

Elijah Magnier: IRAN Says Israel Must Leave Lebanon, Israel Refuses. Trump Makes His Move!

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#Nima

Hi everybody, today is Wednesday, June 17, 2026, and our dear new friend, Elijah Magnier, is here with us. Welcome back, Elijah.

#Elijah

Hello, Nima, and thank you for having me. It's a pleasure to be with you.

#Nima

Great pleasure. And let me start with your latest article about what's going on, because basically the MOU, the memorandum of understanding between Iran and the United States, is totally dependent, in my opinion, on the situation in Lebanon, between Israel and Lebanon. As it was emphasized, we had the Iranian foreign minister talking about this, the head of the Iranian parliament. They're so much insisting on their position vis-à-vis Lebanon. And here is your last piece that you wrote about: "Can Lebanon be separated from Iran?" I think, what is the importance of your latest statement?

Your latest article that you said you published today is about the situation where Donald Trump somehow feels that he can bring Syria in. He says that Israel should back down a little bit and maybe open a new front from the northern part of Lebanon against Hezbollah. But the whole concept of Syria and the fall of Bashar al-Assad is basically about disconnecting Iran from Hezbollah, which hasn't happened so far from what we've seen. How do you see the current situation with the MOU and the way Donald Trump is talking about Israel backing down a little bit—not withdrawing from Lebanon, but backing down—and Syria coming in?

#Elijah

There are too many questions you put in one line, and it requires a whole day to explain them. However, I'll try to be as brief as possible. Now, first of all, let's take Syria. In Syria, Iran backed President Bashar al-Assad at the request of the Damascus government. It did not land in Syria just because it wanted to be part of the war. However, allies can sometimes be enemies depending on the war theater. And here I mean Turkey and Russia. When Russia started being involved in Syria, its involvement was against the jihadists, but not in favor of Bashar al-Assad.

Therefore, Iran had a different objective: to respond to the Syrian government's request to support the government against the jihadists, but also against the Americans and the Israelis who were playing on Syrian ground. However, for Iran, it was important because it was a direct lifeline to Hezbollah. Hezbollah and Iran have an organic relationship. They're not only simple allies, and they're certainly not, as defined by the West and academia unfortunately, that Hezbollah is a proxy. And I don't need to say it; I need to prove it. First of all, Iran went to war on behalf of its ally, Lebanon—Hezbollah in particular. It did not happen vice versa, the other way around.

Hezbollah did not go to war on behalf of Iran. Hezbollah did not intervene to support Iran, but to impose a new rule of engagement in Lebanon that Israel violated. But Hezbollah was engaged in Syria for so many years against the jihadists, including the current president, Ahmad al-Sharif, who landed in Syria after being released by the Americans from prison because he was with ISIS, and ISIS leader Emir Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi at that time sent him to Syria as his representative in the Levant. And when he became powerful, he decided to go solo and pledge loyalty to al-Qaeda leader Sheikh al-Zawahiri. This is when the fight between al-Qaeda and ISIS happened. But then again, Ahmad al-Sharif went to Turkey and then became a very close ally of Turkey. This background is important to answer your question. So will Syria go to Lebanon and attack Hezbollah? Certainly not, for many reasons.

First, the jihadists—the previous jihadists now in control of the government—have tasted the meaning of confronting Hezbollah and the way they were defeated. The jihadists managed to defeat the Syrian army that refused to fight during the days when Bashar al-Assad had fallen, and because the conspiracy was much bigger than him. Secondly, because Turkey heard from Benjamin Netanyahu several times that when we finish with the Shia, we will start against the Sunni, and he mentioned Turkey and Qatar. It is impossible for Turkey, an ally of Iran on so many levels but not with Bashar al-Assad, to accept the defeat of Hezbollah that is fighting Israel out of ideology and for the liberation of the Lebanese occupied territory, and allow the Israelis, with an ally of Turkey, to go and defeat Hezbollah—which is impossible. But let's assume the answer is yes, and then clear the road for the Israelis to go against Turkey.

So, the impossibility of President al-Sharif going against Hezbollah militarily. Secondly, it is not a favor that anyone will give to Israel and America. Third, President al-Sharif told the Lebanese Prime Minister Nawaf Salam, "Do not talk to the Israelis and make our mistake, because they don't want a deal." He tried to strike a deal with Israel, but Israel refused because any deal would lead to the

return of the Golan Heights, Quneitra, and all the areas in Syria occupied by the Israelis. So we have so many reasons why this is kind of an imagination or, rather, wishful thinking of President Donald Trump, who is not really knowledgeable about the dynamics of the geopolitics in that part of the area.

