

The Iran Crisis #23: Elijah Magnier

Transcript of the conversation Helena Cobban held with Elijah Magnier on 5/29/2026. The full video can be viewed [here](#). Find the audio on [Apple Podcasts](#) or [Spotify](#).

[Helena Cobban]

Hi, everybody. I'm Helena Cobban. I'm the President of Just World Educational.

And this is, I believe, number 23 in our series of podcast conversations on the Iran crisis. And I am totally thrilled that today we're going to have back the guy with whom we opened this project back on February 25, which was three days before the US and Israel launched their aggression against Iran. And Elijah Magnier has been doing amazing writing throughout these past three months.

I was just reading his last three pieces that he wrote on his blog in within the last week. And anyway, Elijah, it's great to have you back with us.

[Elijah Magnier]

It's a pleasure to be with you, Helena. Thank you for having me.

[Helena Cobban]

Ah, so okay, let's-- I had outlined a few small things that I want to talk about today. I was actually looking back at the judgments that you made when we were in this conversation on February 25. And some of them were extremely astute.

And some of them maybe we should revisit in light of, you know, the events of three months. But first of all, let's look at this deal in as much as we we know a lot about it from the Iranian side. What we don't know is, is whether actually Donald Trump is going to sign off on it.

What's the latest thing you're hearing? But what, in your view, what are the main features of the deal?

[Elijah Magnier]

Donald Trump is changing his mind constantly. Within one sentence, he contradicts himself several times. So we cannot rely on him because he believes he's really in a business deal, which is not the case.

He's really playing with a country that is Iran, that used to be an empire, much longer than the creation of the United States of America, which is doesn't take any effort for that since the Americans have a few hundred years. Only we're talking about 1000s of years of civilization that is used to hardship, but also used to control and victories. Dealing with Iran and thinking that he is really selling a flat or a property is not the right way.

So let's take an example today. Today, he said, I'm lifting the blockade. And then let's see if Iran is going to behave.

Well, actually, this is not the way to conduct things. There are 14 points in the framework, starting with the end of the war on all fronts, including Lebanon. So you don't start saying, I've been imposing a blockade, and now I'm lifting it.

And then you're not allowed to ask any payment. And I'm not going to pay your compensation. And I'm not going to allow the frozen, your frozen assets that we're talking about 100 billion, not even 12 billion or 24 billion to return to your central bank.

And I'm going to continue imposing sanctions on you. I want all your nuclear enrichment uranium of 60%, 20%. And you're not allowed to produce any enrichment uranium.

And let's make a deal when actually Donald Trump did not win. So basically, the President of the United States is not really getting it right in the terms of negotiating a deal with the country since he blew up the 2015 JCPOA, only because he hates Barack Obama, and he followed the recommendation of the Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who has been advocating for this since 1992, since he was a Knesset. So that's a dilemma today.

[Helena Cobban]

Yeah, we should probably underline that today is May 29. I don't think we've stated that because of course, we hope this video is going to have, you know, a long shelf life. And you're quite right, Elijah, to note that Trump changes his mind, like within a single sentence.

There's even this question of did he intend to threaten to bomb Oman? Or was that a misstatement? Was he actually intending to say Iran because he doesn't really understand the difference between them.

But that's, that's, in a sense, a small point. The larger point is, we do know what the Iranians say is in the deal. And, you know, we can look at that, the current ceasefire draft agreement.

And you say that we can't really trust Donald Trump at all. So that actually raises a huge question as to how anybody that's affected by this conflict, whether we're talking about Iran, which is the primary victim, or, you know, the people of Lebanon, who are victims, gosh, in a terrible way, or the people of Razi, or the rest of Palestine, how can anybody have any assurance that this ceasefire agreement will be any different from the previous ones? The previous ones, you know, two reached last year for Razi, and then the November 2024 agreement and the April 12 agreement of this year for Lebanon.

And the Israelis, with full American backing, just continue their aggressions. And the same with Iran, you know, down there in the Gulf of Hormuz and across the Gulf. The US has continued to take offensive actions, including their post, post so called ceasefire in position of the blockade, which is an act of war.

