

# Matthew Hoh: "CHANGE COURSE OR ELSE!" – Trump to Israel

Follow me: Substack: [https://substack.com/@dialogueworks?](https://substack.com/@dialogueworks?utm_campaign=profile&utm_medium=profile-page)

utm\_campaign=profile&utm\_medium=profile-page X (Twitter): [https://x.com/Dialogue\\_NRA](https://x.com/Dialogue_NRA)

Patreon: [https://patreon.com/Dialogueworks?](https://patreon.com/Dialogueworks?utm_medium=unknown&utm_source=join_link&utm_campaign=creatorshare_creator&utm_content=)

utm\_medium=unknown&utm\_source=join\_link&utm\_campaign=creatorshare\_creator&utm\_content=

## #Nima

Hi, everybody. Today's Wednesday, June 17, 2026. And our dear friend Matthew Hoh is here with us. Welcome back, Matt.

## #Matthew

Hi, Nima. Good to see you.

## #Nima

Matt, I want to play a clip from CNN because it seems they got the document, the MOU, from diplomats in Europe. We had an interview yesterday on CNN in which the Prime Minister of Canada said he saw the document. It seems to be two pages. It's not that much. It's so vague and nobody... But here is what was reported on CNN. CNN, you know, they didn't mention all the points, but here is what was reported.

## #Speaker 03

And has obtained a copy of it. We've gotten a copy from a U.S. official. We've gotten a version of it from a diplomat who has seen copies of it circulating here at the G7 summit, and two additional sources. So we have four sources from which we have obtained the text of this document. In some ways, it does reflect how American officials have been characterizing it over the last several days. It is vague in a lot of its terms, particularly when it comes to Iran's nuclear program. It lays out in broad terms how the Strait of Hormuz will be reopened, how the U.S. will lift its blockade on Iranian ports, and it does spell out what financial relief Iran can expect as part of this deal if it meets its commitments.

And so it does specify, for example, that Iran will be able to gain access to a \$300 billion development fund. American officials have been explicit that the U.S. will not provide the funding for that, but that \$300 billion figure is included in this document. It also specifies that Iran will be able

to start exporting oil and that the U.S. will lift some of the, or it will issue waivers for some of the sanctions immediately upon the signing of this memorandum of understanding. And so those are some of what is included in the document. It's 14 points long. And I do want to pull out one of those 14 points specifically as it relates to Iran's nuclear program, because I think this is important.

And this, at the end of the day, is one of the reasons that the president has said he started the war in the first place — to eliminate Iran's ability to obtain a nuclear weapon. And this is what the Memorandum of Understanding says on this point. It's point number eight. It says the Islamic Republic of Iran reiterates that it will never produce nuclear weapons. The Islamic Republic of Iran and the United States have agreed that the fate of enriched material and the fate of all other mutually agreed nuclear-related issues, including Iran's nuclear needs, will be adequately addressed in a final agreement.

The final agreement will confirm the provisions of this article. And so it is what we expected. It's punting the really thorny issues about enrichment and the fate of Iran's nuclear stockpile to these future technical negotiations. The memo specifies that those will last 60 days, but that they could also be extended. You know, we have been talking to American officials about the language in this document. In a lot of ways, they have been downplaying it. They have suggested that this is essentially a political document meant to create the conditions to get Iran to the table for these much more technical negotiations.

## **#Nima**

Yeah. Here is what he said. I think basically he mentioned the Strait of Hormuz, the blockade, Iran and frozen assets, some sanctions, he said. He mentioned that \$300 billion of reconstruction is not going to be paid by the United States, and then who's going to pay that? It's going to be the GCC countries. And this is the whole thing. And with the case of the nuclear program, he mentioned, he just read the whole sentence, the whole part of that point. That point particularly is related to the Iranian nuclear program. The only point that he read was that one related to the Iranian nuclear program.

The other ones just mentioned what was the sense or what was the outcome or what was his understanding of those points. So, Matt, looking at the situation, we had J.D. Vance in the last two or three days give various interviews. The guy is serious, in my opinion, about being the next president of the United States or the candidate for the Republican Party in 2028. You see the way that he's coming out and putting everything. Today, Donald Trump said, if MOU fails, we have to put the blame on J.D. Vance. He was joking, by the way. But this is the issue. What do you make of it?

## **#Matthew**

Well, you know, if you want to start with American domestic politics and with J.D. Vance, I think this is going to be the GOP split. This is going to be the battle for the Republican presidential nomination.

We're at 2028. And I think that, you know, if you watched that press conference today, I mean, you just saw Marco Rubio standing behind Donald Trump, glowering, just unhappy to be there. Rubio—it's not like Rubio walks around with a smile all the time—but I just felt that he had a look on his face where he just didn't want to be there. And so I think this is what the split's going to be.