#Nima

But when it comes to Lebanon today, we know that for Israel, they really felt that the assassination of Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah, together with the assassination of the Iranian leaders, then the fall of Bashar al-Assad, then the sort of delusion—the sort of regime change that the United States has done in Venezuela—the outcome of all these events could lead to some sort of new equation against Iran, which has failed, which has totally failed so far. But do you think the way that Israel sees Hezbollah today is realistic? Or are they having this sort of rhetoric? Because when it comes to Israel, we are so much... blind, in my opinion, about what is happening in the minds of Israelis vis-à-vis Iran, vis-à-vis the region, because it's all about occupation. It's all about grabbing land. It's all about death and destruction.

That's why you don't see the foreign minister of Israel. Nobody knows him. And it's all about the, you know, the head of, you know, the military. It's all about the Israeli Knesset, the defense ministry of Israel. It's all about that. What do we know about their understanding of Hezbollah today and the capabilities of Hezbollah, since they're fighting Hezbollah and they're seeing how Hezbollah, even after the assassination, after all those attacks in the southern part of Lebanon, they're fighting back with their drones, with their rockets, ambushes, and the casualties that they're, you know, they're having in the southern part of Lebanon is part of their calculation. We had the Israeli, you know, the Israeli ambassador to the UN saying how these drones are becoming some sort of strategic problem for Israel. Your understanding of that and the way Israel sees Lebanon.

#Elijah

You tackle a topic that I've studied for 35 years as an academic and also as a journalist. Hezbollah is highly misunderstood by all players, including Israel. Generally speaking, they understand the military aspect, and I will explain. During the war, Benjamin Netanyahu, after the Pager attack and the assassination of Hezbollah leaders, said that he received a book from the intelligence services, 80 pages, and read every single page to understand that Hezbollah was actually the driving force in front of Iran and not behind Iran.

He was right in many aspects, but bottom line, Hezbollah had its own agenda, but it's an organic relationship with Iran and an ideological one. Nevertheless, the Israelis, and certainly the Americans, never understood that assassinating leaders will not change anything in ideological hybrid actors, because Hezbollah cannot be defined as a non-state actor since it is present in the parliament, in the ministry, in the cabinet, in municipalities, everywhere. So it is part of the state, but it is a hybrid actor. Therefore, if you remove a leader, these organizations have horizontal leadership, not vertical.

You remove one, there are others who will replace them. The assassination strategy that Israel adopts is a tactical one because Benjamin Netanyahu taught Israeli society to be more theatrical than to reach the essence and strategic outcomes. He can reach tactical outcomes. That's what he brags about: we've killed that leader, we killed that leader, we assassinated this person, we have a long arm, we can reach anywhere. Of course, he can reach anywhere when he has half of the world supporting him with false passports and supporting the Mossad wherever they operate, even if they are arrested. And they were arrested in Cyprus, in Switzerland, in Europe.

In many places. But then in Jordan. But then released. So having all this support and this facility, you can go and kill anyone and get away with it because there is no accountability. However, the Israelis, after the 7th of October, have switched doctrine. Today, they understand the necessity of creating a buffer zone in the territory of the enemy, not in their territory. This is why they went and occupied 53% of Gaza, that is 60% now, and Netanyahu instructed the army to go to 70%. This is why the Israelis went to Lebanon and occupied more or less seven to ten percent of the Lebanese territory, or at least they are operating in this territory, making it difficult for the people to return because they want to create a buffer zone in the Lebanese territory. And they did the same in Syria, in the Golan Heights, in Quneitra, and they adopted the same doctrine.

In the West Bank, the West Bank used to be 20% of Palestine; today it's 10%. Because again, they have created this buffer zone inside the Palestinian territory, but not the Israeli-controlled territory. The doctrine today with Iran has failed for a very specific reason. The Axis of Resistance did not have a common command and control center until June 2025. It was just deterrence by narrative. It was something that was used but never had a common operations room where they all fight together, coordinate, and mount attack and defense at the same time. When Iran was unlawfully hit in June 2025, this is when Iran understood the necessity of supporting its allies that had received a setback because of the Israelis, the Americans, and the rest of the Western support, because everybody supported Israel after the 7th of October.