So if there is a deal now, how does anybody, whether we're talking about direct victims, or the, you know, the billions of people around the world who are affected by this, by this

conflict, how can anybody have any assurance that it's going to be any more stable, or sustainable than what we've seen so far?

[Elijah Magnier]

Let's look at the record of Donald Trump, and a very recent one. So he made a deal with Gaza, and then he stopped the war. Then Benjamin Netanyahu is bombing Gaza every single day.

And he moved from having 50% to 53%. And now to 60%. And he told us in the last 24 hours, it's going to go to 70% occupying Gaza.

That is the ceasefire, how it is understood by Netanyahu and Trump. And Trump is doing nothing. He made a whole scenery about being the head of a Council of Peace, that's going to collect money and reconstruct Gaza, but he's done nothing, not even implement the simple ceasefire.

Still trucks are getting into Gaza around 120 [trucks per day], instead of 600, as agreed previously during the ceasefire. So there we have no trust in Netanyahu, Trump doing and ceasefire. Let's look at Iran.

He has bombed Iran twice during the negotiation with the Israelis, one in June 2025, with his blessing Israel bombed Iran, and the second one in February 2026. So there is no trust whatsoever. Let's look at Lebanon.

In Lebanon, there was a ceasefire in 2024 in October, November, and then Israel killed over 515 Lebanese, violated the ceasefire, according to United Nations Forces UNIFIL in the south of Lebanon more than 15,000 times. So the Iranians are sending delegation to talk about peace and a deal and are extremely busy in preparing their missile for another round. They don't trust Donald Trump.

And they certainly don't trust Benjamin Netanyahu, whose sole objective since he is in power in the Knesset or as a prime minister to bomb Iran and destroy it and change the ruling system. So no, this is another dilemma you touch upon. And this is why I can guarantee that no final deal will be signed between the United States and Iran as long as Donald Trump is in power.

[Helena Cobban]

Yeah. What you say about Israel's regard or disregard for ceasefires reminds me that my friend, Ambassador Chas Freeman has taken to calling them a "ceasefire with Israeli characteristics," which I think is a very good specification. It means the other side ceases and Israel continues firing and Donald Trump has joined right in to this on all these fronts.

So I suppose there is a value in having a kind of a de escalation for the resistance forces. Do you think that there is a real possibility that Trump can come down on Netanyahu and force him to stop firing in Lebanon and force him to stop advancing and firing in Gaza? Is that a realistic possibility?

[Elijah Magnier]

Well, he stopped him in Gaza to save Israel because Israel was losing the narrative and is hated around the world. Like ever, Israel did not face this new situation. When anything that Israelis are saying they are attacked, because they are responsible for genocide, they have committed life on social media.

And they had no problem in posting all this against the Palestinians, against the activists who came with the flotilla, torturing them, sexually abusing them, harassing them, putting them in jail and torturing them. So all that is done, and the Israelis are happy to do it as long as they are unaccountable. And the matter of fact, we have the International Court of Justice and the International Criminal Court.

Considering Benjamin Netanyahu, Yoav Gallant his Defense Minister, Ben-Gavir, his Security Minister, and Bezalel Smotrich, his Finance Minister, these are key positions in the government, all war criminals. So the world is dealing with these kinds of people. And these people are the closest allies of Donald Trump.

And he is allowing Israel to protect itself. And he's under the title of Israel has a right to defend itself. So he's allowing Benjamin Netanyahu to do everything he wanted.

And that is the problem. If he says, we agree on the ceasefire, however, Israel has a right to defend itself, then it means nothing because Israel has always the right to defend itself. But nobody else has a right to defend itself according to the Israeli narrative.

[Helena Cobban]

Yeah, I mean, there is a difference between defending yourself. If somebody comes to invade your country or occupy your country, then you have a right to resist. But you do not have a right to preemptively go out and attack and destroy things in their country.

That's just a perversion of the concept of the right of self defense. So I'd like to look actually, at this point, at the components of the resilience that we have seen of the resistance activities, primarily in Iran. I think, you know, when we talked with you back in February, you seem to be cautious in your assessment of Iranian defense slash resilience capabilities.

And you were saying at that point, you know, it would be the Iranians can't win, what they can hope to do is to survive. I would argue that they have done more than survive. But how do you assess their performance thus far?

