelligence support for the ground invasion, because that would be hugely, hugely consequential for his administration.

## **#Chas**

Well, he did say that the American people would not stomach the consequences of the operation, and that no doubt reflects a dialogue between him and senators like Kennedy. But there are other senators, of course—Lindsey Graham, Tom Cotton, Ted Cruz—who are out-and-out warmongers and who no doubt would support such a thing, but they're very much a minority. And all of the polling data shows this has been a disaster, not just for Donald Trump but for the Republican Party. And it's about to become a bigger disaster because we're running out of our strategic petroleum reserve and the ability to moderate the price of oil that that provides. Gas is a different matter; that is consumed locally, and it's not so subject to global pricing.

In fact, American gas has replaced Qatari gas in India, which, you know, the gas industry in the United States is crowing about. And the United States has emerged as the world's largest exporter of oil, displacing Saudi Arabia and the Russian Federation. This is a temporary thing, of course, but, you know, it is a bit of a silver lining in what is otherwise a very dark cloud indeed. In about two and a half, three weeks, there will be a huge spike in prices of gasoline at the pump, gas stations in the United States. And there will be a huge further spike in global oil prices. And I think every economist who's studied this projects that happening. So time is running out for Donald Trump.

He has to do something or the entire global economy will be brought down into recession, and the United States consumer base, including many members of MAGA who are working-class Americans, will turn against him. So I think the question of political support is very relevant. We've already seen the House of Representatives vote a very weak version of the War Powers implementation. The Senate has yet to act, but it's basically one Republican defection away from following the House. That would require Donald Trump to veto an effort to end the fighting. That would be enormously unpopular. So I think he's in a box. It's a box he himself constructed. There's no easy way out. And he obviously hopes that Iran will agree to something that allows him to save a little bit of face as he departs the war.

## **#Nima**

What was so strange about the American attack on Iran was that it came after Donald Trump somehow posted that it was an Apache helicopter being hit by Iranian drones. Later on, CNN reported that it was an Iranian drone. Then we have to respond. Let's assume that the Apache helicopter was hit by one of these Iranian drones. The story is right, but the two pilots are alive. They were not injured during the attack. So how is that going to happen physically? The other attacks came right after the Iranian response to the Israeli attack, which seems that it was so hard,

the Iranian attack on Israel. That's why I think the two things came together — the United States attack.

## **#Chas**

No, I think I agree with you. Apparently, the drone, whoever fired it — whether it was Iranian or Israeli or whatever it was — lodged in the helicopter without exploding. And the pilots were therefore able to get out and eventually be rescued, apparently by an underwater drone of some sort. But, you know, the real issue here is that the United States is not able to manage the Strait of Hormuz. Iran can. You know, Donald Trump claims that there have been all sorts of oil tankers coming out of the Persian Gulf.

In fact, there may have been about three a day coming out, probably not Iranian oil, probably Iraqi or Saudi oil that was smuggled out basically despite the Iranian effort to stop them. Iran has, of course, attacked tankers, and so has the U.S. The U.S. just killed three Indian sailors on a — I haven't seen much of an apology for that, but that is a tragedy. So I think, you know, here we are. As I've said before, this is really a war of attrition. And, you know, it doesn't have to end in agreements. One possibility is that now that Iran has decided to retaliate against Israeli attacks on the region, not just itself, that that becomes the norm — that Israel attacks and Iran retaliates.

Well, that is fatal for Israel because let's not forget that Israel was established as a safe haven for European Jews after the World War II Holocaust in Europe. And of course, then that establishment of the State of Israel and the way in which it was established made the continued presence of Jews in the Arab world difficult, and most of them emigrated to Israel. So Arab Jews now make up a very substantial part of the Israeli population, and some of the most fanatic in that. For example, Ben-Gvir, who is mostly Kurdish and Arab, not European by heritage. So Israel has become a state that is unable to live at peace with anybody, whether it's the Palestinians or others, because of the paranoia that is infectious from European Jewry. European Jews were horribly treated historically by Christians in Europe, and this culminated in the Nazi Holocaust. Of them, six million or so died.

Another 6 million Europeans—liberals, communists, Roma, other people—were also killed. But anyway, the foundation of the State of Israel was to make Jews safe. But there is no place on earth that is less safe now for Jews than Israel. And that could very well continue to be the case if there is no peace. Iran is not going to give up its right to retaliate, and it's no longer intimidated by American backing of Israel. And then finally, you know, again, going back to American politics and the international scene, we've seen the utter collapse of international support for Israel and the collapse of American public support for Israel, except among die-hard fanatics and elderly Republicans who are basically functioning on the basis of inertia.