I mean, you hear Vance and Rubio are the two top contenders to replace Trump, Donald Trump, in 2028. And I think you're going to have this split between an America First campaign by J.D. Vance, where J.D. Vance is backing this agreement, this deal. He is essentially supporting Donald Trump's legacy. And you're going to have Marco Rubio, who I think will leave the administration early. Maybe he'll even leave after the elections. It's not unusual for senior cabinet officials, senior officials, to leave halfway through a presidential term, particularly if it's someone who's looking to do other things.

But you could also have Marco Rubio positioning himself for the neoconservative, Zionist, imperialist support. And while that doesn't show up well in the polls, it certainly shows up in terms of the money and the support from corporate media interests as well as D.C. institutions. And I think that might be the battle you have for the nomination for the president, for the GOP's candidate in 2028. You know, I think, hearing Donald Trump more these last couple of days, he is building his legacy around this deal. Whether or not it's a legacy based in facts or reality doesn't matter. He's committed to this narrative that he stopped Iran from getting a nuclear weapon.

He's the only American president to stand up to the Iranians. And if the Israelis keep pushing them, I think Donald Trump might—not saying he will—but he might even add to his repertoire this idea that "I am the only American president to stand up to the Israelis." You know, and again, how much is real, how much is performative, how much is posturing, how much is lies—you know, it's Donald Trump. So a heavy dose of all of that, not so much of a dose of truth, though, I guess. So I think that's what you're seeing here. You're seeing this setup for 2028, where this will be what divides the Republicans over who's going to get their nomination.

And you're also, too, domestically, for American politics, you're seeing the Democrats continue to come out against this deal. They still frame it as if they weren't supportive of the war, but they criticize the president for capitulating. They criticize the president for emboldening Iran, for rewarding Iran. And so you're going to see, I think, in these midterm elections that come up this fall in the United States, for all of the House of Representatives and one-third of the U.S. Senate, you're going to see, I think, the Israel lobby protest, pull money from Trump-backed candidates, from America First candidates—so Republican candidates who are supporting Donald Trump's deal here—and that money is going to go to pro-Israel Democrats. And I think, you know, that's something we'll see. The Israel lobby has done that for decades, so why should it be any different? And then, of course, just this idea that Donald Trump—this is going to be his legacy.

And so I think whereas, you know, I was reluctant to say that there would be a deal—I said there wouldn't be a deal—and still, I'm not certain, Nima, if we're going to see an actual finalized

settlement here, if all these 14 points will transition into a formal deal. But I think that's the president's intention. Listening to him today, he was asked if he would sign the deal, if he would sign the MOU rather than J.D. Vance at the end of this week, and he said no, it wouldn't be appropriate, which, you know, to me sounds like he wants to sign—the bigger part of it—he wants to sign the final deal, the final negotiation.

And, you know, I think that's what he needs, you know, for his legacy again. But also, too, maybe some of that gut instinct of his that he sometimes has shown about these wars is coming through. Certainly didn't help in this sense, hasn't helped at all for the Lebanese, for the Palestinians. But maybe this self-interest of his is leading him to a position where he realizes that this pathway of continued American imperialism in the Middle East is only going to lead to ruin.

## **#Nima**

I think comparing Rubio to J.D. Vance, which is so important, as you've just done, and to my understanding, Donald Trump prefers J.D. Vance over Rubio because Rubio was not part of his administration. He was somehow part of the Adelson family's agenda in the Trump administration. Basically, they pushed him into the Trump administration by the sort of leverage they had on Donald Trump. But J.D. Vance, on the other hand, had the support from MAGA. He had the support from the base, those people who voted for Donald Trump. And looking at what he's doing right now, he's going to Megyn Kelly.

And Megyn Kelly is just, you know, how she has changed her mindset toward the war in the Middle East. So she's totally against what's going on in the Middle East and was criticizing Israel. And so J. D. Vance somehow feels he needs to bring all these people together. He said that on Megyn Kelly's show. Mark Levin, from Mark Levin to Tucker Carlson, all of them voted for Donald Trump to be the president. So I want to bring all of them together. But I don't see that happening with the MOU that they're talking about. These people are not going to be satisfied with the Trump administration. Like Mark Levin, he's asking, putting out, "MOU, I want to see what's going on." Right.

## **#Matthew**

Oh, they're very upset. Both Republicans in Congress, again, not the America First types, of which there are really only a few, but certainly the neoconservative types. I mean, I'm sure paramedics had to rush to Lindsey Graham's apartment when he read this. But certainly, you know, also, too, you heard Donald Trump today speaking about—maybe it was yesterday—he was asked about his friends who have been giving him advice on this and who are really angry and upset with him over this. And they are referring, I think, to that gang at Fox News—so Mark Levin and Jack Keane and Hugh Hewitt, Sean Hannity, and others. And Donald Trump called them stupid. He said, to paraphrase, that they're not nice people and that they weren't friends of his any longer. So, you know, Donald Trump has got two and a half years left in his presidency.