And what do you see as the main components of their resilience?

[Elijah Magnier]

I think that was a fair assessment, because Iran did not start the war. Therefore, its objective is to defend itself and survive. It is not its objective to win, because it did not start with a specific objectives, because the Israelis and the Americans unlawfully attacked Iran with very specific objective to change the ruling system, destroy completely the nuclear program, destroy the missile program, cut the relationship between Iran and the allies, and submit

the Iranians to what Donald Trump told us, he wants to select and participate in the election of the new leader of the revolution. He is the one who's going to take the oil.

And his objectives were very clear along with the Israelis. What the Iranians did is they defend themselves by calling upon their right, according to United Nations Article 3314, to attack any country that is offering a platform to the United States and Israel to attack Iran. And this is why the Iranians attack all the US bases in the Middle East, managed to destroy them, but they did not destroy the US military machine and capability.

They have degraded their operational base in several Gulf countries, but the United States still has the power to bomb more Iran willingly. But the Iranians understood that the only thing they need to do is to defend themselves, and then make sure that none of the declared objectives of their enemy are achieved. This is all what Iran needs to do.

And when we see today, Donald Trump negotiating with exactly the same people, he's negotiating with Sayyid Mujtaba Khamenei, the son of Sayyid Ali Khamenei. He's negotiating with the same people in the IRGC, because it took around 18 hours to retaliate in June 2025. But it took around 10 minutes to retaliate.

And within one hour, eight countries were bombed by the IRGC commanders who were running the battles that were giving this assignment in a completely decentralized command and control center, which means Donald Trump is still dealing with the same people. He did not manage to remove anyone, but he managed to target assassinate several commanders, and we're talking about more than one million man army.

So can you imagine one or 40 or 100 US generals killed? Will the US army be defeated? Of course not. Because there are other generals who can replace those who have been assassinated or killed in action.

And this is the classical regular army supported by a very strong ideology, but decentralized system, because armies are not decentralized, but Iran created a mixture of centralized and decentralized system in the command and control to make sure that if one command and control or two or 10 are destroyed, all the others are functioning and can replace those who have been hit. So this is the job of Iran was to defend itself. And now Iran is dictating the condition and saying, well, you can leave and lift the blockade, but we don't agree to your terms, you come to our terms.

[Helena Cobban]

Yeah, I think you're right to pinpoint the kind of the survivability, the decentralization, the built in redundancy and, you know, radical decentralization of the command and control that of course, the Iranians had been planning this for more than a decade. I mean, they took a lot of lessons, obviously, from the US backed Iraqi large land war that lasted for eight years in the 1980s. But we've had, you know, numerous things, obviously, Israeli attacks against individual leaders.

Donald Trump's assassination of Qasem Soleimani in, was it 2019?

[Elijah Magnier]

2020. You know, in January 2020.

[Helena Cobban]

Yeah, I mean, this was a kind of a warning signal in case they needed one, which I'm sure they didn't, that this would be the kind of attack that Donald Trump and the Americans and the Israelis would be going for. I mean, it was a very large scale decapitation attempt on February 28. Including, you know, not only as you mentioned, dozens of military and political ideological leaders, but also, of course, many family members that they had, and the school in Minab.

But they were able to survive that because of that planned decentralization. And it's important that you noted that within like, 12 minutes, their retaliation was activated. So my understanding is that essentially, all those US bases that were down the southern coast of the Gulf and right up to Kuwait have been essentially evacuated.

That their radars were destroyed, and many of the airplanes were destroyed, living quarters, and nearly all those soldiers and fighters have withdrawn either to further away in Saudi Arabia, or in Jordan, or massive numbers of them in Israel with all those big American planes parked in Ben Gurion airport because they can't park them in Kuwait anymore. So that was actually a significant military achievement, I would say, to be able to push the American forces back that far.

