

Trita Parsi: Iran-Arab-Turkey Alignment After the War?

Trita Parsi argues that the MoU can still be saved, but there needs to be a wider reconfiguration of the Middle East to adjust to new realities. Parsi is the co-founder and Executive Vice President of the Quincy Institute for Responsible Statecraft. Follow the Substack of Trita Parsi: <https://tritaparsi.substack.com/> Buy Diesen merchandise: <https://diesen-shop.fourthwall.com/en-nok> Follow Prof. Glenn Diesen: Substack: <https://glennndiesen.substack.com/> X/Twitter: https://x.com/Glenn_Diesen Patreon: <https://www.patreon.com/glennndiesen> Support the research by Prof. Glenn Diesen: PayPal: <https://www.paypal.com/paypalme/glennndiesen> Buy me a Coffee: <https://www.buymeacoffee.com/gdieseng> Go Fund Me: <https://gofund.me/09ea012f> Books by Prof. Glenn Diesen: <https://www.amazon.com/stores/author/B09FPQ4MDL>

#Glenn

Welcome back. We are joined again by Trita Parsi, the Executive Vice President of the Quincy Institute for Responsible Statecraft and also an excellent writer on his Substack channel. I will leave a link in the description as well—that's my go-to Substack when I need to know what's going on in the US and the Middle East. So thank you very much for coming back on the program.

#Trita Parsi

Thanks so much for having me again, Glenn Diesen.

#Glenn

So we see now that the United States has gone back to war against Iran. Trump even took to Truth Social and wrote recently that the ceasefire is over. He also made some comments at the NATO summit that Kharg Island could be taken by the US. Is it too late to save the memorandum of understanding now?

#Trita Parsi

I don't think it is too late, but we're definitely reaching the point at which it would be too late. I think it's very noteworthy that the Iranians have not said that the memorandum is over yet. They're keeping the door open. Trump has said that he thinks it's over, so he's not been categorical, because at the end of the day, this latest round of fighting is probably not going to lead anywhere. It's not going to change the fundamentals of the situation. And then there's going to be a need to return to diplomacy. And if the MOU technically is still alive, you save yourself a tremendous amount of time

and political capital. If you have to start from scratch, we saw how difficult it was to get to the MOU, and the MOU clearly was imperfect. The ambiguities in it ended up becoming perhaps a little bit too big.

Particularly Article 5, which is a key reason why the fighting is taking place in the Strait right now. So I think it's noteworthy that both sides have not stated anything categorical about abandoning the MOU. The ceasefire could be over without the MOU being over. Now, is it good that we're in this situation? Absolutely not. I think this is an absolute disaster, and it bodes very badly for the MOU at the end of the day. This was not the way it was supposed to happen. It was supposed to be a bumpy ride, which was very understandable given the difficulties of this. But this type of return to fighting that we've now seen twice, and the second round is much worse, much more intense than it was in the first, is really not something that does an MOU any justice. And I think it was Ali Hashim who at this point called it not the MOU, but the MOM — the Memorandum of Misunderstanding.

#Glenn

Yeah, well, that's what I thought when Trump referred to going after Kharg Island. I mean, this would be an incredible escalation, also sending in ground troops at all. So this would be very different. But I also assume that the U.S. would try to renegotiate the MOU as they went along. You know, could this be part of the American approach here — that is, to use a bit of military force in order to try to make the Iranians shift their position, for example, on the administration of the Strait of Hormuz?

Because I think they were hoping they could get the ships in and out without falling under the control of Iran. But again, making it a twofold question — for the U.S. to simply go on, if it is an approach to renegotiate — this bombing, going back to ceasefire, then bombing again, at some point the Iranians would reach the conclusion: why would they give this kind of escalation dominance to the United States? Why allow the Americans to decide when the bombing starts and when it stops? It's a very dangerous control to cede.

#Trita Parsi

Yeah. I frankly am not convinced that this is a thought-through renegotiation tactic. Is it an effort to strengthen the U.S. position? Yes. But is it a renegotiation tactic, meaning that they actually know exactly what to do with that additional supposed leverage? No. And let me take one step back and also say, at the end of the day, there was a solution to this issue about the Strait on the table that both sides were converging toward after the first round of fighting, which is now about 13 or so days ago. There was diplomatic activity, and there was an idea that had emerged that said, okay, the Iranians do not want to see any ships go through either the southern or the northern corridor without coordinating with them.