Again, the thing that motivates him is his self-interest. And so, is he now trying to arrange the remainder of his presidency to try and protect his legacy, to try and set up some narrative, right, that supports his vision of himself? And maybe that means jettisoning all those who put him into these positions that were, uh, ruinous and nearly catastrophic. Uh, you can also tell, I mean, Donald Trump said something else that is really important. There's a lot of this story about how Donald Trump signed this MOU because Iran was about to attack Israel, and so he had to do it in order to defend Israel, which, interestingly, is the same excuse that was used by Marco Rubio and others back in the beginning of all this when we had to attack Iran because Iran was about to attack Israel.

And now we have to end the war because Iran is about to attack Israel. But that just didn't sound right to me for a number of reasons. And the bigger thing was, of course, the fact that Iran had closed the Strait of Hormuz for about four days. The United States had hit its lowest level in its strategic petroleum reserves ever. And certainly all the indicators we have—all the analysts, the CEO of ExxonMobil, and others—are saying, hey, look, we are approaching a cliff in early July, where all our oil inventories around the world are depleted. Government stocks, commercial stocks—they will be gone.

You'll be at tank bottom. And so, that's what I believed was the impetus for this. You know, it goes in line with what we've talked about. The greatest Iranian weapon has not been their military; it's been their economic weapons. It's been their economic warfare. And so the president, I think, confirmed this today when he was asked about this decision-making process. And he said, look, in four weeks we were going to be out of our reserves, right? And he talked about Herbert Hoover and becoming a president who would lead the world into a depression and things like that.

But I think that demonstrates clearly how effective the Iranians were in their economic warfare and in their political understanding and their calculus, that they put together a strategy to achieve their objectives that was very, very—it was masterful. I mean, I should say, you know, Nima, I wanted to ask you this. You have, I don't know how many folks you have come on every week. You have a dozen or more people every week on your program. All of us going into this war were critical of the United States, didn't think this war was going to go well for the United States, believed it would be a defeat for the United States.

But did anybody in this, you know, outfit that you manage here, all this cast of characters that you have come through, which I'm really grateful to be a part of—was anyone saying it would be this big of a defeat? Was anyone saying that the United States would be forced to make concessions like we're seeing? And again, it hasn't been signed yet. Donald Trump today said, "If I don't like it, I just won't do it." You know what I mean? So there's all that. And we're still dealing with Donald Trump. But did anyone predict, for lack of a better word, that it would be this?

**#Nima**

The only one who predicted, who said over and over, "It's going to be huge. It's going to be huge." I can put all those videos together. Before the war started, it was Miranda, okay? From Iran.

## **#Matthew**

Really?

## **#Nima**

He said that because he said, I can put all the videos together, more than 10, 12 times. He said, it's going to be huge. It's going to be, believe me, it doesn't matter if the United States is self-sufficient in oil and gas and whatever. But nobody actually—I didn't believe it that much. I didn't think it was going to be that influential, because it's not just about oil and gas. It's about everything, basically.

## **#Matthew**

Right. Yeah. Yeah. I mean, I thought it was just going to turn into essentially, you know, a Musavandeh, where the Americans were going to let the Iranians control the Straits of Hormuz. The Iranians would let ships go through. The American blockade would be performative, and everyone would say that they were winning. But that would allow things to get back on track, and we wouldn't head into, you know, this massive economic crisis, catastrophe. But I didn't have any thoughts, though, Nima, that there would be a deal. I really didn't think that the Americans would ever make one of these concessions, let alone all of these. But this really makes me think, what is going on in Donald Trump's head? What does he envision?

What does he want to see for the last two and a half years? And it opens up other possibilities. And how committed is Donald Trump to reforming the American empire? I mean, we've talked about this a lot over the last year and a half or so, this idea of Donald Trump and his administration repurposing or rebuilding or reformatting or whatever the American empire to make it more effective in the multipolar world. And certainly we've seen Donald Trump's willingness to get out of things he doesn't like, get out of things that don't bring him a good enough return on investment, whether that be Ukraine or NATO in general. Right. But this refocusing on the Western Hemisphere—how much of this then fits into that?

I think the thing that is the biggest question to me is this aspect of this MOU that states that the United States will pull its troops from the region. Now, what does that mean? I mean, what does the region mean? I mean, does it mean that, you know, they're just not going to have forces and ships in the Gulf of Oman and the Arabian Sea and the Persian Gulf? But what about all the bases in Kuwait and in Qatar and in Bahrain? I mean, that's certainly in the region, and that's contiguous. That's just across the Gulf from them. I mean, so what does that paragraph mean? And is there something here? And now this is real speculation, but is there something here?

## **#Nima**

The text is so vague, by the way. Yeah, it is.

