



## What Role is the US Playing in the Escalating Mid-East War between Iran and Israel?

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**Glenn Greenwald (GG):** Israel has long considered Iran to be its arch nemesis in the region. For almost two decades now Israel has been repeatedly warning that Iran is just a few months away, or even a few weeks away from obtaining a nuclear weapon capability; warnings that have never yet come to fruition. Iran has always been the country that Israel claims is the greatest threat to peace in the region. It is the country that Israel claims is a terrorist regime that wants to wipe Israel off of the face of the map. Now, the reality is that while Iran does actually employ proxy agents throughout the region, just like the United States does, the Iranians, for example, do you support and fund and finance the group Hezbollah, which people in that region regard as a defensive force against Israeli incursions into Lebanon, which happens very frequently, but of course, Israel and the West consider Hezbollah to be a terrorist organisation. There are other proxies that the Iranians used, including in Yemen and throughout Syria and Iraq. Nothing strengthened Iran more than the US invasion of Iraq and occupation of that country. So it is true that Iran has tentacles in various aspects of that region, just like most countries who are powerful and large have influence in their own region. But the reality is, Iran has not fought a war since the 1980s, which is when they had a protracted and quite vicious war with Saddam Hussein in Iraq, a war that the United States supported Iraq and Saddam Hussein in. It's hard to make the case that Iran is some kind of unique warmongering country, given that in those decades, since Iran has had their last war, the United States and Israel have both been involved in various ways in numerous wars; countless wars in fact.

It's a very similar dynamic to the narrative about China. We're constantly being told that China is this grave menace to world peace, that they are bent upon military domination. And yet China has not fought a war since 1979. That is a fact. Again, China has influence in its region. It suppresses the people of Hong Kong and Tibet. But China has not fought an actual war with any other country since 1979. Again, think how many wars the United States has fought; from Panama and Yugoslavia and Central America and Grenada and Iraq and Afghanistan and Syria and Libya. Now the war in Ukraine, bombing Yemen, etc..., helping the Israelis bomb in destroying Gaza. The list is endless. And in fact, when the United States

pulled out of Afghanistan after 20 years spending trillions of dollars, losing the lives of many American soldiers, China released a video mocking the United States for the trillions of dollars it spent on these pointless wars. The war in Afghanistan did nothing. The Taliban marched right back into power as if nothing happened. The only two effects of the invasion of Iraq was that Iran was strengthened by eliminating Saddam Hussein, a dedicated enemy of Iran, and strengthening the Shia militias with which Iran uses to exert its influence in Iraq. And then the other effect of the invasion of Iraq was to create a vacuum out of which ISIS emerged. And the Chinese mocked the United States for spending all of their resources on these endless wars that achieved nothing and pointed out that while the United States was doing that, China used its resources to build high speed rail that connected its entire country.

So when we hear these narratives all the time about how China is the aggressor, and the United States, which has military bases encircling China, is the innocent victim, the innocent, peace loving victim, how Iran is the terrorist state, and the United States and Israel are just the peace loving nations that just want the application of world legal systems and peace, I think it's very important to keep in mind how propagandised we are when it comes to that. Now, there were all kinds of reactions in the United States to watching Iran launch a variety of missiles and drones at Israel. Obviously, it was a new event to watch Iran not use proxies to attack Israel, but to actually attack Israel directly. And there were immediate calls from Republicans and others that the United States, not Israel, but the United States, should now go to war with Iran and should bomb Iran.

The reality, however, was that the reason Iran launched those missiles and drones against Israel, missiles and drones that caused no damage, let alone any death inside Israel was because they were essentially forced into that retaliation on April 1st, which is when the Israelis bombed the Iranian consulate in Syria and killed several officials. Remember here from AP, *Israeli strike on Iran's consulate in Syria killed 2 generals and 5 other officers, Iran says*. Quote, "An Israeli attack that demolished Iran's consulate in Syria on Monday killed two Iranian generals and five officers, according to Iranian officials. The strike appeared to signify an escalation of Israel's targeting of military officials from Iran, which support militant groups fighting Israel in Gaza, and along its border with Lebanon".