So when we see Iran in June 2025 retaliating after 17 or 18 hours, and Iran retaliating after 15 minutes, the first in June 2025 and the second one in February 2026, we understand that Iran prepared for the battle as it is preparing today. Because Iran was attacked twice during negotiations, and now it is going to sign a framework, it is another negotiation where Iran believes the US is untrustworthy, and Iran can be attacked before, during, or after the negotiation. So the Israelis today are caught because Donald Trump is asking them to leave the buffer zones. Iran is very clever; it is asking to halt all the wars on all fronts, and that includes Gaza, Syria, Iraq, Lebanon, Yemen, and Iran. And the Israelis are saying, we want to have freedom of action, and we want our buffer zone.

And this is when we hear the criticism coming from Donald Trump against Benjamin Netanyahu, who is directing Channel 14 and his ministers to attack Trump. But he's saying, I need to deal with the president wisely. He doesn't want to come out and attack him. But Benjamin Netanyahu will never

accept that in the next six months, to withdraw from what he calls a buffer zone, because that means going to jail, because he has three corruption cases, and he will fall in the prime ministership elections unless he confesses, and then he needs the president of Israel to pardon him. But that will, in any way, be the end of his political career. So for the Israeli prime minister today, it's a matter of an existential issue for his political career, but not for Israel.

#Nima

Yeah. Today, the Israeli Defense Minister, Israel Katz, said anyone who raises a hand against the state of Israel in Gaza, in Lebanon, Syria, or anywhere else knows there is a price to pay. And, you know, first of all, they lose the land, then they lose their home. This is the strategy on their part. I think the war against Iran has, you know, broken the whole picture of Israel in the Middle East. Because Israel, before this started, they thought that Israel would influence Lebanon, would influence Syria. They thought that they had destroyed the axis of resistance. You remember those days before the war started, before June 2025, I'm talking about, the first round of attack on Iran, because Israel started the attack on Iran with the green light of the Trump administration in those days. So this is what's going on right now. How do you compare Israel, the way it was before June 2025, and the way it is today, and how it is perceived by public opinion in the region?

#Elijah

Israel thought in June 2025 that it was capable of fighting Iran on its own. According to what Donald Trump said after the war, he said Benjamin Netanyahu begged me after five days to stop the war, which means when Benjamin Netanyahu understands that his objectives are impossible to reach, he uses destruction of anything because he has the Air Force to destroy and the American bombs to use very generously. And then he wants to stop because he can't cope with the Iranian missiles. Now, for Benjamin Netanyahu, according to US Congressman Van Hollen, it was an opportunity.

Van Hollen said, after 40 years, Israel found a stupid American president to drag him into a war against Iran. These are his words, which is true. It is very unique for Israel to drag the Americans to start and finish a war on its behalf and invest all its military might. However, I think, I don't want to be cynical, but that was the biggest favor that the Americans and the Israelis did to Iran in February 2026. Iran was afraid of a war with America. After all, America is a superpower, the strongest army in the world, and has 780 military bases and can bomb from anywhere. Iran went to the deal with Barack Obama in 2015 because it wanted to avoid the war.

When the Americans and the Israelis crossed that threshold and went to war, Iran accepted what was imposed on it, defended itself, and managed to prevent the Americans and the Israelis from achieving their objectives. Then Iran took another position of power. What Benjamin Netanyahu told us—that he was going to be a superpower in the Middle East—these are his words. In fact, Iran has become the regional power in the Middle East, and we are returning to the position of Iran in the Middle East similar to that of the Shah, but with the Islamic Republic. So before 1979, Iran was the

strongest country in the Middle East. Today, after 47 years, all the Arab countries, including Saudi Arabia, asked Donald Trump, if you want to go to war with Iran, finish it off, because they understand what that means—Iran coming out as it is today.

Iran bombed all the Gulf countries according to UN Article 3314 because these Gulf countries used their territory as a platform and a theater to attack Iran. Today, these Gulf countries will pay—like, I mean, it makes me laugh because Saddam Hussein used to assassinate and execute people and then send the body to the parents and ask them to pay for the bullet.

Iran today will receive reconstruction money from the same countries it has bombed—the Gulf countries—because they allowed the Americans to use their bases in the Gulf, and it is going to receive compensation for that. That is a position of strength. Benjamin Netanyahu today understands that his narrative—that after the war with Iran, he would see the Arabs standing in line to come and beg for a relationship with Israel—has crumbled. There's no longer anyone begging for a relationship with a loser, because a loser doesn't have many fathers; it has only one father. And the Gulf countries today understand the necessity of having a deal with Iran, and particularly a security agreement, because they don't want to be bombed again, and they don't want an American president to use their territory, drag them into war without asking their opinion, and then have to pay the price.

