

Robert Barnes: Iran Drones Attack Ship WITHOUT State Approval!

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#Nima

Trying to hit the tankers or ships that they were trying to use, you know, the routes—different routes from the ones that Iran has defined for the region, for the Strait of Hormuz. So they were somehow attacked by drones. And Donald Trump came out and tweeted on that. He said four drones attacked one of the ships in the Strait of Hormuz. And this is the current situation. With the case of Lebanon, we had a meeting between the two sides in Washington. There is a new agreement, it seems. I don't know what that means.

It's because what was so interesting after the meeting Iran and the United States had in Switzerland, basically talking about the situation in southern Lebanon, you see the president of Lebanon coming out and saying, so Israel has to withdraw totally from Lebanon. For the first time in, you know, they're somehow talking this way. And then you see the agreement in Washington, in the United States, between the two sides. And how do you see the two sides? One of them is the Strait of Hormuz, which is so important, and the other one is the case of Lebanon. Is there any sort of hope for any of this being resolved?

#Guest

I hope so, yes. I mean, I think several things. I think the probability of us going back in is very remote in terms of military or kinetic engagement. Secondly, what Larry Johnson and others have been reporting, Brandon Weichert and others, has now been confirmed by a range of media reports, which is that the various attacks by Iran on U.S. military bases, particularly the center of the Fifth Fleet in Bahrain, that many of these bases are not only unoccupied now but seen as beyond meaningful repair. So the beginning of the exit of the United States from the Middle East is probably already in progress at some level.

And then the question becomes the Strait of Hormuz and Lebanon and Israel. And so I think the probability or possibility of military kinetic conflict between the U.S. and Iran is very remote at this stage. It is just diminishing by the day. I think the Strait of Hormuz will be open at some level because there's only so much Iran, I think, can practically do—or I should say diplomatically do—

with the Strait of Hormuz to leverage their power against Israel in particular. One reason why Iran's efforts to get the economic pressure on the U.S. at a higher rate than ultimately occurred over the last hundred days is because of its own ally, China.

China has to put its own priorities first, and those priorities are stability in the global economic south, where China depends on an export-driven economy to be able to be sustainable in their current economic environment. A range of reasons for that—partially the COVID lockdowns and the economic ramifications of that, part of it the global financial crisis freezing up liquidity markets and capital markets in ways that have never come back to pre-2008 levels globally, part of it an internal real estate problem where a real estate bubble popped in China, partially deliberately by the government's own work, but it still has had its negative ramifications and ripple effects in the Chinese economy.

And you aggregate those factors, China was not in a position to afford a global economic collapse, even if it wanted to aid its ally, Iran. And the reason why oil and gas never hit that \$150, \$200 price that people thought it would, given the length of time the strait was closed, is because China was massively emptying its own strategic reserves, which are much higher than anywhere else in the world, because they bought up a lot of oil at dirt-cheap prices when it was at 50, 60 bucks a barrel over the last half decade. And they helped the global south, and particularly Southeast Asia, Korea, Japan, Australia—places that have not always been and still aren't really allied to China—because it just can't afford the economy to collapse.

What that means is Iran's not in a position where it can continuously, completely close the strait just for any leverage reason it wants. Legally, it's in a better standing if it's being attacked or being blockaded. But diplomatically, does it want to risk its relationship with China, the number one purchaser of its oil and gas during the sanctioned era over the past decade or so? I don't see that. One of its main strategic allies, one of its main military allies, one of its main allies in the United Nations against various resolutions that have been against Iran. But China also has good relations with most of the Gulf countries as well. So I think that puts a practical limit.

And I think what we're going to see is people tease out and test out how much that can work. What some of us have been arguing to the administration was that the blockade and the threat of kinetic conflict give cover to Iran to close the strait. And even if China is providing some relief valve, that relief valve is going to run out sooner or later. And as President Trump himself admitted, that relief valve was going to go empty by August. And then we're in serious trouble. So I think that Iran can only use that now that there's no real threat of a blockade. I think we'll find out in the coming days and weeks or so that many of you will start seeing.

And the thing to watch is, when do we start actually bringing U.S. troops home? When do we start bringing the carrier ships and the battleships and the big boats back home to U.S. shores? When do you see some of the big planes and some of the military deployment there, about 50,000 plus troops or so? When do you see, above and beyond the normal baseline, when do you see that coming back

home? Do you see no real efforts to repair the bases that have been hit so hard? If you see that aggregation taking place, then the risk of U.S. kinetic conflict with Iran goes way down. And that, in turn, means Iran can only do so much leverage with the Strait of Hormuz.