No concept you probably understand better than I, because you're an engineer, but inertia is a real force. So this is unsustainable. For Israel, at this moment, Israel thought that eliminating Iran would guarantee its existence. Instead, it has created an existential challenge to Israel. And Israel needs to

make peace, including in Lebanon, because Iran has extended its protection to Lebanon and demanded, as the original 14 points that have been published suggested, peace in all of Lebanon, no attacks on Hezbollah, and an end to the genocide in Gaza. And so Israel is at a crossroads. It really needs to make decisions that it is clearly unprepared to make.

The Israeli public continues to back every kind of horrific action by its military in Lebanon, even as the Israeli military falls apart with increasing desertion rates, people not reporting for duty when they're called up, and taking about 10 casualties a day in Lebanon, which doesn't sound like much compared to the death toll in Gaza, but is a significant burden on Israeli families and public opinion. And so finally, you know, Donald Trump's political reputation is at stake here. But Netanyahu is in even greater peril. You know, he's going to end up either in jail or escaping jail by exiling himself to some other country. I don't know who would want to take him at this point.

## **#Nima**

He may go to Ukraine.

## **#Chas**

Well, it's possible. But is Ukraine going to be in condition to receive him? You know, I mean, there's a lot of ridiculous comment now, Ukraine turning the tide and so forth. No, it isn't. Ukraine has proven very, very brave, very innovative, very effective beyond most people's ability to imagine. That's not unimportant, and Ukrainians should be given credit for that. But successfully holding off the Russians for a time is not a victory. And I think we're about to see a Russian push to end this war on Russian terms. We'll see. So will the neo-Nazi crowd that currently dominates Ukrainian politics still be there to receive Netanyahu? Isn't there an irony in the prime minister of a Jewish-dominated state seeking refuge among neo-Nazis? Anyway, I mean, this is a very strange time in history, I think.

## **#Nima**

I think the reality of the Persian Gulf and basically the Strait of Hormuz has somehow influenced the mindset in GCC countries, because in the latest Israeli attack on Iran, Saudi Arabia, it seems—we don't know—Saudi Arabia banned Israel from using its airspace against Iran. So this is the moment that the United States is in the region. Just imagine Donald Trump withdrawing the aircraft carriers, all of these weapons in the region. What would be the day after the United States doing this? And Israel is going to be alone? Are they going to continue with these sorts of attacks? Well, I think it's very difficult.

## **#Chas**

Very difficult. You should discuss this with Larry Johnson and Larry Wilkerson. And maybe we'll do that today. I don't know. But the Israeli Air Force cannot do what it has done in Iran without refueling by the U.S. Air Force. So the key is not Saudi Arabia, it's Iraq, where the U.S. Air Force controls the skies. But Iraq is not willing to accommodate that anymore. It's not just militias who are attacking American bases. The Iraqi people, the Iraqi parliament wants the U.S. out. So we're looking at a broad collapse of the American presence in the region. That is, the Gulf Arabs can't afford to maintain U.S. bases on their territory and will not. They will cut a deal with Iran of some sort—the new security architecture, which people in the region hope will keep any external great power out. No Chinese, no Russians, no Americans, no Europeans. The region seeks strategic autonomy.

But as part of this, the American position in Iraq is collapsing. And maybe Syria has, you know, found it convenient to engage in public relations, relationship building with the United States. But it is not in the American camp. Lebanon certainly is not. Lebanese have no reason to love the United States, which has been fully supportive of Israel's depredations in Lebanon, which have driven 1.2 million people away from their homes. Israel is currently engaged in razing parts of Tyre—Sur in Arabic, I don't know what it is in Persian. But so nobody in Sur—okay, I figured, you know, because even though Farsi is an Indo-European language, you have a lot of Arabic in it, like Turkish. And I can sit and listen to a speech in Farsi and pick out words. I don't know Farsi at all, but, you know, so anyway. So Lebanon, which has been very, very pro-Western, is now in a state of drift.

Who knows where it will end up? The confessional constitutional arrangements in Lebanon, which the French contrived—placing a Christian in the presidency, a Sunni as the prime minister, and a Shiite as the speaker in parliament—this is no longer viable. And Lebanon is in a constitutional crisis, with the Lebanese government collaborating with Israel against Hezbollah, which represents a very substantial number of Lebanese. So the whole region is being rewritten. And I guess I would say that from the outset, Iran said that any war would be regional in character. It would not be bilateral. That mirrored the Israeli approach, which is regional.