## **#Matthew**

Yes, but what could it mean, though? I mean, why would they not have said, like, the United States will pull back its offensive forces, you know, or something to make it clear? We're talking about the destroyers, you know, and the aircraft carrier and the, you know—what does it all mean? Does it mean the fighter squadrons that were deployed from the United States? Or does it mean all the fighter squadrons, including the ones that are permanently based in Jordan—or not permanently, they rotate through Jordan—but they are based normally in Jordan and Saudi Arabia and Qatar and whatnot. You know, but it just makes me think that maybe Donald Trump actually does have a bigger vision here, you know, than we were willing to give him any credit for. We'll see. At the same time, too, we're dealing with the Americans here in this Trump administration. And so, you know, you can't trust them any farther than you can throw them.

## **#Nima**

I think if we were to mention the factors, the most important factors in the system of decision when it comes to the Trump administration and their decisions, we have to understand what are the main factors, what are the most important factors. You've mentioned one of them, which is the economy, which is the case of oil, and how the oil reserves in the United States were used to balance the market during the war and the aftermath of it, you know, during the war and then the ceasefire. And I think the other point is how the Republican Party is getting to the midterm election.

You mentioned how the Zionists would play both sides, you know, right now going after or supporting Democrats instead of Republicans. Right. Not only that, we have two more years of Trump's presidency, and the last year would be basically the presidential year. Everybody's going to come out and make speeches talking about the next election. So they have one more year. And what would be the policy on the part of the—are they going to lose the midterm election? Are they going to lose—are they going to—is he going to face some sort of impeachment in the United States? Because Democrats are so serious, I think, about that.

## **#Speaker 03**

Yeah.

## **#Matthew**

I mean, if you look at Democratic leadership, all they do is talk about Donald Trump. I went through Senator Adam Schiff's timeline today—you know, senior senator from California, formerly chairman

of the House Intelligence Committee. You know, a big name, a big deal within the Democratic Party. You go through his X timeline, and it's just one post after another about Trump. I mean, there's nothing else on there. There's no commentary on anything else by this important American senator other than Trump. And I think that's how the Democrats will shape not just their election in 2026, not just the election in 2028, but if they do take the House or the Senate—which I don't think is possible—the entire thing will be about Donald Trump.

It'll just be a spectacle. I think the issue, though, is that it's not so clear that Democrats are going to do that. You've seen the poll numbers and support for the Democrats just dropping. Back in February, the Democrats in a generic ballot were up seven points over the Republicans. Right. February before this stupid, ruinous, counterproductive, lost war. Now, even with this war, the Democrats are only two points above the Republicans. Right. I mean, so if there's any political party in the history of the world capable of not getting victory when they should get victory, it's the Democratic Party.

They essentially have done nothing other than support their corporate donors, shut down any type of dissent within the party, prop up their oldest, most unpopular officials, right? I mean, so they've done nothing to address the needs of the American people when the economy clearly is getting worse, when the President of the United States is sending secret, masked secret police into our communities to terrorize the American people, when you have the Epstein files, and then you have these wars. And this war that the United States just lost, a war that never needed to happen. Clearly, the United States suffers a defeat here. Thousands and thousands of people are dead. And the Democrats are losing points to the Republicans.

It's basically a statistical dead heat now between the Democrats and Republicans for November. And how is that possible? But you're right about the fact that in the United States, once these midterms are over, the presidential race starts pretty much right away. So once the elections are over, by Thanksgiving, by the end of November, you already have candidates coming out. Not many, but a few will declare before then. And, of course, you will have the speculation. Every hour-long speculation. Every hour of programming on the cable news networks will almost always include, here are the top Republican and Democratic candidates, you know, some type of poll or some type of wager, or this is what Polymarket is betting on.

You know, you will see that continually starting almost immediately after the November election. So you're right. I mean, Donald Trump has the rest of this year before the attention is no longer on him but is focused on who his replacement is going to be. And so he will. And if the Democrats do win, you know, Hakeem Jeffries, who's the presumptive Speaker of the House for the Democrats, has said that the Democrats won't prioritize impeachment. But I find that hard to believe. I don't know what else they're going to prioritize. They're certainly not going to prioritize helping families in this country, and they certainly won't prioritize doing something about, you name it. You know, if they could just do one thing.

## **#Nima**

Yeah. Yeah, Matt, you mentioned the Epstein file. Recently, there was an interview with, you know, that guy, the Israeli, the former Israeli intelligence officer, Uri Ben-Menashe. He was, again, in his recent interview, he said maybe the last point, the last attack on the part of the Netanyahu administration would be releasing those files, those... files that nobody has access to, nobody knows about those documents, the last part of the documents being released by the Israelis to sabotage everything. Because so far they've done everything, in my opinion, with the case of Lebanon.

They tried to attack. They tried right before, just moments, hours before the announcement that they were going to sign the MOU. We had the Israeli attack on the southern part of Beirut in Dahia. So here he comes out and says, the last attack is going to be the Epstein file. Do you think if they do that, they release the Epstein file, and there is a lot—we know that many of these people in the administration were involved in those documents—so is that going to backfire on Israel, or is that going to influence Donald Trump's position? How do you see that?