[Elijah Magnier]

It was indeed, because not only the airplane were targeted, but also very expensive radars that control the interception missile system that the Americans have established in the Middle East. And for the New York Times to say, according to satellite images, all the bases have been completely destroyed or severely damaged. That is really significant when we also have the Washington Post confirming that and saying actually the damage the Americans have suffered, not only 29 billion in ammunition, but also 50 to 60 billion in the asset they've lost in the Gulf country destroyed by Iran, plus 50 to 100 billion, the difference of price of gasoline and all the other commodity that resulted in this war, and in the blockade of the Strait of Hormuz. So we see the damage that the United States has inflicted upon itself only for the pleasure of Benjamin Netanyahu and the Israeli objectives that were never met, caused a real havoc in the world. Now, yes, of course, I agree that there were decapitations at the beginning, but we need to keep in mind that ideological actor, state actor and non-state actor have a command, a horizontal and not perpendicular.

So if you have one person that has been removed, the other person replaced it, and then you have at least for every position, three or five people who can do exactly the same job and each one that is killed, again, the same number is filled up where anyone can do the job as long as the instructions and the plan has been agreed upon. And I think they were very accurate in what they have done. First, they have introduced an element that did not exist before the war, that is the Strait of Hormuz.

Secondly, they've destroyed all the bases. Third, they manufactured ballistic missile systems during the first 40 days, because they started to launch only cluster bomb missiles, ballistic missiles on Israel, because these were difficult to intercept. And even when intercepted, they anyway, will fall in small bomblets on the Israelis.

So we see that all the claims by the Americans to destroy the Navy, to destroy the missile, to destroy the launchers resulted inaccurate. And every single day that goes by offers Iran and the Allies the possibility to reproduce more weapons, but adequate weapons that can meet the gathering of experience that they have accumulated during the war to understand the weakness of their enemy, and where it hurts the most. So this is why the Americans have less appetite today to start the war since no objective is going to be able to be achieved.

So what they do is they inflict pain on themselves, on the Iranians who have been under sanctions for the last 47 years, and on the rest of the world.

[Helena Cobban]

Yeah, you're quite right to note that of those initial war objectives, I mean, at the beginning, I think, well, throughout this whole war, Donald Trump has been very unclear as to what the actual strategic objective is. He does time and again here within US domestic politics return to the issue of Iran's nuclear capabilities, because I think he recognizes that it's painful for the Republican Party going into the midterm elections this November, to have the increase in gas prices and increase in other prices. But then he reverts to saying, yes, but we stopped them from getting a nuclear weapon as though they were about to get it.

I think nobody, well, that's not true-- The number of people here in this country who sincerely believe that Iran was about to get a nuclear weapon has been decreasing a lot. And, you know, just the record of the fact that Iran is a member in good standing of the Non-Proliferation Treaty, and the facts that are coming out now about, I mean, coming out, I've been working on the question of Israel's proven nuclear weapons capability for the whole 45 years I've been here in Washington, DC.

But, you know, there has been this kind of vow of silence that people in the political echelon would not admit that Israel has a nuclear weapons capability. To the extent that one of the recent arguments that was made here, I think maybe by Lindsey Graham or one of the senators was, "We can't let Iran get a nuclear weapon, because if they do that, the Israelis may want to get one," which is complete craziness.

But so, going back to Trump's war objectives, I think, from the point of view of the Israelis, who were the ones who had more clearly defined objectives, the first one was regime collapse, in some way. And the second one was destruction of Iran's missile capabilities. Trump wanted perhaps a Delcy Rodriguez type situation. And I don't know whether how much credibility you give to these reports that he was even considering trying to subordinate Ahmadinejad, the former president, to be his Delcy Rodriguez.

It does strike me as fairly weird as a plan. But anyway, none of these plans have been realized. None of these goals have been realized.

And that is very, very significant, especially given the degree of sheer firepower that the US and Israel expended in bringing us to this stalemate situation, drawing down the interceptor magazine's stockpiles considerably at a global level. So yeah, I think you're right to say that Iran's survival was important and a central goal, but I think they did more than survive. I think they pushed the US and Israel onto a back foot, if you like.

I mean, they haven't pushed them over, they haven't pushed them out of the region as a whole, but they've stepped back. And except, of course, we've seen Netanyahu continuing his outrageous genocidal actions in Lebanon and in Gaza. So is it realistic to expect that Trump will insist that he ends those?