So the balance has shifted dramatically. And this is what Benjamin Netanyahu is feeling, not Donald Trump. Donald Trump said, OK, I'm a gambler. I was told that in three days I will finish it off. This is another Venezuela, a very quick victory. And then I can claim the Nobel Prize because I managed to stop nine wars in the Middle East and the world. And then he said, I want to change the regime. Yesterday he changed his mind. He said, no, no, this is not what I want. And he said he wants to contribute to the election of the Wali al-Faqih, which is the leader of the revolution. That is an indication of his ignorance of the Iranian system of election. And what happened, he believes, has no consequences. And then he said he will shake hands and go and meet, say, Mojtaba Khamenei, not realizing that he's the one who killed his father and his mother and many members of his family.

So all that lack of understanding increased the distrust of Iran but forced Iran to impose a very harsh agreement on the Americans, where in 2015 Iran had to prove its goodwill by implementing everything first. And now Iran is demanding from the Americans to implement everything first themselves. The Americans have to implement everything first, starting from the most difficult one, which is stopping the war in Lebanon and withdrawing all the Israeli forces within 60 days.

#Nima

Yeah. Don't you think that somehow, looking at this demand or the way they're talking about it, it feels kind of delusional? Because how is that going to be possible without going underground and forcing Israel out of Lebanon? I think the political will is so important, but you have to have some sort of physical will, a move to force Israel out of Lebanon. Is that going to happen, in your opinion?

And how do you see the way that Donald Trump is talking about this situation? And what could be the leverage on the part of the Iranians on Israel to leave Lebanon? Let's see what's happening in the south of Lebanon.

#Elijah

We have seen a war for more than 100 days. According to the Israelis, they involved five divisions, that is around 70,000 troops, and they did not manage to occupy more than seven kilometers from the border. In many areas in the south of Lebanon, particularly Metula, which is very close to the Lebanese southern villages, the Israelis managed to advance. That means the Israelis are confronted with very harsh resistance. If we look at the battle today in Al-Tahrir Hill, above Nabatieh, we see that the Israelis are desperately trying to reach it because, in case the ceasefire is implemented and forced upon Israel on Friday, then by Friday they need to occupy it and then they would remain in it. And this is where Netanyahu will say no to Donald Trump.

And if he says no to Donald Trump, then Hezbollah, after 60 days, will say, fine, the deal is now fulfilled. The Iranians can say the same, and they will tell the Americans, you and I, we have a framework to sort out together, but I will deal with Israel. And then Iran will go to war against Israel on its own. And let's see if Benjamin Netanyahu will be capable of maintaining this, even if he has superiority in the Air Force, but he doesn't have the possibility to intercept the Iranian cluster bombs that were really deadly in the last confrontation in June 2025, in the last days. So, this is a scenario that can happen when the resistance will hold the ground, and it is holding the ground.

In some areas, the resistance had changed tactics. They allowed the Israelis to come in to increase the number of casualties, and then the Israelis would pull back to seek a secure position and avoid spreading their forces. So wherever the Israelis are in the south of Lebanon today, they don't feel secure. They feel very vulnerable, and they don't know what to do with the local resistance, that is Hezbollah. And they will have Iran-Israel backed, because the Iranian Command and Control Center promised to hit Israel if Israel bombed Dahyeh first. But yesterday they said if Israel continues its attack on Lebanon, so it's no longer Dahyeh, it's the entire Lebanese territory. And I think that will be implemented from Friday onward.

#Nima

Yeah. Look at the way that Hezbollah is fighting. Do you think that Syria can do something about it? As you mentioned, the situation for Israel is so desperate because if they decide to stay in the southern part of Lebanon, last night we learned that they have withdrawn some of their tanks and forces from some parts in the southern part of Lebanon and are moving further to the south. And from Qiyam, they were removing their tanks and their forces from Qiyam to other parts, mostly down to the south. But when it comes to the Israeli forces, it seems that the situation is not sustainable because they're getting hit by drones, rockets, ambushes. And I think the way that Donald Trump is arguing about Syria, he wants to bring something new in to break the backbone of

Hezbollah, to do something in. You know, they have tried some sort of civil war in Lebanon with the government.

You know what's going on with the government and the position of the Lebanese government and Hezbollah already is dealing with huge repercussions within Lebanese society out of these sorts of disagreements with the government in Lebanon. So if they bring in the case of Syria, which so far, by the way, from what we've learned from the Syrian government, they said they're not willing to do that. They don't want to be part of this. And even Al-Sharaa, the former head of HDS, said to the Prime Minister of Lebanon, don't negotiate with Israel. Nothing good is going to come out of this. But after all, it seems that Donald Trump feels that he can force them into Lebanon, into that equation that he has in his mind. What is that role, and how is that going to bring some sort of change in favor of Israel? Is that going to happen?