I mean, Israel is trying to expand its borders in all directions. Israel is the only state in the UN that doesn't have borders. Its borders are very elastic. They keep expanding. Part of Syria is now effectively under Israeli jurisdiction. Southern Lebanon they are attempting to annex. Gaza they are squeezing and attempting to reduce through ethnic cleansing and resettlement by Israeli Jews. Israel has lost the support of the international community. It is now the most boycotted state on the planet. It's the most loathed society. Its more extreme politicians are being subjected to immigration bans in Europe, unable to get visas.

This despite the fact that Europe for a long time was troubled by guilt and vulnerable to Israeli charges of anti-Semitism. But anti-Semitism as a charge has lost its sting because of what those who leveled that charge, Zionists, are doing to ordinary human beings. So I think Israel's reached the end of a road, and it's going to have to make some decisions. And it doesn't seem to be capable of that.

So we may see the slow collapse of Israel as a state—its depopulation, its withering away—much as the Christian crusader kingdoms in the 11th and 12th centuries withered away when they lost their external support and failed to make peace with their Muslim and some Christian neighbors.

## **#Nima**

Yeah. Donald Trump just retweeted what the Iranian foreign minister posted on X, confirming what the Iranian foreign minister said.

## **#Chas**

Let's hope this is coming to an end, because it has been a disaster for everyone. You know, and Iran may have outlasted the United States. I think it has held its breath longer than we can. But it's been battered. It's been very badly battered. Nobody comes out on top here. Israel's in difficulty. The Gulf Arabs have suffered damage. They are going to have to make difficult policy decisions. And Iran has a lot of reconstruction to do. The United States has been humiliated. And one of the reasons that Donald Trump probably refrained from renewing the attack on Iran is his own military told him, we don't have the ammunition.

We don't have the interception capability. And therefore, if you do this, we will not be able to defend Taiwan, for example, if we want to do that—which I'm not sure Donald Trump does want to do. You know, he's being accused of a grave crime with regard to the Taiwan issue. That is, making a strategic judgment. Apparently, that's a crime. You should keep doing whatever you're doing, no matter how stupid and self-destructive it is. Or, you know, there's something wrong. That's that.

## **#Nima**

What is happening, Ambassador, when it comes to the Iranian strategy in the region? They want to improve, for example, Iraq. Iraq was so important in this war for Iran, and they're trying to improve the air defense system of Iraq. That's happening right now. They want to make them capable so that nobody can use their airspace to attack Iran or to defend themselves. And that's going on as we talk.

## **#Chas**

Now, that, of course, makes perfect sense. As I said earlier, the way from Israel to Iran is across Syria and Iraq. And the Iraqi airspace has been controlled by the U.S. Iraqis need to control their own airspace. And, of course, Syria—that should be the case too, but Syria really doesn't have the capability to do anything. It's been so savaged by interventions from all directions. What a horror—a war that has driven huge numbers of people out of Syria, left the country destroyed, destroyed its military, reinforced its ethnic and religious divisions, and basically subjected it to subjugation by Israel and Turkey.

## **#Nima**

Here is what the Israeli Defense Minister, Israel Katz, put out just moments ago: "President Trump is currently leaning toward an agreement with Iran out of a view of American interests, including the shared interest with Israel to prevent Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons. And we expect him to uphold this principle and additional principles in the realm of missiles and terrorist proxies. Together we have inflicted severe blows on Iran that have set back its capabilities by many years." And he's dreaming on proxies and missiles. It's impossible.

## **#Chas**

Well, I would say also the nuclear issue has been fundamentally changed by this war. The group around Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, who opposed the development of weapons of mass destruction, was murdered. And the successors appear to be in favor of a nuclear deterrent. Iran may actually have one. You know, there have been rumors. I think you yourself had a discussion of this with some of your guests about the possibility that Iran has a nuclear device and will follow India and Pakistan in exploding it to demonstrate that somewhere on Iranian territory. I don't know whether that's true or not, but I think certainly the logic of the situation no longer favors a non-nuclear Iran.

And I confidently expect Iran to develop a nuclear weapon, which I don't think is a good thing. I think the only thing holding that back is Iranian realism, the judgment that if Iran goes nuclear, so will Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Egypt, maybe Iraq as well. And Iran will be less secure, not more secure. Instead of facing a single nuclear threat from Israel, it will face a nuclear threat from all of its neighbors, remembering also that Pakistan is a nuclear power. So I think that's what's holding Iran back, if anything is. And, you know, I think this war, from the point of view of the Israeli interests that Israel Katz just outlined, has been an unmitigated disaster. It's probably produced a nuclear weapon in Iran.