That's their read of the MOU article finding. The U.S. and most of the GCC do not read the MOU or that article in that manner — that it is solely the responsibility of Iran. But an idea that emerged that was actually attractive to both sides is that, okay, let's have all ships report to both sides, not just to the Iranians. So there would be a designated country on the GCC side that also would receive all of the notifications of all ships, northern and southern corridor, that would be going through. And as long as that is the case, the Iranians would be fine. In fact, they have been fine with countries going through the southern corridor as long as they report.

And the reporting is nothing insurmountable. It's just essentially sending an email saying that they are seeking to transit. There are no fees, nothing of that kind. Now, what happened, though, is that they never managed to fully come to a conclusion on this. They were on their way, but then, because of the funeral of Ayatollah Khamenei, the diplomacy was put on pause. And during that pause, there were several ships — three in total, at least one of them Qatari, one of them Saudi — that were trying to go through the southern corridor with their transponders off, which the Iranians viewed as a major provocation.

And part of the reason why the Iranians are concerned about this is because, and I write about this extensively on Substack, they fear that the U.S. is trying to use the MOU to create a new solid corridor in the southern part of the strait that would be operational even if war were to resume. Meaning that if full-scale war breaks out again and the Iranians want to close the strait, they won't be able to do so because of this new corridor that the U.S. Navy is setting up. And this, of course, would be a very detrimental situation for the Iranians because it was their ability to close the strait that gave them significant leverage in the war. And they're fearing that the U.S. is quietly trying to undo that capacity.

And I think there are reasons to believe that that is exactly what the U.S. is doing, because it is in the interest of the United States to take away that leverage from the Iranians. So this is why this is a very sensitive point. But had there not been this pause as a result of the funeral and this effort to go through the southern part of the Strait during the funeral... And I have to say, on the one hand, you can make an argument saying that, look, these countries have the ability and the right to go through the southern part of the Strait by their reading of the MOU. And you can also say that from the Iranian side, their argument is going to be that there's nothing preventing them from transiting through the Strait, whether it's the southern or the northern.

It's just that they have to register and turn on their transponders. So, you know, that's why they view this as a provocation. Why did they not notify their transit? Why did they turn off the transponders? Right. This then caused the Iranians, after several warnings, to shoot at these ships—not in a way to sink them or anything like that—which then led to the U.S. taking military action. I think personally that both sides overreacted. There is an overreaction on the Iranian side in the sense of shooting at the ships. There are probably better ways. And I'm not saying that they're shooting right away—they're sending several warnings, trying to redirect them.

But there are nevertheless probably better ways of dealing with this. But I also think it's a massive overreaction by the U.S. to essentially restart the war over this issue. Because at the end of the day, this really doesn't matter that much. This arrangement would only be lasting for roughly 10 more days of the first 30 days of the MOU. And then the final agreement is not determined by the intermediate agreement. So a lot of things are being sacrificed for a temporary period of 10 days that ultimately don't matter that much. So both sides, in my view, are unfortunately not showing the discipline that they should.

I think Trump appears to be... not talking to him to know, but just seeing how out of balance he seemed to have been at the NATO summit. I'm sure it's very hard on him to have to spend that time with European leaders, who he seems to all despise. No progress on Russia, Ukraine. And then Pete Hegseth and Marco Rubio come into the Oval Office and brief him on additional Iranian attacks and are pushing him to take military action. And I think it shouldn't be a surprise because neither Hegseth nor Rubio appear to have been in favor of the MOU in the first place. I think all of that contributed to what I think, at the end of the day, is an overreaction—and a very counterproductive one.

#Glenn

But Phil said that the MOU, in general, attempting to establish some kind of peace, is placed on top of an alliance structure that doesn't really permit it, because the whole region is built up in terms of an alliance system. That is the economic security architecture in which the Gulf states and the U.S. are seeking to undermine Iran. So the fact that the Iranians would fear this dividing into two separate corridors to undermine Iran's ability to shut it down, that seems... because it's a continuation of the conflict. Now, my point isn't to fuel further distrust in the U.S., but it's suggesting that perhaps, you know, one needs a more profound solution that is a wider, you know, economic security architecture, which is able to accommodate one to a greater extent, because... you know, it's a bit like in Europe.