Now, Israel has done its own damage over many years to Iran. They've launched all kinds of cyber attacks that have been very dangerous. Israel has assassinated scientists, nuclear scientists in Iran by claiming that they're working on Iran's nuclear program. And so it isn't as though these two countries haven't done anything to one another, they have. But bombing an embassy, something that is considered inviolable in diplomatic relations, and that by treaty and convention is sacrosanct in international law, something that is almost impossible to remember a country doing. I think the last time was when the United States, by accident, bombed the Chinese embassy in Belgrade when they were fighting Serbia and they profusely apologised, insisting it was an accident. But I can't remember the last time that a country deliberately bombed another country's embassy. That is a massive escalation, almost guaranteed to provoke a retaliation and a response from Iran, as it did. Now, as I said, Iran wanted to show that it would not sit by passively. No country could. But the actual reality of

what Iran did in responding to Israel was far more restrained and moderate than almost any other country's reaction would have been. Imagine what Israel and the United States would do if a foreign air force deliberately flew a fighter jet over an American embassy or an Israeli embassy in the world and shot missiles at it, destroyed it, and killed top American or Israeli officials, I guarantee you they would do a lot more than what Iran just did. By all accounts, Iran's response, while intended to be dramatic and to look like it was a show of real force, was in fact engineered and calculated by Iran to cause as little damage as possible inside Israel in the hope of avoiding, rather than provoking, further escalation.

Here's the New York Times from earlier today: *A show of might in the skies over Israel*. Quote, "Iran's retaliation for Israel's killing of senior military leaders was a highly choreographed spectacle. But fears of wider war still loom. The more than 300 drones and missiles that hurtled through Iraqi and Jordanian airspace Saturday night before they were brought down, seemed designed to cause maximum drama while inflicting minimal damage, defence officials and military experts say." So let's just highlight there; the point of the Iranian response was designed to create maximum drama while inflicting minimal damage. Which party seems to be the more restrained, the more rational, the more moderate, the more eager to avoid regional escalation? The Israelis that bombed the Iranian consulate in Damascus and killed senior leaders? Or Iran, which deliberately responded in a way that seemed erratic, seemed to be a resolute show of force, but was one which in fact was guaranteed, as the Iranians both knew and intended to cause almost no damage inside of Israel. Quote, "Just as they did back in 2020 when retaliating for the US killing of General Soleimani, Iranian leaders this week gave plenty of warning that they were launching strikes. Iran also sequenced the attack, a retaliation for airstrikes on Iranian embassy building in Syria on April 1st, in such a way that both Israelis and Americans were able to adjust their arsenal aerial defences once the Iranian missiles and drones were in the air. The result: a lot of bang, but relatively little destruction on the ground. Few of Iran's drones and missiles found their intended targets, an inaccuracy level that military experts and defence officials say probably was by design." Let's emphasise that part as well. The fact that there was no damage, was an inaccuracy level that military experts and defence officials say was probably by design.

So unlike the Israeli attack on Iran, which blew up their building and killed their senior officials, the Iranians responded in the most harmless and benign way possible – on purpose. By not using their most powerful weapons, by not using fighter jets, by not shooting missiles from Hezbollah, their proxy, which has over 100,000 highly precise missiles aimed at almost virtually every Israeli city. There's no doubt Iran could cause a lot of damage inside Israel if it wanted to. And the reason it didn't was because they purposely used the kinds of drones and missiles with advanced warning – everybody knew exactly when the attack was coming because Iran signalled it, that would be designed to avoid escalation. Quote, "Iran planned the attack in a way that would send a warning to Israel and create deterrence, but avoid sparking a war, according to two members of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, who spoke on the condition of anonymity because they were not authorised to speak publicly. Mr. Biden has made clear to Israeli leaders that while the United States is committed to defending Israel, he has no interest in attacking Iran. In fact, the president and his team, hoping to avoid further

escalation, are advising Israel that its successful defence against the Iranian airstrikes constituted a major strategic victory that might not require another round of attack retaliation, U.S. officials said".

Now I have not given Joe Biden credit, in almost any instance that I can remember over the last six months, since October 7th. He has financed and armed the Israeli devastation of Gaza with no limitations of any kind, with no red lines, with no conditions, as he has done throughout his entire adult career. But it seems like American officials understand what Netanyahu tried to do here, to purposely spark a major retaliation with Iran that would then lead to a wider regional conflagration in which the United States would feel duty bound to join a war fighting Iran, which is what the Israelis have wanted for a long time. Here from AXIOS yesterday, quote, *Biden told Bibi, U.S. won't support an Israeli counterattack on Iran*. Quote, "The official said that when Biden told Netanyahu that the U.S. Will not participate in any offensive operations against Iran and will not support such operations, Netanyahu said he understood. U.S. Secretary of Defence Lloyd Austin spoke on Saturday with his Israeli counterpart Yoav Gallant and asked that Israel notify the U.S. ahead of any response against Iran, a senior Israeli official said".