It's probably, it's certainly improved the Iranian missile capability and drone capability, and it has strengthened Iran's support and commitment to the resistance against Israeli expansion. So, no, that is a very defensive statement by him. He's been quoted before as basically condemning the United States for even considering an agreement with Iran. Why? Because an agreement with Iran is the end of Israel's unopposed expansion in the region. And he's an ardent expansionist. So I'm sure he's feeling pretty bad, and so is Benjamin Netanyahu, who's also apparently got some sort of cancer and not in very good physical shape, and the Lebanese adventure is once again turning out badly for Israel.

## **#Nima**

And he added that Israel will not withdraw from the security zones in Lebanon, Syria, and Gaza. I think in that case, there is no way, because in Lebanon we know what's the policy of the Lebanese people. Lebanese people—I'm not talking about the population of Lebanon, not the government—

they don't want Israel to be there. And with Syria, it's the same case, by the way. Turkey is just putting a lot of pressure because they don't want Israel to capture or occupy Syria. They want Israel to pull back.

## **#Chas**

Well, this goes back to the most likely outcome here, which I discussed, and that is that war continues—sporadic attacks and exchanges of fire. And here the United States holds the key. You know, all three of the Israeli missile interception systems—Iron Dome, Arrow, David's Sling—these were all paid for by the U.S. taxpayer and co-developed with the United States Missile Defense Command. Israel did not do these on its own. When I was Assistant Secretary of Defense, I was asked every year to sign off on a transfer of funds to Israel for the development of what became Iron Dome. That was a long time ago, but Israel is completely dependent on the United States for many things. And Iran is not, in my view, going to sell out the interests of either the Palestinians in Gaza or the Lebanese in southern Lebanon.

So what Katz is saying is the same thing Israeli leaders have been saying all along. They want the war to continue. They don't, but Katz is unrealistic because he does not seem to understand the changed circumstances. Israel no longer has impunity. It probably is going to lose its political impunity to the next administration in the United States, which will not veto UN Security Council resolutions against Israel as previous administrations have done. And it has lost its military impunity because Iran has made it clear it will retaliate. And it doesn't help to have candidates to succeed Benjamin Netanyahu, like Naftali Bennett, saying that, you know, after we knock off Iran, we'll go after Turkey.

Turkey, by the way, which is part of the four-party Pakistan, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Egypt grouping—Turkey is now conducting air defense exercises with Egypt. You know, not that long ago, they weren't even talking to each other. Well, who's the enemy that they're exercising against? I think it's pretty clearly Israel. And so we're seeing the development of a four-party core coalition to deal with the reality of Israel's constant aggression and its genocide of the Palestinians, now genocide of Lebanese Shia. So this is not a static situation. It is very dynamic. New forces are coming into being. And also, you know, I reiterate, this four-party agreement—that is, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, and Pakistan—is a potential threat, a regional military-industrial base for self-sufficiency among these countries, each of which has something to contribute.

Pakistan has Chinese technology, which it has used to good effect against India. Egypt has an army with very heavy equipment and manufacturing capability. Turkey is a first-world manufacturer, now producing, in the process of producing, a fifth-generation fighter aircraft, the Kaan. And Saudi Arabia has money, when war is not closing in at all. So, I think this is a geopolitical change of great importance. After this war, the U.S. will likely be gone. China and Russia will have increased influence but will not be physically present. And this four-party Turkish-Saudi-Pakistani-Egyptian coalition will be the core of a new security architecture in the region.

## **#Nima**

I think it would be smart for the United States to improve, as time goes by, this sort of understanding—or maybe the relationship with Iran—together with all the other GCC countries. It would be smart, but I'm not optimistic about that because of Israel.

## **#Chas**

No, the key is Israeli attitudes and policy because they're the flea that drives the dog. You know, that is... They're small, they're nimble, they bite, and they can direct the dog's movements, the dog being the United States, unfortunately. So if Israel is finally prepared to make a decision to live at peace with its neighbors, I think every one of the neighbors would love to have peace with Israel. They're not dedicated to destroying Israel. What they are dedicated to is destroying Israeli aggression against them, people who live under Israeli control.

## **#Nima**

Sorry for interrupting. I have never heard anybody say that we want to destroy Israel, we want to wipe it out.