#Elijah

First, let's look at the first three or four months of the control of Ahmad al-Sharaa of Syria. In the first three to four months, Israel bombed every single day all the warehouses and the missile industry of Syria. They bombed everything—helicopters, they destroyed the Navy, they destroyed all the tanks that are more advanced.

They left the T-52 tanks, the very old version that, with an RPG, you can just burn the entire tank. That is completely different from the new tanks today, so you don't need to use a coordinate-guided laser missile to blow up a tank. That's one. So, Syria doesn't have the military means to do so. Syria doesn't have enough men for that. Three, Hezbollah is not fighting in the south of Lebanon with all the might of its ground forces and special forces. Hezbollah's forces are divided into three parts. First is the geography forces—the geography forces, which means the people who live in the villages and in the cities since always, through generations. Therefore, these represent the bulk of the force that defends the land where the occupation forces are advancing, in the case of Syria or Israel. We're talking about tens of thousands of forces. Second, we talk about the special forces, the Radwan forces.

If we see the casualties of Hezbollah, according to the Israelis, they said 1,000 so far have been killed, but Benjamin Netanyahu suddenly came out two days ago and claimed 10,000. So he just added another zero to Hezbollah that he killed.

Therefore, the Bekaa Valley, which has borders with Syria and the north, all these forces have never been engaged in a battle with the Israelis so far. They're still living there—tens of thousands of people belonging to Hezbollah in their villages—who are equal to the Iranian army that has never been engaged in the war in the last 40 days, and that Donald Trump claims to have destroyed. Not one of the Iranian army, the Basij, has been engaged in the battle because there was no ground attack by the Americans. So it is exactly the same in the south of Lebanon, the Bekaa Valley, the north of Lebanon, where the forces that are engaged with the Israeli enemies are only on the front,

in the first seven to ten kilometers, and all the other forces behind, north of the Litani River, they are still fresh in Lebanon. They have not engaged in a battle. So Donald Trump doesn't know what he's saying, really. He said that a few months ago—he said, well, we could have left Syria to attack Hezbollah, and they were willing to do so—and then he repeated that yesterday. But he's repeating something.

He is unaware of the consequences. Above all, Turkey will never allow that. Not only that, Turkey is not far from supporting Hezbollah in what it is doing against the Israelis, because Turkey has never been an enemy of Hezbollah. Well, actually, I can share with you something that I have never shared. Many of the Hezbollah supporters that worked with the Mossad and were meeting with the Israeli agent in Turkey were discovered by the Turks, and the information was shared with Hezbollah. So we're not talking about a country that is an enemy of Hezbollah—on the contrary, in particular when it is related to Israel. Of course, they were not friends in Syria, because as I said, every theater has its own particularity. Iran and Turkey have excellent relations, but they were not friends in Syria; they were against one another. So when it comes to Israel, despite the fact that many people will argue, "Oh, Turkey is giving oil to Israel, or is giving gas, or is giving food, or all the uniforms of the Israeli army come from Turkey," that doesn't mean Turkey is going to support the Israelis or its allies against Hezbollah. It's not going to happen.

#Nima

I think part of the equation would be if, let's assume Donald Trump is honest and he's incapable of putting pressure on Israel because of, you know, his administration, because of his connection with the Zionists, all of that. He has two options right now: getting back to war against Iran, as he decided to do, to start this war of aggression against Iran on February 28th this year, 2026, or try to do something politically with Iran. And let's assume that he wants to do something politically.

He wants to find an alternative solution instead of having a new round of war against Iran. Who can help him? I would say Turkey has the capacity and has the power in the region to cooperate with Iran or somehow with Trump's agenda, if we assume that agenda exists. And you mentioned how Turkey can put pressure on Israel in the case of energy, in the case of Syria. They're confronting each other. Is that going to happen, in your opinion? Or is it somehow delusional to think Turkey would move against Israel anytime soon? Because look at what has happened. Iran said if Israel attacks Dahiya, for example, Beirut, we're going to respond.

And this is the new calculation. That wasn't there before the war started. This is the new change in the whole region. So if Turkey comes, you know, comes in a little bit, in the way that they can put pressure on Israel, that could change, you know, put tremendous pressure on the Netanyahu administration. It's not related to the United States and the way that Trump tries to negotiate or make a deal. It's about the region going against him. I think the two important forces are Iran and Turkey. I don't see that much happening with the GCC countries. That's why I'm arguing Turkey could be that alternative.