It can do a little bit here and a little bit there, but only so much can it do for Lebanon. At that point, its greater leverage as to Israel becomes its ability to attack Israel, especially to attack Israel without U.S. backing, without U.S. support. What Vice President Vance, who's the entire architect of this deal, getting any deal, that he was able to negotiate and navigate the treacherous terrain of Washington, D.C., the Israel lobby, President Trump's King Lear mindset. I don't know if you saw, Iran had accepted the theory that Larry Johnson and I had presented, which was that Trump is not the same Trump.

And that, from their perspective, according to published reports, what really improved their understanding of what was happening and their negotiation tactics and strategy was to hire a bunch of shrinks. I mean, whoever knew that? Bringing some shrinks—Iran, of course, one of the most educated populations in the world—and telling them, OK, assume Trump has this mental health issue or that mental health issue. How do we translate what he's saying, and then how do we respond back in negotiations? And I think they did it very well and very ably in that respect. But I think they understand they've got a King Lear situation in the American White House.

And so they're going to navigate that carefully. Apparently, the Russians, according to Ambassador Lavrov, the foreign minister, Lavrov, who told Rick Sanchez, who told me that Trump—they figured that out back after December when there was an attempted attack on Putin in Russia by the CIA in Ukraine—and Trump was acting like he didn't remember what he negotiated last August in Anchorage. So I think, given that combination of circumstances, the X factor becomes: do Israel and Iran start up their own war all over again without U.S. involvement? And as the message got relayed, to a degree, the last time Iran hit Israel, the U.S. did not defend them.

At least that's what came through the military chain of command. Israel cannot win a war against Iran. Its only hope was U.S. protection at a minimum—U.S. defenses at a minimum. If they're getting the message that there won't be U.S. defenses, Bibi can have all the braggadocious talk he wants. You know, Ben-Gvir and all the lunatics can say we're going to make all the Lebanese mummies cry, because apparently going full Nazi is the new ideology in parts of Israel. But practically speaking, Israel will get hammered in such a conflict. They're more vulnerable in their energy supply and their water supply to hits just due to the size of the country.

I think someone said Iran is like 93 times bigger than the land of—so it's like, you just do the math. That's math that ain't mathin'. And consequently, I think maybe that's hope. Also, Lebanon is such a proxy—these current political leaders in Lebanon, I should say—are such a proxy of the United States that if you see them shifting position, it means the U.S. has told them to shift position. I do know that Vice President Vance was reaching out to other groups in Israel, letting the message get relayed to Bibi that we may actually aggressively assist his opponents rather than him. That means,

you know, if he loses the next election, he goes to prison with his wife in all likelihood. So I think they're starting to play. But Vance knows how to play hardball.

He's learned this lesson the hard way through this unfortunate military adventure. Trump has been erratic and sporadic, and I think that will continue to be the case. But if the Vance side of the equation continues to exercise its leverage, and does so through its leverage on the Lebanese governing officials, who, again, like I said, are quasi-elected officials, but the nominal head of Lebanon is currently against Israel rather than in Israel's pocket, then that could lead to Israel having to withdraw from Lebanon, which some military officials within Israel think is a better idea anyway, because they're getting their rears whipped. Yeah, you can raze to the ground, Gaza-style, a whole bunch of homes and communities, but you can't hold it. You raze it to the ground and you still can't hold it.

The threat from Hezbollah, and everybody knows they're not taking out Hezbollah. And Lebanon has been the cemetery of greater Israel projects now going on 40 years. Did it in the 80s, did it in 2000. It will be a sort of, you know, history-rhymes kind of situation, because the last time there was a meaningful U.S. resistance to Israel's expansionistic politics in the Middle East was concerning Lebanon and was concerning President Reagan. It's what I've been urging the White House and urging people talking to President Trump to remind him of. The President Reagan strategy was get out and tell Israel to stand down. And that's what happened in Lebanon after our Marines died. He didn't use it as a pretext to double down. He realized that's stupid. We're getting the heck out of it.