If you can move away from this bloc politics, where all security, the whole economic architecture, is essentially bloc politics. If you can move, you know, pull the Iranians into this, put some common deal between Oman and Iran to take, you know, do the administration of these ships going in and out. Do you see the possibility, though? Because one would think that as a result of, well... from reading the MOU, that the Iranians have strengthened their position in the region quite significantly, that there would have to be some change to the architecture, both the economic... Absolutely.

#Trita Parsi

Yeah. And I have a piece in Foreign Policy that talks about exactly that. And this is what I think, unfortunately, is being jeopardized by this dual overreaction over this issue. Because again, this arrangement would only last for another 10 days before a final arrangement is negotiated. And that

final arrangement is much, much more important in terms of whether a southern corridor actually is established that would be that threat to the Iranian leverage that they seek to have, which I think is, you know, from their standpoint, having been attacked twice in the midst of negotiations by two nuclear weapon states, it's understandable that they're going to do everything they can to keep that leverage.

But it's exactly that which has actually been jeopardized with this overreaction, because as part of the larger deal that should come about, and frankly was moving in that direction, is to have a new architecture in the region in which Iran is rehabilitated. The Qataris, for instance, the Prime Minister has been actually explicit, saying that they're looking for economic interdependence with the Iranians going forward. Now, it's clear that not all GCC states are on the same page on this issue. I think that the Bahrainis, for instance, the Emiratis, and the Kuwaitis are probably of a different view. But even the Saudis, who matter far more, were planning to host a meeting, a session with the GCC plus Iran and Iraq, to build confidence-building measures that would feed into a new architecture.

They even explicitly said that they had been studying the Helsinki process. And again, in my view, what I write in Foreign Policy is that anything that returns to bloc formations is going to be detrimental to the region. It's really about getting rid of all of that and having a security architecture that is based on collective security, inclusive security that, by definition, rejects bloc formation. That is the path that actually is open, but it requires the MOU to work and to be finalized. And it requires that, in the intermediate period, there's no overreaction by either side to temporary solutions for the Strait apartment.

#Glenn

Well, since you refer to the Helsinki process, I mean, this would also require the US to accept a very different role in the Middle East. Indeed, the Helsinki process, beginning from '75, the Helsinki Accords moving forward, this was a key issue in why the Cold War came to an end. But Gorbachev made a comment in the last days or the last months of the Cold War where he made the point that both the Soviets and the Americans had to address the hawks within their own camps, because once you abandon bloc politics, both the Soviets and the Americans would see their power diminished, because bloc politics forms a power structure.

Once peace breaks out, then suddenly, why would your allies remain obedient to the same degree? And I think you saw earlier, when the Chinese were pushing for improved relations between the Saudis and Iranians, again, the fear that peace might break out. You saw also the U.S. recognizing this — that is, who's going to help them contain the Iranians? Why would the Gulf states listen to America if peace breaks out? So how do you see this? Would the U.S. have to completely reconceptualize its role in the Middle East?

#Trita Parsi

Yes, it would. And at the same time, I think it's important to recognize two things. One, even if it doesn't, the rest of the region is abandoning the idea of relying solely on the American security umbrella because it has proven to be unreliable, and its limits turn out to be stunning as a result of this war. So the very idea that existed before, which is that even if the U.S. wanted to move itself out of the region, the GCC states would be pulling it back, Israel would be pulling it back — that is no longer the case, at least not to the same degree. These countries are not going to abandon the U.S. or their relations with the U.S. in a security sense, but they're not going to rely solely on it. And that in and of itself is going to break at least that element of the bloc formation to some extent.

I could go in the wrong direction, and they just build additional bloc formations on top of it, which again, I think would be a mistake. But it's important to recognize that now we're in a scenario in which the demand from the GCC is not at all what it was prior to the war, because they've seen what that bloc formation leads to. It leads to a disastrous war in which the U.S. bases are not protecting them. In fact, they're magnets for attacks. And on top of that, in that war, the United States did not prioritize the safety and security of these states. It prioritized almost entirely Israel. So what's the point of this at the end of the day? It didn't deter the Iranians. It led to a war. And in that war, they couldn't rely on the U.S. So I think that most GCC states realize this, and as a result, the demand for that old formation is no longer there, at least not to the same extent.

And then on the American side, you have thinking that is very different from what the Biden administration had. The Biden administration, if you remember — and you do very well, Glenn, because of all the coverage that you did — I mean, they were all about strengthening the existing alliance system and, by that, sustaining existing enmities. And you needed those enmities in order to strengthen the alliance system. So they were really status quo. They didn't want to see any change whatsoever. And as a result, they reacted very negatively to the Saudi-Iranian deal and the Chinese role in it, because again, it showed the U.S. is not the only game in town. Other states can intervene quietly.