#Elijah

I don't think Turkey will intervene because it's already, according to the Israelis, stopped the Kurds from entering Iran and played a role in preventing American support to the Kurds in Kurdistan in the northwest of Iran. That is where Turkey feels its national security is in jeopardy and doesn't want to see the Kurds armed and having another enclave close to Kurdistan, Iraq, and this is where the dream of Rojava, the nation of the Kurds, can be materialized. Already, Massoud Barzani, the leader of Kurdistan-Iraq, tried to declare independence and failed in Iraq in 2018-2019. So that is where Turkey draws the line. However, Turkey doesn't need to fight Israel on its own.

It needs its allies and supports those who fight Israel. For example, Turkey and Hamas are very close. Turkey and Qatar are very close. They're all Muslim Brotherhood — Hamas, Turkey, and Qatar. Therefore, this kind of collaboration can lead to support against the Israelis when necessary. And this is where Turkey can play a role. However, Turkey will not play a role to stop the economic relationship with Israel. And it is, at the end of the day, a member of NATO, one of the strongest after the United States. It also has, in Incirlik, an American base, and it has 50 nuclear bombs directed toward Russia, although Turkey and Russia are very close friends. So this is where geopolitics is important.

Turkey will not commit suicide and go against Israel. It doesn't have borders with Israel and would have to start fighting from afar. We've seen what happened to Israel when fighting Iran from a distance, or even Yemen. The distance is great, even with Turkey — it has only Syria to cross. Turkey has a large influence on the Syrians and can make the life of the Israelis extremely difficult on the borders, willingly. But Turkey doesn't want to do that because it has a good relationship with Donald Trump. Turkey is aware that Donald Trump is not predictable, and he is not the enemy of Israel, even if he sees the interests of Israel differently from Benjamin Netanyahu.

#Nima

I think that's the point for Donald Trump. He feels that he knows better, that he can do something better for Israel than the Benjamin Netanyahu administration. That's the whole point. But I think the better Israel in the mind of Trump and his administration is still the Israel that is occupying, in your opinion. Lebanon is occupying Syria. And they're talking about, as you've mentioned, 70% of Gaza. Just before coming to this slide, it was reiterated by Israel Katz, the defense minister, and Smotrich. Both of them said, "The 70% of Gaza, we're not going to negotiate on that. We're going to capture 70% of Gaza." And this is the new sort of—you know the situation in the West Bank, what's going on there. And I don't know how long the United States is going—are they going to stay in the region forever to fight?

Because, as you know, there is a new section, Section 224, in the United States. They want to merge the two militaries, the U.S. and Israeli military. So this is a new sort of trap for the United

States in the region if they decide. I don't know if they consider it a trap or some sort of friendship or something. You know, many people are arguing that the whole case of Israel is part of the American empire, and that that's one of the ways we can look at the situation in the Middle East. But after all, I think the United States has reached the limitations that they can have in the Middle East, because this is the end. This is the last sort of round of war against Iran. What else can they do for Israel? How can you explain the Israeli mindset and the way they're asking the United States to stay in the region?

#Elijah

We should not be very optimistic because Donald Trump is not going to solve the Palestinian question, the Lebanese conflict, and the Iran-Israeli conflict with just an agreement—a framework agreement that he's signing with Iran. Although he's trapped by the sentence that Israel will have to withdraw from all occupied territories and will have to end the war on all fronts, that is very elastic and can be interpreted in so many ways. So I don't think the Americans realize that what they are asking, what they are agreeing on, is so easy. And Donald Trump is very easy to change his mind and play on words and say, no, this is not what I meant. And then we go back to square one. It doesn't mean they go back to war with Iran, because they don't have any more targets in their bank of objectives. When the Israelis said, we have petrochemical, we have energy to bomb, it's because they like the chaos.

The Americans don't like the chaos, because the chaos means inflation, the increase of prices, the increase of gasoline, and everything else with it. So there are two different objectives between the Israelis and the Americans. However, the Americans overestimate their influence on Israel in all matters. Because the matter of security for Israel is a mentality that is built on wars and killing and genocide and occupation. And they don't want to live in peace with anyone, not even with themselves. So they are at war all the time. Where do you see a small area having 450 of the most modern jets—for what? The Israelis have 20,000 square kilometers. Iran has 1,648,000 square kilometers. The Israelis have a depot of bombs that can cover the entire Middle East. Look at the size of the bombs and the number of bombs they dropped on Gaza and on Lebanon and on Iran.