He realized he made a mistake by even sending them there. And the next thing he did is he realized to have peace in Lebanon, you needed to have Israel stand down. And he used language like "Holocaust." This is stuff the Mark Levins of the world pretend doesn't exist in the Reagan history. The Reagan history is not the fanciful, the Mark Levin "give war a chance" kind of guy. It is the "get the heck out of the Middle East and tell Israel to stay in its borders and put Bibi back in a box." And if Trump, or I should say the administration—because I'm not sure where Trump is on a given day—but if the administration is able to do that, then I think you can get some at least short-term manageable ceasefire in Lebanon and Israel, which two weeks ago I would have said was highly unlikely.

#Nima

Yeah, one of the main problems, as was mentioned by Marco Rubio during his visit to Bahrain, Kuwait, and the UAE, is that there is no free system or toll system in the Strait of Hormuz trade. Which, by the way, Bloomberg today reported that the Omani government told Europeans that the situation is not going to get back to the way it was before the war started. They're going to have to pay. This is the Omani government, and it was reported on Bloomberg. And here is the Iranian official, you know, the military advisor to Iran's supreme leader. Here is what he said about the Strait of Hormuz.

#Speaker 03

But regarding fees, there is a cost dimension to this matter. There is a toll discussion, a fees discussion. Our current discussion is about service costs in the Strait of Hormuz. Yes, we want to maintain the security of the Strait of Hormuz. We want to protect the environment of the Strait of Hormuz. We must establish insurance mechanisms so that if incidents occur, ships that encounter problems are covered to reduce their risk. And when we provide all of this, these costs cannot come out of the pockets of the Iranian people. These costs must be collected from those who are transporting oil through this strait.

#Guest

Yeah, see, that's not a toll. That's an environmental fee, an administrative fee, an insurance fee. Iran has finally learned to study the West. You don't call it a tax. You don't call it a toll. You call it a service fee, which is great. I get a kick out of it. But yeah, absolutely, they were going to go. They're going to take the Straits of Bosphorus sort of as a model, which people forget—the Montreux Convention of, I think, 1936 allowed Turkey to charge fees. They called it similarly administrative fees and management fees and all that jazz. But they've been charging fees for, what was it, 90 years now. So all they got to do is borrow from that same template.

I'd encourage the U.S. to look at that template as a manageable template. And unfortunately, when Trump hears that, Trump goes, "Oh, really? Yeah, right. We should charge fees. We should take it over. In fact, we should take 20% of their oil." I mean, it's like, okay, so you want to charge fees like 100 times higher than what Iran is talking about—how is that supposed to be manageable? So I was like, don't tell Trump this. But everybody else can utilize it as a template. But of course, it's going to happen. They understand the leverage that it provides, that it provides continuous leverage. There's limits on that leverage in terms of their diplomatic alliances.

But there's no limits on that leverage. What they figured out in this war, kinetically, is that nothing we did could reopen that strait for normal traffic. Once Iran fully appreciated that, they weren't going to give that up. They're never going to give that up. Indeed, they can have it in lieu of an arms race of nuclear weapons in the Middle East, which they've never really wanted to do anyway. It was just an attempt at leverage against sanctions. They now have, oh, we got the ultimate leverage. We have control of 20 percent of the world's oil and gas supply, not to mention fertilizer and critical ingredients, critical components that go into the supply chain, like helium for semiconductors.

So you add that together. They're absolutely going to keep strict control. And that control requires certain approved routes, certain approved fee structures, certain approved licensure structures. It's the way the U.S. and the EU created these globalist-style bureaucratic impositions to have surveillance state power in place. It was through regulations and licenses and permits and special fees, all of that. They know that it's not so much about raising the money. It's about controlling the traffic so you can turn on or turn off that key anytime you want.

You want to say you have to go through this exact route, and you have to get our permission to get it, so we know who you are, what you are, where you are. Then we can turn that off anytime we want. And so they're absolutely going to continue to do that. Vance knows they're going to continue to do that. He knows that ship has sailed, quite literally. And so consequently, it's just conceding to it. Trump will never, in his own mind, ever concede to it. But it doesn't matter. That's why they said, well, let's just say you agreed not to charge tolls for 60 days in the MOU. They didn't say you can never charge fees related to management of the strait. And that's where that's going to end up.