## **#Matthew**

I don't think—at this point, I don't think it would influence Donald Trump. I think he would just say it's fake news. His supporters won't believe it. And I think maybe the calculation would be you get more play at this point with the American public for standing up to Israel than you will for getting, you know, things revealed about you in the Epstein files, which most Americans believe about you already. Yeah. I think the Israelis also have a heck of a lot of blackmail on their own. I think it was Joe Kent last week who was talking about how the Israelis spy on everything, including on local law enforcement. And the reason why they do that is because they want to pick up blackmail wherever they can.

You know, if some congressman's or some state legislator's husband or wife or whoever gets arrested for drunk driving, the Israelis want to know that because they can use that down the line, you know, as well as whatever else they can get by spying however they can. And so I think, yeah, this idea that the last weapon to be used would be the Epstein files, I think that's, you know, it's larger than that. It's the mass of Israeli compromise. He used the Cold War term, you know, blackmail that would be utilized here. But I think we're just at the beginning of seeing the Israel lobby get put into motion to oppose this deal. You know, the talking points are probably coming out every hour to congressional offices as well as to producers at the cable news networks.

I'm waiting to see what the New York Times and Washington Post and Wall Street Journal editorial boards are going to say about all this. I'm pretty sure you and I could probably write that ahead of time for them. You know, we know what they're going to say. And so, you know, we saw it already happen two days ago—when was it? Axios had this story that John Ratcliffe, the Director of Central Intelligence, went rushing to the White House. Two days ago, yeah. You know, "Mr. President, we've got this intelligence here. It says that the Iranians are conspiring to renege on the agreement, to

violate the agreement as soon as we sign it." You know, and where do you think that intelligence came from?

You know, so you're already seeing, and Ratcliffe, of course, if people aren't familiar, was well understood to be a tool of the Zionists. I mean, this reporting has been done on this. The Grayzone has published stories about Ratcliffe. But, you know, particularly a year or so ago, The Grayzone published the hot mic capture of the—I'm blanking on his name—but the guy who runs AIPAC bragging about how AIPAC essentially had top Trump national security officials in their pocket. And the three he rattled off were Marco Rubio, Mike Waltz, the UN ambassador, and of course, John Ratcliffe. And Ratcliffe was known to have been a favorite of the Israel lobby when he was in Congress.

And that's why he got the Director of National Intelligence job in the first Trump administration and why he's here as the Director of Central Intelligence. It's the reason why he replaced Tulsi Gabbard in the White House meetings with Donald Trump. But now we'll have to see. I mean, this comment today from Donald Trump about how these people are no longer friends of mine, about how he's so willing to seemingly take on Benjamin. Look, I mean, we had him a week or two ago put out that Truth Social message that said, you know, if the Israelis don't get in line, I'm going to cut them off. You know, I'm paraphrasing him.

But you never imagine George W. Bush or Barack Obama or President Joe Biden ever saying anything like that, even when relations were, quote, at their worst, unquote, with Biden and Netanyahu, when Biden temporarily suspended one shipment of bombs. That suspension was all dressed up in language that explained that the suspension was really about ensuring that the guidelines are being followed, all the T's are crossed, I's are dotted. I mean, they apologized it away. And at the end of every paragraph from the Biden administration was always this expression of the ironclad relationship between the United States and Israel. I mean, it's this idea that an American president would threaten Israel with cutting them off in public? I mean, this is a big deal.

And again, I don't put a lot of hope in that. I don't think it's likely. But is it possible? Yeah. Is it slim, the possibility? Sure. But the idea that it actually exists is really something that is quite remarkable. And you're going to see now the response from Israel, from their friends in the United States, from Zionists in the United States, Pastor Hagee and his Christian Zionists, from the Israel lobby, from the corporate media. All these folks were so invested in the understanding of an Israel-first policy for the United States, whether it's because we've got a legalized system of bribery here in this country, or because they actually do believe that an Israel-first policy is the best thing for the United States.

There are many people who do feel that way. And so we're going to see them in the next several months do everything they can to sabotage this deal or at least give Trump a very difficult political time, including having his candidates not win election. And, of course, we'll see what that sets up for 2028. And then, you know, that's what's happening here in the U.S. What is Israel itself going to do about it? And we'll have to—they've already said, we're not pulling out of Lebanon. You see the

Israelis actually starting to tighten down and make things worse for the Palestinians—hard to believe, but yes, they're actually punishing the Palestinians for this MOU, right? Which is totally in line with how the Israelis operate.

## **#Nima**

Matt, after that report on Axios about Ratcliffe and CIA reports on, you know, the Iranian sort of mindset or the Iranian sort of argument about the Iranian nuclear program—because they said that that report said Iran told the Trump administration something behind the scenes, but the communication among themselves is different, you know, Iran is not honest—that report on Axios was telling us that. But later on, we had another report, you know, a report on Israel Hayom, saying that Donald Trump is seriously considering, you know, firing Ratcliffe and Pete Hegseth. And he's even thinking of Marco Rubio, those people who were against him, who were against the agreement between the United States and Iran.