[Elijah Magnier]

He can't. So you made a point on people believing that Iran was about to make a nuclear bomb. That is true, because people who are less informed, or not at all informed, can believe anything when Donald Trump is following Benjamin Netanyahu's narrative and motto that you say things and you repeat them, and someone will end up believing them.

This is exactly what Donald Trump is saying, forgetting that he is the one who said, we've obliterated the Iranian nuclear program, and we bury it completely. Iran doesn't have any more nuclear enrichment, any nuclear enrichment available for them. So he said that at the beginning, he repeated it between June and February.

And then in February, he started, we cannot allow Iran to have a nuclear bomb. So if Iran wanted to have a nuclear bomb between June 2025 and February 2026, it would have made 11 nuclear bombs, as Steve Witkoff and Jared Kushner and all the same orchestra is repeating. But Iran doesn't need a nuclear bomb, because it has the Strait of Hormuz.

And that's more than enough. Why should Iran create a nuclear bomb it doesn't believe in, and it's 60% enriched uranium? It is entirely right, according to the NPT, that does not put a limit to the enrichment uranium.

Iran actually can go to 90 or 93% enriched uranium, but not the military grade, as long as the IAEA organization is monitoring Iran and making sure that there is nothing of a sort of a nuclear weapon program. So for the Americans to say, we stopped Iran from launching a nuclear missile on the United States, which means Iran has already a ballistic missile that can cross 10,000 kilometers with a nuclear warhead. And that is going to cause a nuclear explosion in the United States that has more than 2000 nuclear bombs.

So yes, people who are far from the will to be informed, they can repeat this as much as they want. And they can believe whatever Trump is saying. Now, for your point, is Donald Trump going to stop Benjamin Netanyahu on Lebanon?

I don't think so. Because Benjamin Netanyahu has failed in Gaza, has failed in Iran, has failed in Lebanon. And he's facing a serious problem domestically, because he has election starting from September to November 2026.

Now the Knesset elections are in a few months. And with what he is offering to his people, it's a total failure. And we hear the chief of staff of Israel, Eyal Zamir saying, well, actually, we can't disarm Hezbollah, unless we go and occupy the entire country.

And then we go house by house. So we're talking about projects that will last years with no possibility of success in the horizon. So what he's going to sell to his people, the best thing that he is capable of targets assassination, and the targets assassination ever worked with anyone among these ideological non state actors?

Not true. Because from Sheikh Yassin in Hamas, look where Hamas was capable of producing. After that, the 7th of October with a whole list of leaders that they have been assassinated.

And he continued doing so in the last week, he did the same thing with the new commander of Hamas. Is that the end of Hamas? No, of course not.

He killed so many leaders within Hezbollah. And he's creative and producing a new lethal weapon that is the drone against the Israelis that feel impotent in finding any other way to stop it. So what the targets assassination is doing apart from having a few minutes celebration in Israel, but then we see the Israeli media is picking up against Benjamin Netanyahu saying, well, actually, we need to change the leader, because he's incapable of achieving anything.

Even if Donald Trump, Benjamin Netanyahu managed to achieve the creation of an extreme far right, Israeli society that we have never seen so extreme in the life of Israel.

[Helena Cobban]

Yeah, that does seem to be his major achievement thus far.

If we go to Lebanon, you were talking about Hezbollah having developed, having not only survived the, you know, the pager attack of September 2024, which was quite damaging, and then the massive Israeli assault of October, November of 2024. And then I think a lot of observers thought that at that point, Hezbollah was kind of a spent force.

And through the months after that, so called "ceasefire" of November 2024. The Israelis were, as you noted earlier, daily undertaking major violations of that ceasefire 15,000, according to to the UN force UNIFIL, and killing people and destroying things and taking new hilltops. And people here in Washington, DC would say, Oh, you know, Hezbollah is a spent force.

But actually, no. Actually, Hezbollah was reorganizing and developing these new capabilities. So suddenly, you end up, as you mentioned, with these first person view drones, which are not only very effective in an operational way, and I've seen some of that drone footage, where they were actually hitting Iron Dome missile batteries, or, you know, launch centers, as well as the drone going into the back of a, you know, a personnel truck, and killing the Israeli occupation soldiers. And I'm sure there are other capabilities that Hezbollah both managed to protect and keep after the assaults of October 2024, and to develop since then.