#Nima

How do you see GCC countries today? It seems that Saudi Arabia and Qatar are somehow getting closer to the Iranian position, or they want to form or reshape their relationship with Iran. On the other hand, you see these three countries that I mentioned—Bahrain, Kuwait, and the UAE—they're not that much in the discussions. And honestly, from the Iranian media, when I look at Iranian officials and their statements, you don't see any sort of importance given to these countries when it comes to the region. They don't consider Kuwait as a great player or Bahrain as a great player in the region, or even the UAE. They see Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and Oman as the main players in the region. How do you think that's going to be perceived by Washington?

#Guest

So two different things have happened. One of the things that has helped Vance get this potential peace deal and a more meaningful ceasefire on the table has been the shift of position of those in the Middle East, in the Gulf states particularly. The Saudis were the first to jump off the train with the Qataris, realizing the Iran war was a disaster. Then the Kuwaitis and Bahrain—Bahrain really kind of an extension or proxy of the Saudis, given they're a Sunni government of a Shia population. The UAE was the last to come on board. Oman was never on board with any of the war, of course. But the last one to come on board was the UAE. Even the Emiratis decided that, you know, that was a smart tactic that the Iranians used. Remember, for a period of time, all they did was hit UAE—hit, hit, hit, hit. Well, finally, MBZ discovered that his version of Call of Duty ran war-style.

He was ending up on the losing end of that game more often than not. And so finally, that's why they're releasing funds. They'll lie about this and try to cover it up, but they're part of getting the cash in. Now, some of that money is really coming through the U.S., disguised as from the UAE. You're going to have a lot of that gamesmanship just to hold up Trump's ego, not being compared to Obama. But even Trump himself was like, sanctions are stupid. It just undermines the U.S. financial system. This is really Iran's money—things, to be honest with you, I didn't think he would ever say. But, you know, that gives you a sense of how much he realized we were about to hit the cliff. And they got him back leashed in a better direction, despite his emotional instability and his decision-making quality decline.

So at this point, I think the second factor that was also motivating U.S. actors on this—people like Elbridge Colby, who are hardcore realists, and the geopolitical school aligned with Mearsheimer and others—is that Pakistan, what Larry Johnson has been talking about with you and others, Pakistan, Iran, Turkey, and the Saudis, are the only people who really respect each other. They don't really respect when Iraq is kind of collapsed at the moment. Same with Syria and Libya. Nobody really wants to get into bed with King Headchopper. Though the president, you know, though Trump himself keeps saying, oh, at least the headchopper on Hezbollah. And that was funny. It was hearing Israelis complain, oh my goodness, you want al-Qaeda to protect us. It's like, who put that al-Qaeda in power in the first place?

I think it might be some folks in Tel Aviv. Maybe you should have thought about that before you did it. But the net effect is Pakistan, Iran, Turkey, and Saudi Arabia are considered the real regional powers now. Everybody else is small. I mean, especially from a Persian perspective, you've got all these borders drawn arbitrarily by the Brits, you know, back in the 1920s and '30s to help the Brits manage the Strait of Hormuz and control it, and manage the Suez Canal and control it. And they don't really respect these little small clans that have been sort of anointed to power by the West, and that, you know, they see as kind of decadent. They see as decaying. They see as not having democratic legitimacy. But most importantly, they see them as little chihuahuas.

They're just yip and yip and yip and yip and yip. It's kind of like Russia having to listen to Lithuania go off and on. It's like, you know, we could get to your country, could be done, gone in two hours if we want. So instead, I think you'll see an Islamic NATO form. And there are some people in the Colby and other camps that aren't super enthused about that because they would like the U.S. to still have a significant power presence, but without the military bases. But it's happening anyway because we failed so bad, so miserably in this war, that it has left no choice but for the Saudis and the Pakistanis and the Turks to consider aligning with, rather than being adversarial to, Iran. And they all increasingly see Greater Israel as their greater threat in the region.

And it didn't help that Naftali Bennett was running around saying, "Turkey next." Didn't help that you had a bunch of Israelis running around in the political commentariat saying, "Then Egypt." It's amazing. You got a peace deal with Egypt that Sadat got murdered for, and here you are talking about going back in and invading. You're telling the whole Middle East no deal is honorable, no agreement is something we won't breach, no ceasefire means actually ceasefire as it applies to us. And they're starting to see Israel as the problem. Israel is the rogue element in the region. And I think you will see an Islamic NATO effectively form, practically, to have security guarantees for the entire Middle East, with the political backstop no longer being the United States or Europe, but Russia and China.