You know, the Saudi intelligence chief was in Beijing for five days, and the U.S. intelligence had no idea. It tells you how limited the insight is. And some say that it was because the U.S. was solely focused on something else, which was just Israel, Israel, and Israel's normalization, etc., etc. It wasn't paying attention to these other things. And you have, in the restraint community, of course, arguments that I know resonate at least with some in the Trump administration, which is the U.S. should simply move away from its dominance in the Middle East. It's not paying off for the U.S. You have numerous American presidents for quite some time promising to get out of the Middle East.

So it is not that controversial any longer for American politicians to be very explicit about this. I see this as a massive opportunity for the United States to turn this around and say, okay, let's have a different arrangement in the region that is not reliant on the United States. The U.S. can move its bases and its forces out, focus on things that matter more to the U.S., while leaving the region in a

state that is actually more stable than it was before, while the U.S. actually retains good relations with the majority of those states, and perhaps also, thanks to the MOU succeeding, perhaps a decent relationship with Iraq. That's a huge win at the end of the day for the U.S. as well.

#Glenn

Yeah, well, again, that's why these deals, which just tinker a little bit, try to make some minor changes — that's why I think they won't necessarily be able to accommodate this massive shift in the international distribution of power that is, again, the hegemonic order. This had two main implications, in my opinion. One, it would exhaust the United States, which it did, and second, it would incentivize all of America's major opponents to essentially band together to collectively balance the U.S. as opposed to balance each other. So no, I think one has to adjust to the new world. I'm just wondering if politicians are able to do so, because at least I see in Europe we have an ideological political class which, I can't imagine, sees anything else than the world which is already over. And I think it's absolutely our strategic vacuum.

#Trita Parsi

Yeah, so I think what you're pointing to is a limit to imagination and political will, rather than that the opportunity does not exist. The opportunity clearly exists. In fact, the opportunity is begging for attention because the realities of power have shifted away from what these politicians would like it to be. And this is where you have the paradox of the Trump administration. It has absolutely no path dependence whatsoever. So it is not path dependent on the previous structures. In fact, if anything, an argument saying, "Well, this is what the U.S. has always done," I assume is a negative argument, a demerit in the eyes of the Trump administration, because they constantly seek to be rupturing things.

And I think there's also a tilt towards believing that they should be pulling out of the Middle East. But that is then accompanied by another problem, which is an administration that seems increasingly incapable of striking a single deal and holding on to it. The patience of Trump is very, very limited. I think one of the problems with the NYU and any negotiations with the Iranians is that Trump constantly needs positive reinforcement and constantly feels like he's moving in the right direction. And if he isn't, he has the capacity to just do a 180 and move in the other direction, which may be what he's doing right now. Diplomacy in 12 days didn't work out, so screw it, I'm back to bomb away. And then, you know, in a couple of days, he's going to realize, well, that ain't going to work.

And then he's going to try to go back to diplomacy, not realizing that others are not willing to play that game with him. But so you have a scenario in which there isn't that ideology, there isn't that path dependence, which creates a massive opportunity to actually do some of these shifts. But then, on the other hand, you have an administration that, for a variety of reasons, is not staffed in the right way, is not having the top leadership with the patience that is needed to be able to actually make a massive change as this would be. Remember the NSS of December 2017. It was talking

about hemispheric focus, you know, getting out of the Middle East. And two months later, he starts the war with Iran.

#Glenn

Well, yeah. How do you see the regional actors, though, putting the United States aside? Because, you know, you see a similar development in Europe. That is, the U.S. can't be everywhere at the same time. The U.S. begins to pull back a bit. But instead of, you know, the Europeans reverting back to the Helsinki format of indivisible security, pan-European security, they essentially want to recreate Europe, only NATO. So continue to block politics, but without its main player, which is, you know, a crazy proposition if you ask me. But how does it look in the Middle East? Do you think as a result of this war there could be a shift in relations between the Iranians, the Arabs, and the Turks?