## **#Matthew**

Why wouldn't he? You know, I mean, the only reason he wouldn't be would be his senility. But at this point, again, with two and a half years left, the fact that he followed their advice on this and it was a spectacular disaster—he has to cut this deal with Iran. I mean, I hear these people on the news, Nima, asking, what does the United States get out of this deal? I can tell you what the United States gets out of this deal: it gets out of this war. That's what it gets out of the deal. That's the only thing you get when you're losing a war—you get out of it. That's what you get.

You know, people were shocked in 2021 with how it happened in Afghanistan. Yep, that's what losing a war looks like. This is what losing a war looks like as well. The best you get is you get out of it. That's it. You get nothing else. You know what I mean? So the people who are scratching their heads being like, oh, it's curious, there's no concessions from the Iranians—give me a break. You know, I mean, he should, absolutely. I mean, of course, we were, you know, you and I were pissing and moaning about these guys when they got selected to be in their positions, so we were never boosters of theirs.

But, you know, even try and take an objective standpoint here and be like, they should—someone, you know—it would be a shock to see any president suffer a defeat like this and somebody not take, uh, and somebody not pay a price for it. It just doesn't happen. When you have a failure, you have to, uh, you have to give a body, you've got to offer a head. Now, the idea of Donald Trump clearing house—again, I'll go back to what I heard him say earlier about how these guys aren't friends of mine anymore, and I think he's referring to the pundits and stuff who are really upset with him or who pushed him a lot on this. You know, certainly, you know, the loss of a Rubio, the loss of a Hegseth, the loss of Radcliffe—what does that do for the United States? What does that do for Trump's administration?

It's interesting. We saw this report about the Israelis spying on Pentagon leadership. They weren't spying on Hegseth. Who were they spying on? They were spying on Elbridge Colby and Mike Dempsey. Who are they? Well, they're guys who were saying before they came into this administration that the United States needs to restrain itself. It needs to reduce its presence in the Middle East. I don't know if they were ever so bold as to say the United States needs to reevaluate its position with Israel, but certainly that was the subtext there. So those are the guys that Israel was spying on. They weren't spying on Pete Hegseth, you know? Uh, so, um, yeah, I mean, certainly, if for just normal, basic political reasons, somebody's head has to be offered here.

But if Donald Trump is serious about ensuring his legacy, then he needs to get rid of, you know, that clique there, you know, he needs to get rid of these neoconservatives, you know. And what does that then offer him in terms of moving forward and trying to—he does seem really enamored with this idea of being a president who brings about peace. Certainly, I mean, there's this idea of getting rid of neoconservatives and bringing in America Firsters. Would that then allow him to pursue more efforts like that, whatever they would be in his crazy, warped mind or imagination? But, you know, here we are trying to get inside Donald Trump's head. And of course, that's right, that's got to be a fool's errand.

## **#Nima**

Matt, his attitude, his sort of argument, or the way that he's talking about Israel is changing somehow. He attacked Benjamin Netanyahu—everybody hates you and everybody hates Israel. If it wasn't because of me, nobody would—it's all about the way that Donald Trump talks about Israel, as though without Donald Trump, Israel wouldn't exist, the way that he's talking about it these days. But he reiterated the same sort of argument during his visit to Europe at the G7. He was again and again saying, "Without me, you could have never seen Israel survive," all of these sorts of arguments. But he said something important—he said, "I want Israel to back down. I want Syria to get in." What does that mean to you?

## **#Matthew**

I think that means he's been listening as well to the Qataris and the Saudis. I think Al-Thani and MBS are calling him. Certainly, he probably has others within his administration, maybe J.D. Vance, who are offering this solution of, hey, let the Arabs take care of the Arabs. This is what was always done before. You know, I mean, that would be a very typical American way of viewing this problem, right? We should not be involved directly. Let these people take care of each other. You know, certainly they believe Sharaa, you know, Al-Julani, formerly Jabhat al-Nusra, is someone that they can work with. They certainly, you know, want to also provide some options for Israel here, too—something that gives them a sense that, OK, Hezbollah is going to be too busy fighting Al-Qaeda to worry about Israel. Uh, and now here you are once again, the United States and Israel on the side of Al-Qaeda.

## **#Nima**

Right.

## **#Matthew**

I mean, so, um, but I think it's something that shouldn't be dismissed. I know, I know a lot of people wave their hands at it. I don't know if it means a full-scale, uh, you know, Syrian invasion, uh, as Assad did, uh, you know, 40 years ago or whenever it was. Uh, but, uh, I think there certainly is this idea that we can have the Syrians try and block the Lebanese border, and that will cut down on arms shipments going from Iran to Hezbollah. Uh, you know, and that's the way it will be spun. Um, you know, so, but I don't think it's anything that should be dismissed. And I think what we saw over this last year with Sharaa and the embrace by the Americans is that he is their agent.