They are equivalent to several nuclear bombs—without radiation, of course. So this generosity of ammunition, the modern warfare technology, all the most modern interception missiles in the world in Israel, only to protect Israel so Israel can go for other wars. It is really something that the world cannot cope with, but has no say because the Americans are protecting all that. And they consider that the Israelis are part of American national security. So this integration with the intelligence services, with the army—already, Israel is part of CENTCOM, the Central Command—which means that there is already a very strong integration. But where the Americans make a mistake is thinking that this integration, and if we give Israel many supports, billions of dollars in help and billions of dollars in munitions, it means we have leverage over the Israelis.

Well, Joe Biden did not have leverage over the Israelis. Barack Obama did not. People can argue that they are Democrats, not Republicans. Well, now Donald Trump is a Republican, and he said to Benjamin Netanyahu, "Don't bomb Beirut." And Netanyahu went and bombed Beirut. He said that Israel should stop targeted assassinations because they are bringing down entire buildings and killing many people. Netanyahu is not going to stop targeted assassinations in Lebanon, but also in Iran. He will continue doing so because he wants to provoke the Iranians into an answer, and he wants to blow up the entire deal, using a phrase and a sentence that the West gave to Israel, which the Israelis are now using against the West's understanding.

It is, Israel has a right to defend itself by starting a preventive attack before the enemy thinks of attacking Israel. That is the Israeli theory and doctrine now, so Israel is not going to give up on the narrative of defending itself, and for that, it needs to go and attack. And that is against what Donald Trump wants, and he will be faced with a confrontation that will be damaging in the midterm elections, and he will be in deep trouble because Netanyahu wants war for his elections, and Donald Trump wants peace for his elections. But he cannot allow the Israelis to go to war, and he cannot stop them from going to war on their own without offering them support. That is going to be the dilemma in the next two months.

#Nima

Yeah. I think the alternative in Israel would be, because we know what is going on with the case of war and the repercussions of the war in Lebanon against Iran for Benjamin Netanyahu himself. You said that in the next six months, maybe we're going to have this war with this occupation, at least because of the situation of Benjamin Netanyahu in Israel. But let's assume, what would be the alternative for the Benjamin Netanyahu administration? It's going to be Naftali Bennett. He said in one of his recent interviews, the next target is Turkey. Turkey is the worst enemy of Israel.

And then they're talking about Pakistan. Pakistan is nuclear-armed, you know, they have the nukes. So it's not even about Israel having nukes. Iran doesn't have, Turkey doesn't have, but Pakistan is different from these two countries because they possess nukes. So looking from the point of view of the Trump administration, whoever runs the government in the United States would be asking, what is the recipe for the Middle East for us? Are we going to continue with these wars? Donald Trump started the war, and are we going to go after Turkey, Pakistan? What is your understanding of that?

#Elijah

First of all, Benjamin Netanyahu has transformed Israeli society from being radical to being extreme radicals. Therefore, today Israeli society wants war. And Benjamin Netanyahu is saying, with war, I am the security man because you are going to be completely defeated and killed if you don't have me as prime minister, because Israel is in danger.

So anything that we will hear from the Israelis from now onward, until October when the election of the Knesset will be over and then the selection of the prime minister, should be taken with a grain of salt because everybody is now in a warmongering mode. Then you have Naftali Bennett saying, "I am the one." When he was elected prime minister, he said, "I have no problem killing Palestinians. I've killed Palestinians before." That was his presentation card to become a prime minister in a warmongering and extremist society like the Israelis today. So the problem in Israel is the Likud party with its extreme nationalist radicals like Ben-Gvir and Smotrich, and supported by the Haredi because he's giving them what they want and not forcing them to enroll in the army. They still have the majority. You need the opposition to have Benny Gantz, Naftali Bennett, Yair Lapid, and Ashkenazi. You won't have them all together. So far, they're not united. If they are not united, they will not be able to defeat Benjamin Netanyahu, and then Benjamin Netanyahu can change, but he needs to be re-elected.

He needs another few years to dilute this corruption case and then get away with it. So he's no longer afraid of going to jail because Ehud Olmert went to jail, and he was a prime minister. So he has seen a prime minister of Israel going to jail for corruption before him, and he went for eight to nine months. So he doesn't want that. He wants to continue being prime minister. And Donald Trump already told us, when he revealed something among the sentences that sometimes Donald Trump reveals, he said, "I don't know, he's going to run for prime ministership again." And this is where the Likud party answered, saying, yes, he's going to run again and he's going to win.