So we have this almost panic in Israel, both at the survival and inventiveness and resilience of the people of Iran. And now also, a similar thing regarding Hezbollah, although, you know, of course, we all know that the price the Lebanese people have paid, like the price the people of Gaza has paid. And the price in Iran has been extremely high.

But there is this kind of inventiveness, systematic, you know, on the behalf of the military resistance people, and the kind of building of survivable and surviving systems that I think people in the West, grossly misunderstood. And one thing I've noticed here in, you know, DC and New York City, is that a lot of the even right wing Israeli people are just in shock as to how, you know, Israel's amazing military, and it's, we need to underline also, the first operational alliance between the Israeli and American militaries in a big war. And even with that, all those capabilities, they were not successful.

So, I mean, you know, maybe people who were here in this country during the Vietnam War had a similar kind of, like, how did those peasants in Vietnam manage to defeat the great American military? And I think there's something similar now about the, you know, the survival and resilience of the resistance movements in West Asia.

Coming back to the issue of if there's this deal. And I don't know if it's gonna even get concluded.

I think Lebanon is probably, I mean, for the decision makers in Tehran, I think Lebanon is a red line. What do you think?

[Elijah Magnier]

The first point of the framework, you call it a deal. I don't call it a deal. I call it a framework.

It's an MOU only because it's a paper, and everything within this paper is negotiable. But to start with one point, the end of the war, and above all in Lebanon. If that is not achieved, there is no deal whatsoever, not even negotiations, because the killing of Benjamin Netanyahu in Lebanon should stop.

Now, Israel has not been very clever, because the Lebanese government attacked Hezbollah by considering it as an outlaw. They disarmed Hezbollah south of the Litani River, and Hezbollah evacuated the entire region in exchange of the Israeli withdrawal from all the occupation territory. Instead, Thomas Barrack, the US envoy, went to speak to Benjamin Netanyahu and returned with this specific sentence, Benjamin Netanyahu do not recognize anymore, the borders. Sykes-Picot is over. There are no limits between Lebanon and Israel, or Israel and Syria. So because Netanyahu doesn't recognize anymore the borders, then he can do whatever he wants.

And he's not going to pull from one inch of the territory he is occupying in Syria and Lebanon. That was the end of it. Hezbollah remained silent for 15 months.

And the Israelis bombed Hezbollah and bombed the civilians also, prevented the Lebanese from returning to their villages, until Hezbollah said, right, you've got your chance. Now it is my turn. We return to the resistance.

We're not capable of defeating Israel. That is not our aim, because it's above our potentiality. But we can make sure that Israel will pay the price of its presence in Lebanon.

This is what the resistance is about. And the motto of Hezbollah today is to defend, the fight to defend Lebanon and its population. And this is what Hezbollah is doing.

The Israelis are bombing the civilians, destroying villages, destroying civilian homes, killing medical personnel, destroying churches, mosques, hospitals, and Hezbollah is hitting the occupation forces. That's a difference of morale between the Israeli army and the rest of the world.

[Helena Cobban]

Just the question of this message from Ambassador Tom Barrack. When was that? Because I remember hearing it.

[Elijah Magnier]

In 2025. In 2025.

[Helena Cobban]

Yeah.

[Elijah Magnier]

He was going backwards and forward to Israel several times, you find it on the internet. He said, Benjamin Netanyahu doesn't recognize anymore the Sykes-Picot and the borders. So he failed to obtain the withdrawal of the Israeli forces, occupation forces from the south of Lebanon.

And the presence of the Israeli occupation forces is meaningless militarily speaking, because today there are drones, they can go anywhere, there are satellite and there is artificial intelligence. And one can fight without occupying a high hill. It's not like in the Second World War, where you need visibility upon the area controlled by the enemy.

You have eyes in the sky 24 seven, and you don't need to occupy their own territory unless you have really ambition to grab more land of your neighbor. And that is the case of Israel. And this is what Benjamin Netanyahu did not hide by saying he is working toward the greater Israel.