#Trita Parsi

I do. I think it's actually very interesting. When I grew up, and I grew up in Sweden, a lot of folks were looking at Europe at the time as this miracle that had managed to get over all of these different hiccups, despite having had two world wars that killed more people than any other wars combined. Nevertheless, it had reached this unforeseen level of political maturity and managed to live in conceptions of indivisible security. And now you look at Europe and you're wondering, what on earth happened? Because the deterioration, the intellectual deterioration, is just stunning. And at the same time, the Middle East, which no one looked at as any sort of model for security or political maturity, is actually demonstrating that right now.

First of all, the center of diplomacy is no longer Switzerland or Europe. It is increasingly Istanbul and Doha, and perhaps even Islamabad, although it's a newer actor in that field. Secondly, they are moving towards recognizing that they cannot go back to the same formulation. They can't do it without the U.S., and they cannot do it with Israel. You know, the Emiratis are thinking that that is still a viable path, but no one else is convinced. And I think the war and the outcome of the war have further convinced the other states that any type of alliance with Israel and an Abraham Accord would create some sort of Sunni-Israeli alliance against Iran, which frankly has always been the case, but it's not been as explicit. It is no longer in the cards.

I mean, even weeks after October 7th, it seemed like the Saudis were still toying with the idea, but at this point it seems to be really past them. And if the Saudis won't do it, then it doesn't matter if Somaliland does; it just won't make much of a difference. So I do think that we're seeing that the region is moving in that direction, is trying to see if that can work. I'm not saying that the political maturity is evenly spread throughout the region, but I think it is beyond what we're seeing in Europe at this point. And I think there's a clearer understanding in the Middle East that you cannot successfully contain and balance Iran in a hostile way without the United States, compared to the Europeans thinking that they can do it with Russia without the United States.

#Glenn

Well, if there would be some restructuring of the Middle East, that is, then the Arabs, the Turks, they would all more or less have to recognize that Iran can't be contained. The former alliance system is dead. We need to find some collective, indivisible security format. How does Israel fit into this? Because, you know, the discourse is often, you know, you're pro-Israel, anti-Israel, but it's kind of beside the point. It's a country with nuclear weapons, which is backed by the United States. Yeah, essentially, indivisible security does mean that one has to take into account the security concerns of all actors in the region. And again, Israel is an actor in the region, so... I know there's a lot of hostility, especially in Iran, towards the Israelis as well. But if you want peace for yourself, you do have to make sure your opponents do not fear for their existence. So is there any way of pulling the Israelis into this?

#Trita Parsi

First of all, I just want to express my complete agreement with you that there is no such thing as inclusive or indivisible security unless you actually include everyone. So to have it, you know, in a corner of the region and think that that actually yields what indivisible security is supposed to yield is just an illusion. It has to be complete. And this then raises the question: what about Israel? So again, this goes back to the piece I had in Foreign Policy—I think it was on Monday. I argue there, based on a proposal that was developed by the Better Order Project at the Quincy Institute over the course of the last three years, that there is a pathway forward.

But what the region may risk doing right now is, instead of actually going toward a fully inclusive security, it may just change the fault lines in which Iran's decontainment is coupled with Israel's recontainment. That Iran comes out of its state of isolation, and Israel returns—not fully, but toward the position of isolation it had prior to Oslo. I think oftentimes people forget how isolated Israel was before the Oslo process. Roughly 36 countries normalized relations with Israel after Oslo, including India, including Russia, including the Holy See. So these are some heavyweights that had not even normalized relations with Israel prior to Oslo.

And that, you know, we may see a scenario in which this is what happens in the region, which is just a shift in the fault lines rather than actually, you know, graduating from this kind of bloc formation toward a non-bloc formation region. And my argument, and what we put forward in this proposal, is that ultimately it will not work. So you need to put forward a proposal that at least has a door open for the Israelis, meaning that the Israelis cannot join right now, and they won't join right now. But there should be an effort to have two parallel processes: a process of creating this architecture that should go on without Israel at the outset, because it's just politically impossible to include Israel at this point. But that architecture, as it gets formed, should have an open door—a standing open door—to Israel.

But the ticket price for Israel to be able to join is that there also has to be a Palestinian state created based on the 1967 lines—not a political horizon, not a pathway, but created, or whatever the Palestinians decide in terms of their own self-determination. And once that is done, then the Israelis have to be included. But the ticket price is very clear. And this actually could be a way of also incentivizing the Israelis to move in the right direction, to shift away from the direction they're on right now, which I think is a suicidal direction. And this, you know, I understand right now sounds extremely unrealistic. And I agree, it is unrealistic today. But imagine if this process continues for five years and the actual infrastructure, the architecture, is set up, the organization is set up.