The United States and Western countries have major interests in avoiding a regional conflict involving Iran. Just to begin with, the spike in oil prices that it would cause would be highly destabilising to the American and Western economies, which is obviously something Joe Biden seeks to avoid heading into an election just a few months from now. But on top of that, the United States has repeatedly seen the futility, in fact, the counterproductive outcomes of involving American military and American service members directly into a mideast war. And so both the West and the United States are saying to Israel, look, it's your choice what to do, but we don't think you should engage in a serious retaliation against Iran. We'll see what Israel does. Unfortunately, there are members of both political parties, the wing of both parties that constantly wants to bring the United States to war, that supports every single conceivable conflict that the United States may get involved with. Here is Senator Marsha Blackburn, the Republican of Kentucky, on April 13th, saying the following: "Iran has begun launching drone strikes on Israel. President Biden, we must move quickly and launch aggressive retaliatory strikes on Iran." Tennessee. Did I say Kentucky? I meant the Republican from Tennessee. So here is Marsha Blackburn, not just saying that Israel should go and start a war with Iran and do a major attack on Iran, but that the United States should. Even if you want to blame Iran for everything and claim that this harmless attack on Israel was some sort of grave act of war that merits massive retaliation [inaudible] war, why does the United States have to treat an attack on Israel as if it were an attack on the United States? Iran isn't threatening the United States. Iran has repeatedly made clear diplomatically and through its behaviour that it seeks to avoid a war with the United States. In fact, when President Trump launched that highly provocative attack on Iran when it killed General Soleimani, a major figure of great importance to Iran, the Iranians were being urged by hardliners in the country to respond in an extremely aggressive way and yet they mostly did to the United States what they just did to Israel. They had to show their dignity in not letting it go, but they purposely responded in a way that would be restrained and moderate and

designed not to provoke future conflict. In addition to Marsha Blackburn, we have Senator John Fetterman, the Democrat from Pennsylvania, who for reasons that should be studied at some point, has become one of the most fanatical and extremist supporters of Israel. He's almost never willing to criticise Joe Biden and yet, Senator Fetterman has repeatedly criticised Joe Biden for not doing enough to fight for Israel. The New York Times editorial board published an editorial saying, quote, *Military Aid to Israel Cannot Be Unconditional*. Now the New York Times is owned by the Sulzberger family. They are self-described Zionists. They have been editorialising in favour of Israeli wars, including the Israeli war in Gaza after October 7th. The New York Times is very pro-Israel. And yet John Fetterman thinks they're insufficiently supportive of Israel. And in response to The New York Times calling on military aid to be conditioned on the Israelis not ignoring all humanitarian considerations, not bombing aid workers, not using famine as a weapon, Fetterman responded, no, "no conditions". We should just arm Israel without limitations of any kind, even if we believe that their behaviour is harming American interests, that shouldn't matter to us. Israel should be the priority, not American interest. Because there are many times when US support for Israel conflicts with and undermines US interests. And so often politicians in Washington insist that it's not American interests that should be prioritised, but Israeli interests. Earlier today, the Foreign Minister of the United Kingdom, the former Prime Minister David Cameron, appeared in an interview where he was denouncing the Iranians for this grave escalation, and he was asked a question and gave an answer that I regard as highly revealing. This is actually yesterday he was on Sky News, and here is what Foreign Minister Cameron had to say.

**David Cameron (DC):** 101 ballistic missiles, 36 cruise missiles, 185 drones, that is a degree of difference, and I think it is a reckless and dangerous thing for Iran to have done. And I think the whole world can see all these countries that have somehow wondered, well, you know, what is the true nature of Iran? It's there – in black and white.

**Sky News:** What would Britain do if a hostile nation flattened one of our consulates?

**DC:** Well, we would take very strong action.

**GG:** I mean, isn't that amazing? With a 28 second clip to watch David Cameron contradict himself, almost in a unselfaware manner. He began by saying, basically, Iran has no right to respond to the destruction of its embassy and the deliberate killing of its senior officials in Syria by the Israelis and then the reporter asked him, what would the United Kingdom do if somebody did to a British embassy what the Israelis just did to an Iranian embassy? And David Cameron said, obviously we would respond with great force. We would respond very aggressively. Maybe just play that again. I think it's really worth hearing.

**DC:** 101 ballistic missiles, 36 cruise missiles, 185 drones, that is a degree of difference, and I think it is a reckless and dangerous thing for Iran to have done. And I think the whole world can see all these countries that have somehow wondered, well, you know, what is the true nature of Iran? It's there – in black and white.