[Helena Cobban]

Right. So at the broader regional level, if the American forces have had to pull back largely from the Gulf to points further west, we've seen, you know, some insertion of Israeli forces into Abu Dhabi, I think, primarily United Arab Emirates, where I would imagine they are capable of launching all kinds of provocations if they want to. But still, there has been a substantial drawdown, drawback of US forces from there.

And I think this is like, if you're going to look at the region at West Asia as a whole, this is a huge development. And it really marks, I want to say the end of a period in which the Israelis could hope to have American support for reach their own for Israeli regional domination over the whole region.

[Elijah Magnier]

I wouldn't, I wouldn't say that because the strategic relationship between Israel and America existed before Benjamin Netanyahu and before Donald Trump and will continue to exist. However, there is an unprecedented case today we have for the first time, the two army joined their forces. And that really was significant.

Because the strongest military in the Middle East and the strongest military in the world fought together shoulder by shoulder side by side against a nation that was under 47 years of sanctions, and failed to achieve their objectives. This will have repercussion for the next 10 and 20 years, and will mark the beginning of the decline of the US Empire. Because that defeat, and the implication, the United States imposed on its allies in the Gulf without consulting them, and then threatening them if they don't join the Abraham Accord, that there is no end of the war, which means Iran will bomb them again.

That is significant, because it's going to not raise a serious question about the present and the allies with the United States, but is going to make very clear that it is very damaging to be a friend of the United States in the Middle East.

[Helena Cobban]

Yeah. I'm interested that you say it's going to set back the US Israeli kind of power position for one or two decades, I would say it's actually setting back the US position in the world, more broadly, not just that region, given the sensitivity of West Asia and the Gulf within the world economy and the American strategic planning.

But you mentioned the Abraham Accords, I just want to underline that the Abraham Accords were actually what allowed the Americans to do joint strategic planning with the Israelis throughout the Gulf region.

Because prior to the Abraham Accords, the US Israeli relationship was handled under the European Command, EUCOM. And it was only after you had the Abraham Accords, I think this was the one concrete achievement of the Abraham Accords was that it allowed that joint strategic planning, the effects of which we saw last June and we have seen now. I'd like to just, before we wrap up, go to the whole question of the role of Pakistan and China in this.

We've seen obviously Pakistan emerging as the key, I wouldn't call it a mediator, I would call it a, it's more than a postbox, but not quite a mediator. It's a channel. And it's the channel that the Iranians, I think, chose, rather than-- they previously had used Qatar or other channels, but they preferred to use Pakistan, which is also significant because Pakistan is part of Iran's strategic depth, if you like, part of their strategic hinterland.

Pakistan has a long border with Iran. And also, Pakistan has a pretty close relationship with China at some levels, and with the United States at other levels. So it is an interesting power that the Iranians chose Islamabad as the place for exchange of messages.

And behind the Pakistanis, you have the Chinese. So there is a huge sort of a cross Asia dimension to this, not just a West Asian dimension, but also potentially, and sitting in the shadows, a global dimension to this, you know, given the state of US Chinese relations. But how do you assess the importance of these pan Asian and potentially global factors in what's happening?

[Elijah Magnier]

The war against Iran was extremely significant for China, because it was how the Americans are fighting, and how Iran is retaliating, and what is the best way to cause pain on the Americans? And how fragile are the Americans and what kind of weapons they can use? What are the targets that they have attacked at the first beginning of the war?

All that is under very strict scrutiny by the Chinese. But the main lesson is actually the Americans are incapable of winning a war against a country that is willing to fight back. If we're talking about the capability of Iran and the capability of China, there is no comparison.

China is a nuclear power, but with a very advanced missile and above all air force, and can really inflict serious damage, not only on the Americans, but also on NATO, and all the American allies. However, the Chinese really don't need to fight America. The Chinese made a point when Donald Trump imposed tariff on China, and the Chinese retaliated in kind and he again increased and the Chinese went again to confront him, not to enrage him completely.

They kept themselves a little bit under to make him feel that he is the winner. But they've done that three times that they've increased three times because Donald Trump increased it three times. And they said to Donald Trump, actually, we're ready to fight.

So don't test us. We're not weak. Nevertheless, the size of commerce between China and the United States is huge.