These defense ministers and foreign ministers have their quarterly meetings in a rotating state throughout the region. Whatever, you know, inspired by ASEAN, inspired by OSCE, the Helsinki process, et cetera, et cetera. And that infrastructure is tangible, visible, and clear. I think that it could have an impact on the perspective of the Israeli public if they understand that they're being left behind, but the door is open if they're willing to change their approach and actually give the Palestinians exactly what they deserve, which is their right to self-determination and dignity and statehood. I think it would have far more of an effect than just thinking that you can isolate and contain it. I'm not arguing against the isolation.

I'm just arguing that there should be isolation and containment coupled with an open door that says you can come back in, you can be part of this inclusive security, but there is a ticket price for it, and that is a Palestinian state. And if they go in this direction, I think there could be a very—again, I know it's difficult, et cetera. But to just clarify, this proposal was not put together by people who live in the sky. The key authors of it included Nabil Fahmy, who was the former Egyptian foreign minister, who's now started his term as the Secretary General of the Arab League; Daniel Levy, who I'm sure you're familiar with, a former Israeli negotiator; and altogether about 130 other people in the Better Order Project from 40 different countries.

#Glenn

Well, such a deal, even if it's not politically available at this point in time, does still serve a purpose. That is to set an objective — that is where we want to go. Again, if you want to bring it back to the Helsinki Accords of 1975, we didn't establish anything inconclusive. But the general idea is recognizing that with these competing blocs, it fuels conflicts, it fuels the security dilemma. We should be moving towards something inclusive, based on indivisible security — at least putting that goal forward. You know, we can get off course sometimes, but at least that's what we're aiming for. Because now there's no such thing in Europe — if you talk about inclusive, indivisible security, you know, with the goal of overcoming bloc politics such as NATO, it's seen as treason and they will come for you again. So we don't have the goal, at least something to work for. There's no such thing. So it does serve a purpose.

#Trita Parsi

You need to have that vision. Yeah, you need to have a positive vision. And a positive vision actually works at the end of the day. And it did. The unprecedented level—this is what really upsets me, and I try to stay away from European politics—but it upsets me deeply to see what is happening in Sweden, where they're talking about the previous 70 years or even longer when it comes to Sweden's foreign policy as some sort of disgrace and failure. It is the most successful period in European history in terms of peace and prosperity. And what they have shifted towards is a freaking disaster. And to think that, you know, the previous leaders of Europe were naive when they were putting together the Oslo process, when they were pushing for these very strong norms around the use of force to protect civilians in conflict, international law, respect for human rights, all of these different things.

That was naive. But to say that what they're doing now is the smart and realistic approach is preposterous. And the Middle East right now has an opportunity to move in this direction. The combination of the region itself recognizing, by and large—not everyone—that the previous approach was a failure, together with the fact that the U.S. is neither capable nor increasingly willing to play that old role, is a unique opportunity that I hope is taken advantage of. And it requires, as its first step, that the MOU leads to a final deal between the U.S. and Iran and does not get derailed over different interpretations of Article 5 or exaggerated overreactions to what is happening in this intermediate period.

#Glenn

Let me ask a last question that is on Israel, though. Not just the possibility of joining some new security architecture of the Middle East, but also its view on the MOU. Why is Israel so terrified of this peace process? Because it has become one of the key obstacles—that is, as we saw with the strikes on Lebanon, for example—it seemed very deliberate to throw a wrench into this whole system.

#Trita Parsi

It's a very important question because it also comes back to what we just talked about, about Israel joining in. While the official requirement is, at least in our proposal, that there is a recognition of the Palestinian state and that the Palestinian state gets created, a deeper requirement is that there has to be a complete transformation of Israel's security paradigm. Now, that is required for all states. All of them are coming from a mindset of bloc formations. But the Israelis are coming from something that goes even further than that, which is that they believe the only way they can be secure is if they're completely dominating the region militarily.

For them to be secure, everyone else has to actually have a degree of insecurity. Because Israel needs to be able to deter everyone else, but no one is allowed to deter Israel. Only under those circumstances will Israel be secure. Not even peace. Peace is beyond even what they're thinking at

this point. Peace is not a politically correct word in Israel. It hasn't been for some time. They accuse you of Beilinish if you talk about that—going back to Yossi Beilin, who was one of the architects of Oslo. With that attitude, with that paradigm of security, of course, Israel will never be able to be at peace or secure, in my view, with its region.