He is their guy. I mean, I'm sure the Saudis and the Qataris and, of course, the Turks—God, I can't believe I'm not referencing the Turks—would have something to say about this. But, you know, I just keep going back to David Petraeus speaking to Sharaa back in September, and Petraeus saying to him, "Your success is our success." Right? You know, and Petraeus representing the institution of the American national security establishment, representing, you know, the deep state, if you will. Right? Representing, you know, essentially the American empire saying that.

And so, yeah, it also does signal to the Israelis that it shows the Americans have options here. Like, we don't need you to do this. We could have other people who could, you know, act as our proxy, act as our vassal in order to enforce our interests here. So, I mean, this is... You know, what it's going to look like a year from now, you know, is a really good question, is a really good question. I think you've got parties involved who are going to do their best to make sure this MOU doesn't succeed. Always a possibility that Donald Trump changes his mind, that we go back to war after the elections. Very, very, you know, those are all really good possibilities.

But it's also the possibility that, you know, rather than seeing the United States establish itself more firmly within Israel, which I think a lot of our assessments were a month or two ago—I certainly know mine was—that, okay, when this is over, the United States will probably have to pull back out of some of these Gulf Arab states. But even whether that happens or not, we're going to see a commitment of American troops into Israel that we've never seen before. So whereas before this war started, you essentially had, I think, two American bases in Israel. Both of them are small. They're both basically devoted to managing missile defense there.

But the idea being that I think going forward we would have seen, you know, F-35 squadrons or F-22 squadrons constantly rotating in and out of Israel and a larger American military presence there full time. But now, you know, I'm not so certain about that. Right. You know, and I think the White House is communicating that it's not so certain about that. And again, if we go back to the national security strategy from last fall, the idea of the United States pulling out of the Middle East is

something that was in that strategy. It's something that people like Vance or some of the deputies there at the State Department and others have advocated for. Um, we'll see.

I mean, I think the biggest shock to me, Nima, in this Axios story about Ratcliffe rushing to the White House with this intelligence that says the Iranians can't be trusted or whatever, and in a delineation of who was supporting the deal, who wasn't supporting the deal within the White House, was the fact that it had Kushner and Witkoff as supporting the deal. And, you know, those two are, you know, very, very—they're Zionists, and they've been viewed as agents of Israel. I mean, you had, I think it's the Financial Times quoting Arab diplomats saying, essentially, we viewed Kushner and Witkoff as nothing more than mouthpieces for Tel Aviv. And the fact that Axios is saying, hey, look, Kushner and Witkoff are supporting this deal when every other Zionist is against it.

Well, that means, you know, now we got to take a step back and say, who exactly are Jared Kushner and Steve Witkoff? It's the president's son-in-law and his best buddy, business partner. Okay, what are their true interests here? What do they want to see succeed? And are they more tied to Donald Trump's legacy than they are to the state of Israel? And I think probably for both of them, yes. I mean, at one point, maybe there wasn't daylight between it, or it wasn't that much of a concern, but now I think there may be. And so that was very interesting to me, to see this report that Witkoff and Kushner were so supportive of the deal, when again, every other Zionist has not been supportive of the deal.

## **#Nima**

Yeah. Matt, before, you know, wrapping up, shifting the gear a little bit to what's going on in Ukraine, we had the G7 summit in which participants all agreed that Russia had no intention to make peace. It was mentioned. And they agreed to refocus on applying tensions on Russia. This is, you know, after we're getting close to five years—or four and a half, you know, getting to five years—of war in Ukraine. And still, it seems to me like we were in the second or even the first year of the war, the way they're talking about Ukraine.

## **#Matthew**

Right.

## **#Nima**

And Zelensky is there as though nothing is happening. And the guy comes in and everybody's greeting him and saying, yeah, you're a good guy, big guy, you're doing your best. He's bragging about producing more drones.

## **#Matthew**

Meanwhile, it's still off the charts.

## **#Nima**

Where is the Trump administration concerning Ukraine?

## **#Matthew**

That's a good question. That's a good question. The headline from Euronews a couple of days ago was that the Europeans were looking forward to the Americans becoming more involved with Ukraine again. What I read wasn't very convincing, but the idea, I think, for the Europeans and Ukrainians is that there's light at the end of the tunnel — that 2028 is going to come, January 29 is going to come, and there'll be a new American president. There's a possibility of the Democrats taking control of the House or the Senate. Again, we could say earlier, Democrats are doing their best not to do that. But, you know, this idea that, you know, could you see aid starting again from the United States to Ukraine?