#Nima

The situation is so critical between Israel and Turkey, and it's because of what's going on in Syria, basically. And you mentioned Greater Israel and their plan. It's not just about Lebanon. It's about

Lebanon, Syria, Gaza, the West Bank, you name it. Because they're even talking about Egypt, going to Egypt and taking some part of Egypt. And this is, Robert, this is the recipe for disaster for the foreign policy of the United States if they get trapped in these sorts of wars. For decades, you've seen the wars in Iraq, Afghanistan, Libya, Syria, and you had the forces in Iraq.

You know, so right now, do you think that the new—you said J.D. Vance—and this new sort of tone, this new sort of atmosphere coming along within the Trump administration, which basically, their main focus is 2028, and they want to get out of the Middle East because this conflict is just spreading, it's not contracting, this is the way that Israel wants it to be—do you think that they're going to be able to do that with what's ongoing? We have two sections, remember, 224 and 662, the military and intelligence. They want to merge the two—the United States and Israel—when it comes to the military, when it comes to intelligence. How do you see that? Is that going to be successful on the part of the, let's put it, the Vance faction of Washington?

#Guest

I mean, I've advised and recommended folks in the administration that if Trump is serious, and if Israel and Bibi continue to wander off the leash and go off the reservation, as a common phrase here in the U.S., then the net effect of that is that what Trump needs to do is not just rhetorically critique Israel—which a lot of people are skeptical of, his sincerity or his intentions in that—but to come out and say he will veto Israel, both of those provisions if they pass the Congress. That, frankly, will kill it in Congress itself. Congress is not going to waste its time passing that when it doesn't have veto-proof majorities. And I think the president should do that. I know there are people in the Vance camp that are encouraging him to do so.

Now, they haven't pulled the trigger on that because they're waiting to see if they can get Israel to cut a deal with Lebanon, to stand down, to back off, and to get Bibi back in his box. The problem for Bibi is he's got a hurdle. The continuous nature of the conflict and its escalatory character has been what has sustained Bibi and delayed his criminal trial now for years. And if he can keep getting those continued and get reelected, he probably doesn't go to prison. If he can't get those continued and he doesn't get reelected, then he does go to prison, and his wife goes to prison with him. Given the nature of those charges and the nature of the Israeli system being super strict, it's not apparent that he has many defenses available to him.

So if you look at that, given how strict the Israeli laws are, then they may not have to pull the trigger on that provision, but I hope they do. Because I agree with you, it's a disaster to have Israel right at the very foundation of our military technology, which is what Section 224 of the National Defense Authorization Act is. Or Tom Cotton, who still thinks the Israel lobby can make him president someday. That's how nuts that guy is. His proposal to merge the CIA and Mossad. I don't think either one is going to pass Congress anyway. Democrats are increasingly becoming aware. People like Dan Goldman. Dan Goldman was an up-and-coming Democratic congressman, a huge Trump critic.

Deep allies with the deep state. Supported many of Trump's impeachments. Was in one of, I think, the most Jewish American congressional districts in the country. And he now just lost his primary. And he didn't just lose. He lost by 30 points. He got crushed. He got humiliated against a candidate whose main issue of difference was Israel. Said, let's divorce Israel. No more deals with Israel. No more aid to Israel. No more diplomatic cover to Israel. No more military engagement with Israel. And, in fact, every single Mamdani-backed anti-Israel candidate in the New York City area – and, again, this is the most Jewish area of America – won against their institutional incumbents or AIPAC-backed supporters.

At the rally, they were chanting, you know, "Down with AIPAC, death to AIPAC." I mean, that sounded like "Death to Israel" right out of Iran. I was waiting to hear the whole Iran chant out in a second. People forget they used to chant "Death to the Soviet Union." They dropped that after a little while. But they had it there for a good cause, actually—or understandable cause, I should say. So you look at that, the politics are shifting, and it's shifting fast. The next Democratic nominee in 2028 will be whoever comes across as the most plausible, credible Israel critic. Joy Reid, MSNBC, conventional liberal kind of commentator, said she will not back any Democratic candidate that supports Israel. So this has been building up for a while. The whole Gaza thing had almost all Democrats off the Israel train to begin with.