And China is not going to sell all of that. But China is ready to support Iran, as long as Iran is ready to fight, to make sure that the Americans are always busy somewhere else. If they want to spend some time just venting because they have a lot of military and they want to test their weapons, and they want to try their chance against like Iran.

And I don't think the Americans will try again against Iran ever again, at least not in the next 20 years, because the Iranians understood what they need, and how they need to confront a superpower like Iran, but certainly how to confront Israel, because the war with Israel is far from finished. So today, the Chinese are in good terms with the Americans as long as the Americans are behaving in a respectful way toward the Chinese. Pakistan is a great ally of the United States, but also of Iran.

And Pakistan understands that it has a favorite position today in the Gulf countries, because the Gulf countries do not trust America anymore. So the Gulf countries need Turkey and

Pakistan, and Iran to strike a deal with them of alliance and to make sure that these three main major countries in West Asia, and in the Middle East are capable of supporting the Gulf rather than turning their guns against it. Today, the Gulf understood that being an ally, only an ally of the US is not a choice.

They need to diversify, and they need something more substantial, like China. And I think it is not only the beginning of the US empire decline militarily, but the de-dollarization and dethroning of the dollar, it will start by the really shift of so many countries more aggressively in a positive sense of the world toward China, and less toward America.

[Helena Cobban]

Yeah, I think you've absolutely called it right there. And when you talk about the countries of the Gulf, recognizing that they need relations with Pakistan, Iran, and Turkey, there is some difference amongst the members of the Gulf Cooperation Council, obviously. But by far the biggest and most weighty of the members, six members of the Gulf Cooperation Council is Saudi Arabia.

And what we have seen is MBS, the Crown Prince, pulling back from getting drawn into the US-Israeli war plans, which I think was extremely significant. That happened about three weeks ago. And we've also seen the Saudis bring in quite a few air force battalions, or whatever they're called, and some defensive capabilities, which are maybe not mainly operational, but they're very political.

That at the same time that the Emirates have pulled in some Israelis. So, you know, there are differences. But if you look at the relative capabilities of Saudi Arabia versus the Emirates, Saudi Arabia is much weightier.

So, I think you're essentially right.

I just note, parenthetically, before we sign off, that until recently, in any consideration of big strategic issues in West Asia, Egypt would have been on the balance sheet, you know, what is Egypt going to do? People don't even talk about Egypt now, which maybe is a mistake, but it's something worth watching that, you know, Egypt is a country with great potential power, and we need to see what's happening.

There's so much that we have talked about today, Elijah, that I want to follow up on. So maybe we should just schedule another conversation sometime soon. But do you have any parting observation that you think people should be watching for in the coming days?

[Elijah Magnier]

I think people should not be very optimistic when they hear there is a deal between Israel, between the Americans and the Iranians, because the framework is far from it. It's just a paper where they can start discussing. And it is really not something that Israel is going to respect, in particular, the ceasefire in Lebanon.

Claiming the right to defend itself in Lebanon means blowing up the whole deal. And the Israelis told us that they will not accept it. Benjamin Netanyahu, Ben Gvir and Smotrich said

it is out of the question that they will accept the ceasefire in Lebanon, and Iran will not accept to strike a deal with the United States without Lebanon.

So anything that is coming out from Donald Trump is just folkloric. And it is aiming to calm down the market. But actually, it's not the case.

He is afraid of striking a deal. He's afraid of giving back Iran's own money. He's afraid of saying that he has been lying about the Iranian nuclear program, that there is no nuclear weapon there.

And he's lying about destroying Iran's capability because Iran can still fight, otherwise, he would not negotiate with Iran.

[Helena Cobban]

That's a fantastic summary. Thank you so much. I really always really learned such a lot from talking with you, Elijah.

Thank you for everything you do, all your writings, really helpful. People should go to your WordPress and sign up to get your writing, I think maybe two or three great pieces of analyses each week. So just want to tell everybody else, you know, that's watching this, go to our website, www.justworldeducational.org, where you can find all the records of these now 23 conversations. The first one was with Elijah, and this latest one is with you, Elijah. Thank you so much for giving us your wisdom.

[Elijah Magnier]

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