So Donald Trump understands the difficult position Benjamin Netanyahu is in, but he doesn't understand that he is going to be in a difficult position because Netanyahu is going to fight back for his freedom. So whatever the Israelis are saying today cannot really be taken seriously when they say we're going against Pakistan and Turkey, but they are finding a new enemy for the society to think still in a way of security — that we need to be defended, we are at war, we continue to be at war, and we need a strong man to defend us. And maybe Benjamin Netanyahu is the strong man we are looking for.

And he's going to prove it for them by standing against Donald Trump, his friend that he claimed to be his friend. And next, after 60 days, because this is when the Israelis have to withdraw from Lebanon after 60 days, he's not going to pull out. Maybe he will pull out partially and remain in high hills enough to keep the security zone according to his understanding, but he will not completely pull out of Lebanon. So this is where the Israeli society today considers that actually Benjamin Netanyahu is ordered by the Americans and forced to do things that are against the interest of Israel, which falls into the interest of Netanyahu.

#Nima

Yeah. Before wrapping up, Elijah, I think one of the great losses of Israel is the way the GCC countries were influenced by the war — the Israeli-American war against Iran, the war of choice. They went after Iran. They convinced the GCC countries it was going to take something like four

days and that it was going to be beautiful for them, that there would be no threat from the Iranians. I have never seen any Iranian aggression, by the way — military aggression or any sort of aggression — against GCC countries. But they had this sort of delusional thinking that Iran was going to attack them, that the greatest threat in the region is Iran. But right now that calculation is changing, not only because of the Iranian war, but because of what Israel did before the war started against Iran in Doha. You remember?

15 fighter jets from Israel went over Saudi Arabia, flying over Saudi Arabia, getting to Qatar, to Doha, hitting some targets, then getting back without having any sort of difficulties. That was a huge change for GCC countries. Then the war is coming, the outcome of the war, and how the economy went under tremendous pressure because of the war and because of the reality of the Strait of Hormuz. What is the calculation, in your opinion, on the part of GCC countries? I know that when we talk about GCC countries, we are dealing with Saudi Arabia and the UAE — totally different positions. Their understanding is different. But I'm asking about, when I say GCC countries, I particularly am thinking of Qatar and Saudi Arabia, which in my opinion are the most important players in the region.

#Elijah

Now, Qatar has a particular position because when Saudi Arabia imposed sanctions on Qatar, Iran helped Qatar and offered all the facilities to the Qataris. And the Qataris have a good memory. They never forget their friends. This is why they've accepted. And tomorrow, on Friday, they're going to be present with a signature because they are one of the guarantors that accepted to guarantee the United States, a role no other country accepted to play. Now, you have a point, but let me say it differently. Had Iran shown signs of weakness and been seriously damaged, incapable of responding, I have no doubt that the GCC countries would have formed squadrons of air forces and started to bomb Iran every single day in the name of the right to defend themselves and retaliation against the Iranian aggression against the GCC countries.

But because Iran did not raise the white flag, because Iran did not surrender, because Iran kept to the last moment sending missiles and drones on Al-Islam in Kuwait, where the Americans have facilities at the civilian airport, and because Iran also bombed Jordan in the last two days and continued the tit-for-tat, not showing any flexibility, and because the Americans failed to achieve all of their objectives, we're talking about two nations with nuclear power failing against Iran that day. It's 47 years of sanctions. Because of all that, and because Iran has enough missiles to sustain the battle and more battles, this is where the GCC countries today consider that actually the Americans are the source of trouble and not the source of security. The Americans were incapable of defending themselves and defending the Arab countries that are paying them.

Qatar paid for Al-Udeid, the huge American air base in Qatar. It's the Qataris who paid the money. So the Arabs invested a lot because they were told Iran is the enemy, and for 47 years the Iranians did not attack. But this time they did, because they retaliated and because they warned before. So

now I think the GCC countries, the first thing they will do is create a coalition between Turkey, Pakistan, and Iran to make sure that they have a strong alliance. And this is when they will start, not by letting go of the US as a power, but by little by little, slowly but surely, dropping and dethroning the dollar. This is how you start defeating the U.S. So when they start dealing with China, when they start not using the dollar in all their oil transactions and energy, this is how they can get rid of the U. S. that proved their priority is Israel, but not their Gulf allies with whom they did not consult.

#Nima

Yeah. Thank you so much, Elijah, for being with us today. Great pleasure to have you on and to know your opinion, your understanding of the region, which I found so interesting, and I agree with most of the points that you've made during this talk. And I think, you know, your understanding is so deep, and we're going to continue these talks. Thank you so much.

#Elijah

Thank you, Nima, for having me. It's a pleasure.