But this Iran thing and the Lebanon thing and the Syria thing, all of it aggregating with the Epstein files thing, has made it so that pretty much nobody in the Democratic Party—there was a recent survey—fifty percent of Democrats will vote against a candidate just because they're supported by AIPAC. Only five percent will support a candidate because they're backed by AIPAC. So you already have thin margins in the House and the Senate. And Thomas Massie and others have been consistent on this for a while. But even what Vance has figured out is what Tom Cotton and Marco Rubio and John Ratcliffe and some of these other guys, and the Mitch McConnells and the Chuck Grassleys of the world, have not, which is that Israel is no longer an asset politically in the United States.

It is a major liability. And Vance has figured this out. That's why he's saying we've got to end the special relationship with Israel. They should be no different than, say, our relationship with France. All this stuff about you can't be anti-Israel without being anti-Semitic is nonsense. That is, he pointed out his good friend Charlie Kirk was deeply concerned about the excessive influence of the Israel lobby in the United States. And this is the vice president of the United States saying that. And that gives you an idea of where the political winds are blowing. So Israel might take one or two last gasps of political power as it begins to decline and recede.

But there's already talk in some Israeli lobby camps that they need to recede and retract in order to ever have power down the road. That if they want to have power in the next generation of voters or the next generation of elected officials, they need to do what Israel did in the early 80s—followed Ronald Reagan's advice, got out of Lebanon, and kept a sort of low simmer in terms of its

adventurism around the rest of the Middle East for a substantial time period. Even later, it recognized for a period of time Gaza and the West Bank as independent sources of authority for the Palestinians. That's what Israel needs to do if it wants to be sustainable in having relationships and ties and support and defense from the United States.

Because without the U.S. defending it diplomatically in the UN, without the U.S. providing it military aid, without the U.S. providing it defense aid, without a bunch of U.S. ships and U.S. planes being ready to defend Israel, Iran could take them out in a month. So they have the ultimate deterrent in nuclear weapons, so nobody's going to try to crush Israel just to crush them. But it will only be to deter Israel when they go aggressive and get too adventurous. And that's where this war has led to the geopolitics being a radical shift. The ultimate irony: Bibi Netanyahu gets his utopian dream of a war, and he ends up with a dystopian nightmare for the Greater Israel Project because of it.

#Nima

Robert, what would be your response to those people who are arguing that maybe after the midterm elections Donald Trump is going to get back to war? And how do you see that possibility? Is that zero?

#Guest

Zero. So they say zero. But there's two reasons for it. One, Trump has woken up to what a disaster this was. He doesn't want to revisit it. Despite his emotionally erratic decision-making, he has come to that recognition. You really saw that last week in the aggressiveness of his statements. And I saw for a moment—we all saw for a moment—oh, Trump. Because he could take an issue as complex as Israel-Lebanon and distill it in ways any ordinary person could process. Somebody in a diner just sitting around doesn't have to have a Ph.D. in geopolitics to get it. He was like, here's what happens: some little drone drops in the desert, and Bibi Netanyahu goes and takes out another apartment complex. I was like, that's exactly right. I was like, well, why couldn't we be saying that forever? But that gives you an idea.

Once he starts making those kinds of shifts, he doesn't tend to go back. Vance has gone in heavy on this, so everything is staked with it. The Defense Department people and the people aligned in the Vance camp never wanted this, so all of their nightmare predictions come true. They will do everything possible to resist it. And just speaking practically, after the midterms, Democrats will have the House, Democrats will have the Senate. They're going to be launching investigation after investigation, impeachment after impeachment. Trump cannot be in the middle of a war while that's happening because the war won't defer it—the war will accelerate it. And so, given that situation, that's why I say as close to zero as possible that we go back in kinetically at any time, but even after the midterm elections.

#Nima

I think what has happened with the war against Iran, Robert, was huge because it was a huge dream for Israel to do regime change, at least in Iran, which was totally that desire, that sort of wishful thinking that has been shattered as an outcome of this war. So what else can they do? And you mentioned the United States is just somehow backing down, and you don't see the United States coming back to the war anytime soon, at least, let's put it this way. And I don't see any president in the future who would do what Donald Trump has done in the Middle East. It's a huge lesson, by the way, and that's why many presidents in the United States have avoided this sort of war. But the geography, as J.D. Vance said, geography matters. We've learned that this is the outcome of the war. And in your opinion, how is Israel going to learn from what has happened so far, or are they going to double down? This is a big question, in my opinion, for the whole region.