## **#Chas**

Well, you know, I think there are people who do want to destroy Israel.

## **#Nima**

No, in response to what Israel is doing, they're not doing it by choice.

## **#Chas**

They're reacting to what Israel is doing, but there are such people, though they're a very small minority. And they don't include people in the governments in Tehran, or Riyadh, or Abu Dhabi, or the capital of Kuwait—certainly not Muscat. So, you know, there have been peace offers twice from Saudi kings: once in 1982 at Fez, and then in 2002 at Beirut, laying out very clearly a willingness to normalize relations with Israel if Israel stops behaving the way it does. So the key is Israeli decisions, which they don't seem to be making. And if they don't make those decisions, they risk having the United States make them for them as relations with the United States deteriorate over Israeli behavior, which is truly unspeakable.

I mean, the things Israel has done are just horrifying to any normal human being. And it didn't start yesterday. If you go back, we now have a lot of evidence previously concealed that the same sort of thing was done after the 1967 war, in which Israel launched a surprise attack on Egypt and Syria

and did other things, including sinking the USS Liberty, which was covered up but is now out in the open. We also have testimony from settlers in Arab towns and villages about the massacre of the inhabitants and other cruelties—the rape of Arab women by the IDF. So this isn't just yesterday.

This is consistent. And it's no wonder that people have been reluctant to normalize relations with Israel. But I think they are, if Israel changes its policies and behavior. And I think that includes Iran. It's not an implacable enemy of Israel, nor is Turkey. But it is an implacable enemy of an Israel that is without established borders, no constraints imposed by international law, no respect for the international community, no respect for the UN Charter—basically an outlaw and pariah among states. Nobody will accept that, even in the West, among those who sponsored the existence of Israel.

## **#Nima**

Pakistani Prime Minister Sharif just tweeted, "Setting aside the noise, we can confirm that a final agreed-upon text of the peace deal has been reached, and Pakistan is now working closely with both sides to finalize the next steps."

## **#Chas**

Very good news. Hooray for Pakistan, if that is true. Of course, I have to say that at this point it's impossible to restrain a degree of skepticism, since we've had so many false statements made about potential agreements. And part of the negotiating process by the United States and Pakistan, for that matter, seems to be to exaggerate the progress that is being made in the interest of encouraging such progress. So let's hope that's true. If it's true, we will all be better off.

## **#Nima**

I think when we think of a new sort of deal or some sort of memorandum of understanding, we have to understand that the long-term strategies of the United States and Iran don't overlap. And this is the basic problem in the region. I don't see any sort of solution for that.

## **#Chas**

Well, that's an issue that appears likely to be solved by subsequent diplomacy. We know that the Gulf Arabs who harbor American bases are all clandestinely talking to Iran about the post-war situation, and the Iranian-American confrontation is partly built on nostalgia—meaning memories of past abuses, the overthrow of Mossadegh, the taking of hostages during the Islamic Revolution. But if you remove the military confrontation, and if the United States makes it clear to Israel that it is not prepared to attack Iran again, then I think you have a different situation, and it's very much in the interest of Iran and the United States to make peace with each other.

Even if that is something that follows the end of American hegemony in the Persian Gulf. So I would not—I'd be fairly optimistic that something could be worked out. But of course, as long as Israel controls American policy, it won't be. I come back to the point that Israel now faces very difficult decisions, which Israel clearly sees and doesn't want to have to make. Israel needs to learn to live at peace. Israel needs to discover diplomacy. Israeli diplomacy is an oxymoron. There is no such thing. There's only coercion and no diplomacy accompanying the coercion. And, you know, I think actually, having talked about normalization with Israel in many Arab capitals, the Arabs realize that this would be very beneficial to them.

Israel has a high-tech economy. It has a lot of influence in American politics, even if it has squandered that influence by its recent behavior. But, you know, they would like to have a relationship with Israel—a commercial relationship, a business relationship. They're not denying the existence of the state of Israel. They know it's there. They don't want to get rid of it. They just want it to behave properly. So, again, Israel has to make decisions. If Israel continues the war path, it will eventually be destroyed, in my view. It cannot survive in a region where its survival depends on military superiority over all of its neighbors and the occupied Palestinian population. This will not work.

**#Nima**

Thank you so much, Ambassador, for being with us today. A great pleasure, as always.

**#Chas**

Well, it's a moment of optimism for a change. Let's hope the war is really going to come to an end. That would be wonderful.

**#Nima**

Yeah, exactly.

**#Chas**

Have a good day.

**#Nima**

You too, Ambassador.