**Sky News:** What would Britain do if a hostile nation flatten one of our consulates?

**DC:** Well, we would take very strong action.

**GG:** Is it possible? This is what I always wonder about in these kinds of exchanges, whenever the United States or Britain or other Western countries so flagrantly, often within two minutes, make clear that they believe certain standards and rules apply to other countries, but not to the United States and Great Britain. Like the right to respond aggressively when your embassy is flattened, and I genuinely always wonder whether there's any self-consciousness about the fact that they are clearly engaging in a form of self-contradiction that is so incredibly obvious, or whether they're so inculcated in this kind of propaganda, that it's just so instinctive to them to say these things, that they have no idea what it is that they're saying. One of the most telling examples I've ever seen about this was on February 27th, 2022, on Fox News, just a few days after Russia invaded Ukraine, the Fox News host Harris Faulkner hosted an interview with the former national security adviser and Secretary of State for the Bush-Cheney administration, Condoleezza Rice. And she was not only occupying those positions, but Condoleezza Rice was one of the most aggressive advocates for the invasion of Iraq, which at the time nobody argued was a country, Iraq, that was threatening the United States. The idea was, well, at some point in the future, they may be able to pose a threat to the United States, and therefore we're taking a pre-emptive action to impede that. Something that was unrecognisable in international law, the idea of pre-emptive or preventative invasion of a sovereign country that isn't threatening you at the time, but in some speculative sense might. She went around the country, Condoleezza Rice did, saying, Look, people are asking for proof that Iraq has weapons of mass destruction. The problem is, we can't wait for that proof to materialise in the form of a mushroom cloud over the United States, meaning that Iraq was going to hand nuclear weapons, that it did not have, to terrorist groups who would then nuke the United States. She was a leading defender of the invasion of Iraq, and to this day believes that the United States had the right to invade that sovereign country. So here is this conversation three days after – Russia did not pack up its military and go attack the country on the other side of the world that wasn't threatening it, they attacked the bordering country based on the perception that what the United States was doing in Ukraine, the promises to expand NATO up to the Russian border was a threat to the Russians. And here is what Harris Faulkner and Condoleezza Rice had to say about that Russian invasion.

**Harris Faulkner (HF):** Well, and I have argued that when you invade a sovereign nation, that is a war crime. I mean, I think we're at just a real basic point there.

**Condoleezza Rice (CR):** Well, I agree, it is certainly against every principle of international law and international order. And that's why throwing the book at them now, in terms of economic sanctions and punishments, is also a part of it. And I think the world is there. Certainly NATO is there. He's managed to unite NATO in ways that I didn't think I would ever see again after the end of the Cold War.

**HF:** Really?

**GG:** Let me just play that question again that caused Condoleezza Rice to nod in agreement.

**HF:** Well, I have argued that when you invade a sovereign nation, that is a war crime. I mean, I think we're at just a real basic point there.

**GG:** So she is saying to Condoleezza Rice, just as a general principle, in fact, Harris Faulkner said, it's so obvious, like self-evident, that if you invade a sovereign country, by definition you're a war criminal. You're committing a war crime. And she's saying this to Condoleezza Rice and I think neither of them have any conscious sense that the behaviour they're condemning is behaviour in which Condoleezza Rice was centrally involved. And you can always question, is this just a cynical, Machiavellian attempt to use propaganda while understanding fully what they're doing? I don't think it is that. I think people like Condoleezza Rice and Harris Faulkner, who are so drowning in American propaganda for so long, are incapable of seeing anything outside of it. And so they really do believe that when Russia invades Ukraine, that makes the officials responsible war criminals. And they're incapable of applying that rationale to what they did in Iraq. The human brain should not be capable of that kind of self negation. And yet, you see it all the time. American officials go around condemning Russia for having relationships with repressive regimes when the closest American allies are some of the most savage, brutal dictatorships in the world, like Saudi Arabia and Egypt. And there's no sense of that contradiction at all. Because the United States and top foreign policy makers really do believe that the standards they impose on other countries don't apply to themselves. And the problem with that is that the rest of the world increasingly is becoming very resentful of that, and increasingly because of the role of multi polarity and the rise of an alternative alliance led by China and BRICs, these countries have the opportunity now to express that resentment and increasingly are moving toward China, which expertly exploits this kind of resentment. But it's just amazing to watch in such exquisite form. And the idea that Iran somehow did something evil and outside of the bounds of decency in responding to the bombing of their embassy, when every single country on the planet, certainly United States and the UK, would have not just responded, but far more aggressively and violently and destructively than what the Iranians did, is so illustrative of how countries, even ones that don't like to think of themselves at this way, are propagandised to the point where people inside of that system can't even critically evaluate it any longer.

**GG:** Thanks for watching this clip from System Update, our live show that airs every Monday through Friday at 7 p.m. eastern exclusively on Rumble. You can catch the full nightly shows live or view the backlog of episodes for free on our Rumble page. You can also find full episodes the morning after they air across all major podcasting platforms, including Spotify and Apple. All the information you need is linked below. We hope to see you there.

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