So it requires a paradigm shift that goes deeper in Israel. The shift is going to need to be deeper in Israel than it is in some of these other countries. But precisely because of that outlook, they believe that any deal between the United States and Iran that ends the enmity, regardless of its other terms, is a disaster for them. Because it means that the United States would pull itself out of the Middle East and no longer put its military finger on the scales in the region and shift the balance artificially in favor of Israel. And Israel wants that support because it's the only way for it to be able to dominate the region militarily. Israel itself cannot do so.

Israel itself cannot even have a war with Iran without active American support. So, you know, the idea that Israel would become some sort of a hegemon I find very questionable, because Israel doesn't have the capacity to be the hegemon. It's just the edge of someone else's hegemony, and that someone else is no longer that interested in that hegemony. So it creates a major problem for the Israelis, but they're fighting tooth and nail to keep the United States as a dominant military power in the region, which necessitates having the enmity with Iran be as alive as possible, because it's the key motivator for the United States to be involved in the region militarily.

#Glenn

Yeah, no, I see this intent, but I'm thinking if the United States, out of necessity, can't have the same role in the Middle East, then it's simply... The Israelis, as you say, wouldn't have that capability to have that security strategy based on regional dominance. So you would think that rationality then would kick in at some point and force, as I say, a paradigm shift, reconsidering what security actually means. Because the last 30 years, as we've seen this security through dominance, weakening or destroying neighbors, it's a recipe for disaster. It is.

#Trita Parsi

I'm going to give you an example. I don't know if we talked about it last time I was on this show, but I've given this example of a senior Israeli military official who told me, I think it must have been 2004, that he was very worried about Israel's future because he said that when he fought in 1967, when he fought in 1973, he and his peers thought, if we just win this war, eventually these Arabs will have to come to terms with Israel as a reality and make peace. So winning the wars was a crucial step toward achieving peace. And he said, but when I see the youth of Israel today—and this is, mind you, 22 years ago—he said, they don't believe in peace. They believe that Israel is always going to be in a state of complete warfare, and that the only way to have security, not peace, is to dominate everyone else.

And he said that this is just going to destroy Israeli society from within. And I think he has been proven right. Twenty-two years later, we see that this mentality is even further strengthened. And part of the problem of getting that reality check is that this current paradigm is teaching Israelis to think there is no other security than the approach that they currently have. All of these other things that we would say, look, if they were realistic, they would realize they would have to shift to it—in their view right now, it's a pathway to their destruction. I don't think that's right. I think their current pathway is the pathway to destruction. But they're deeply ingrained in the belief that this is the only way for them to be able to be secure.

#Glenn

Well, again, I think this is a thing that defines our—well, these days, that is, America's allies or frontline states. They do have to also adjust to this new reality that the U.S. is no longer the hegemon, that they—again, they have to readjust to a multipolar world. And I think Israel, like the Europeans, like the Gulf states, will have to change. But again, they all have, after decades of not having to make any concessions or compromises, always looked toward the Americans standing behind them and having the final say. It's going to take some time, I think. And a lot of horrible things can happen then.

#Trita Parsi

Anyway, have any final thoughts before we wrap up? Yeah, just on your last point, you're absolutely right. This is not going to change unless the context changes and forces a shift. And in that context, I think, again, it is necessary to have those pressures, but I think it's also necessary to have a theoretical pathway open for rehabilitation. This is what never existed with the 30 years of isolation of Iran. There never really was a theoretical pathway open. It was supposed to be permanent. And it didn't work. It was a disaster. And I do believe, you know, at the end of the day, Iran is a country of 90 million.

It's much more difficult, perhaps, to indefinitely isolate it. But Israel is also a very sophisticated country technologically, and it has nuclear weapons. And I think it would be a mistake to pursue the same strategy with Israel as was pursued with Iran. And also, it would be a missed opportunity, because if one doesn't use this, if one doesn't open up that pathway, then one is also not doing much to use this momentum that exists in the region to ensure that it not only creates stability for the rest of the region, but also does something for the plight of the Palestinian people. And that would be a huge missed opportunity, in my view.

#Glenn

Thank you so much for taking the time. It's always very enlightening to speak with you, so thank you.

#Trita Parsi

Thank you so much for having me. I really appreciate it.