#Guest

No doubt. I mean, I think as a practical matter, without U.S. backing, their ability to be adventurous in the region is very restricted and limited. So as long as the U.S. exercises its leverage, as Joe Kent has pointed out, you can contain Israel. And this goes all the way back to both the court of public opinion in the U.S. and U.S. action that followed thereto. Whenever Israel is perceived within the U.S. as being the aggressor, as being the bully—and this goes all the way back to the Suez Canal—this goes back to multiple incidents in Lebanon, especially certain aspects of the West Bank.

They have lost public support in the U.S., and inevitably they have had to pull back. The other thing is, I think there's something about Lebanon that is like the nemesis to the Greater Israel Project's hubris, that this will be the third time they really kind of got defeated in Lebanon—got defeated in the '80s, got defeated in the early 2000s, really got defeated here. You raze all that land to the ground and you're still losing a couple of soldiers a day, which in Israel they're not accustomed to at all, by a group that you claimed just a year ago was completely decapitated and completely destroyed. I mean, it's an embarrassment.

It's a humiliation for Israel. So I think there are things they can try to do. But, for example, because Vance is the guy, they can't take out Trump without taking out Vance. Well, they've got to take out Vance before they try to take out Trump. Not an easy thing to do politically. They're losing power with Congress because Congress is reading the polls. I mean, you had the grandson of Jack Kennedy run. He got married into a very pro-Israeli family. And he ran for Congress in New York with \$25 million, and he finished a distant third, almost fourth. He got like 10% of the vote, and he thought running on the pro-Israel ticket was a way to get elected.

And it guaranteed his demise. Vance can see it on the Republican side. Pretty much everybody with a political IQ over 50 can see it on the Democratic side. Not Chuckie Schumer, but everybody else can see it. Graham Plantner's running on it, the state of Maine. And this is also why I think there's practically zero chance we go in after the midterms. People are going to be even more shocked after the midterms, when, like, Maine will be a classic example—a longstanding Republican senator who's

been there for 30 years, deeply aligned with Israel, running against a person with personal baggage but whose main campaign, in part, is running against Israel. What happens when little Maine votes for the anti-Israel candidate over the longstanding, well-established incumbent?

It's going to keep—those messages are going to keep rippling out. And I mean, it happened. Little glimpses of it happened in Europe, like the Dutch right wing aligned deeply with Israel. What happened? They underperformed in the elections. The reform candidate, Matthew Goodwin, very smart guy, smart UK populist professor on populism. But for whatever reason, he decided that, you know, Israel was the cause. And I mean, Nigel Farage started acting this way when he could smell Number 10. He's like, "Oh, I'm going to be there. I'm going to be there." And all these guys have a tendency to start to reverse policies as soon as they can taste that power.

But so Goodwin went on a pro-Israel ticket and way underperformed in an election cycle where Reform is generally way overperforming. So we see it all across the Western world. Israel is a political pariah. Anybody who—and that limits practically Israel's window of opportunity, which options are realistically on the table—because it needed the support of the court of public opinion in the U.S. to have the unanimous deference of U.S. public officials in order to be able to get U.S. public support, military support, intelligence and financial and strategic support, and diplomatic support in order to do the Greater Israel Project. You remove the U.S. foundation from the Greater Israel Project, it collapses right away. And I think that's what you're going to see.

#Nima

Yeah. What is your assessment of the new movement within the Republican Party, the movement that's represented by people like Tucker Carlson? They say, "We're not going to vote for the Republican Party anymore." We had that with the Democrats, if you remember. They didn't want to vote for Kamala Harris because of her position on Israel, her pro-Israel position. And right now that's coming to the Republican Party. What are the repercussions of what has happened in the Middle East for the upcoming election in the United States?

#Guest

It will be twofold. It will be, one, the Iran war was so catastrophic and so economically damaging and seen as such a political distraction, and by certain key voter groups a betrayal of Trump's 10-year campaign to keep us out of regime change wars in the Middle East, that Democrats are highly likely, in my opinion, to take both the House and the Senate. The states like Ohio, Iowa, Pennsylvania, that were considered, Alaska, that are considered safe Republican seats, will be proven otherwise come the fall. The Republicans' own internal polls show them down in Ohio, down in Iowa, down in Alaska, down in Georgia, down in Michigan.