You've got a couple of bills in Congress right now trying to do just that. In the House of Representatives, a discharge petition was signed. A discharge petition is what members of the House of Representatives can do to bring a bill to be voted upon that the Speaker of the House doesn't want voted upon. So this is what Ro Khanna and Thomas Massie did back in the winter to get the Epstein files released. And so in this case, though, it was about getting, I think it was only about \$1.7 or \$2 billion. It wasn't very much, but I know there's another package for \$17 billion that's being talked about. You know, I mean, so I think the Europeans and the Ukrainians are saying, look, we can see where the Americans will come back in. We can see where we'll start to get.

We just need to hang on through November, and then we'll get a Democrat, you know, and then maybe some of the thoughts are that Donald Trump will be upset with Russia because Russia hasn't acquiesced and hasn't gone along with his peace plans and et cetera, et cetera, and that he will support Ukraine because he's fed up and he's tired of the Russians. You know, that... you know, I think that's a strategy of hope. It's a complete... or just completely ignores the escalation that has been continually, incrementally growing in this war. The rhetoric is dangerous. We see now, feels like every week, another drone or missile or unmanned boat or something ends up in somebody's airspace or on their land or blowing up in one of their ports.

I mean, the dangers here, combined again with the rhetoric, particularly coming out of, say, the Baltic countries, is incredibly dangerous. And on the other side, you have a Russian president whose pressure on all this is from those who feel this war should have been won already. That's the greatest political pressure on Vladimir Putin — from a political class, a media class, as well as the public who are saying, why are we still fighting this war? You know, I guess the refrain is, look, it only took us four years to beat the Nazis, and here we are now with the Ukrainians. We can't — what's going on here? So, you know, and then, of course, the Ukrainian strategy with their drone

campaign — I mean, it's still early, but it seems to me to be somewhat effective, how real the damage is to Russia's refineries, to their export facilities, to their terminals, et cetera. But, you know, you continue that day in, day out, and it's going to begin to wear. And then you have the issues of Russia running a wartime economy. This is something that was always bound to happen. The Russians did incredible things in terms of dealing with the sanctions, in terms of finding new markets, in terms of building internally, developing their own internal alternatives to what they couldn't get because they've been blockaded. I mean, all these different ways the Russians, industrially and economically, have been so successful. Well, you're also running a wartime economy.

And regardless of whether you're the good guy or the bad guy, wartime economies do certain things, such as eventually start sucking away services to your people, investments in your own communities, investments in your country. I mean, wartime economies are, you know, stressful and bring about a host of issues that make managing expectations very difficult. And so when you start to have those stresses combined with this question of why haven't we won yet, then what's the logical answer to that? Okay, then let's finish the war off. Okay, how are we going to finish the war off? Well, we got to hit them harder, right? And so that's the thing I think that Vladimir Putin is resisting. Right.

I mean, I think Vladimir Putin is trying not to get into this war with NATO that this war was supposedly meant to prevent. Right. I mean, so, yeah. I think we're in a dangerous place when it comes to Ukraine. Again, like I said, I think the Europeans have this strategy of hope, where they can kind of see some light towards the end of the year, even though it's going to be two and a half years before there's a new American president. I think the Europeans are able to say to themselves that we can do it, we can make it through. The Ukrainians just have to bleed out for two and a half more years, and then the Americans will be back in. And so I think that's what you're dealing with here.

## **#Nima**

Yeah. Yeah. Quite complicated in Ukraine.

## **#Matthew**

Yeah. Yeah. I mean, it's just, and then we have the issues too with this continuing evolution of drone warfare, which is, you know, really scary stuff. Ukrainians a couple of weeks ago said they used autonomous drones. A couple of years ago, they said they only used them one time. I don't believe that. But this idea that we're heading into a world where you have robotic warfare, where the robots essentially fight on their own, is a really dark, dark place to be heading into. And this idea that neither side can knock the other side out, so it's a question not about trying to weaken the will of the other side, of your adversary or enemy, but of propping up the will of your country.

So then you start trying to do more spectacular attacks. You try and do more attacks that are going to be noticed, and then have headlines to them, that there will be really large fireballs that are going to look really good when they're shown on the BBC or on CNN. You know, I said the Ukrainians send more long-range drones into Russia, trying to score those propaganda points. At the same time, too, the Russians are responding in kind because they've got to show their people that we're giving it to them as good as what we're getting. You know, I mean, so where does that all lead to?

Essentially, we're in a war of the cities, similar to what occurred in the 1980s with the Iran-Iraq war, where the two sides try and just punish each other by attacking their population centers. We've not gotten to that point in the Ukraine war. Certainly not. You know, neither side is targeting civilians the way that the Israelis or the Americans target civilians. But it's getting there. I mean, certainly the response from Russia after those 24 or 25, however many students were killed in that college dorm—I mean, more of those things are going to continue to happen. And so they're going to have to respond. And here we are on this escalation ladder.

### **#Speaker 03**

Yeah.

### **#Matthew**

Where does it lead?

### **#Nima**

Yeah, exactly. Thank you so much, Matt, for being with us today. Great pleasure, as always.

### **#Matthew**

Thank you, Nima.