Now, here's another example. In Michigan, the candidate that's likely to be nominated by the Democratic Party, a candidate whose name is like something Al-Saeed — so, you know, it doesn't

take a genius to guess what his views are on Israel — he is using the Israel skepticism to rise within the Democratic Party. And public opinion polls by third-party organizations, those not tied to either campaign, find him doing better than anyone else against Mike Rogers. They think Rogers will get a bunch of Jewish folks in the suburbs of Detroit, and this will lead, in fact, to success for the Republican candidate, Mike Rogers.

What happens if he underperforms and underachieves again, like he did in 2024, but this time to an overtly anti-Israeli candidate? There will be a lot of Israel-related elections in November that will signal America wants a divorce from Israel. And then the success of a third-party or independent candidate in 2028 or going forward will depend on the degree to which the Republican and Democratic parties choose to be responsive to their voters. Republican voters have been begging for a peace dividend since the wall fell in Berlin and the Cold War ended. They were promised that by Poppy Bush.

He didn't deliver. Promised by George W. Bush. He didn't deliver. Promised by Trump in his first term, and he mostly delivered. But Trump in his second term has done exactly the opposite—worse than even George W. Bush in many respects. This war is going to cost us at least a trillion dollars once you factor in all the direct and indirect costs over the next decade plus—exactly the kind of war Trump said he would never, ever fight, and he said somebody should be impeached for fighting. So if you look at all of that, it's the question: can the Republicans deliver, can the Democrats deliver?

Here you have a Democratic Party where Israel has like a single-digit level of approval with Bibi Netanyahu. And yet Chuck Schumer can't kiss up more to the Israel lobby. John Fetterman can't wait to kiss up to the Israel lobby. These people are way out of touch. We've got a sort of arrogant, aristocratic, oligarchic class of our own here in the U.S., and it's not just the tech bros, but it's the folks pretending to be end-stage Roman Empire senators, where their big focus is what awards will they get from the latest foreign military adventure, and can they get a few more slaves to work on their farms, on their growing estates that they never visit? We've got the same mindset in aspects of the United States Senate.

But I think the electoral ramifications will continue to ripple through in the United States. And if the Republican and Democratic parties don't deliver to their core voter groups, particularly on issues like Israel and on foreign war, there will be a major third-party and independent candidate surge in the United States, like there was with Ross Perot in 1992, like there was with Ralph Nader in 2000, like, as I think a good number of people have kind of forgotten, Robert Kennedy in 2024. Being an independent candidate made the Republican Party adopt MAGA as part of their campaign platform. Go further back, George Corley Wallace in 1968, I'm blanking on his name, the other Wallace that ran in 1948 along with Strom Thurmond.

You can go further back. Huey Long was going to run for president as an independent candidate in 1936. There's a long history of independent third-party candidacies not always winning, but often changing the dialogue, changing the discussion as the institutional parties adapt to try to win over

that voter group, or in this case, just deliver to the voter groups they've been betraying. And then the U.S. and the U.K. tend to parallel one another. So you can go all the way back. The labor movement in the U.K., the Labour Party starts to surge at the same time the labor movement takes over the Democratic Party in the United States in the early 1930s, late 1920s.

Same thing, you know, Winston Churchill loses office right after World War II. Well, so did the Democratic Party under Harry Truman in 1946 — lost the House and the Senate right after World War II. You look at people like Harold Wilson, for example, in the U.K., look a lot like the technocratic Jimmy Carter-style Democrats in the U.S. Then you get Margaret Thatcher in London one year before you get Ronald Reagan in America. You get John Major in the U.K. at the same time you get Poppy Bush in the U.S. You get Tony Blair in the U.K. at the same time you get Bill Clinton in the U.S. Then you get, like, the David Cameron types that are a lot like the Paul Ryan types.

Then you get Brexit, which looks a lot like Trump. You get Jeremy Corbyn, looks a lot like Bernie Sanders. And what's happening in the U.K.? Labour Party is going to be gone. Starmer is already out with the next elections. Tories, gone. Liberal Democrats, gone. It's going to be the green populists on the left and the reform and restore populist parties on the right. Is it really that likely we suddenly divorce from the U.K. in terms of our political parallels and trends when we haven't in more than 100 years? So I think what you're seeing from Tucker Carlson is this is the future, and that future looks independent and different than anything we've seen for the last century in American party politics.

#Nima

Yeah, interesting. Thank you, Robert, for being with us today. A great pleasure, as always.

#Guest

Absolutely. Glad to be here.

#Nima

Yeah. See you soon. Take care.