



Trump's "Victory" in the Iran War Is Just an Illusion

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Glenn Greenwald (GG): Good evening everybody. It is Glenn Greenwald. I am very happy to be back on what I guess is kind of a sequel to or a manifestation of our System Update program. We definitely intend to do more video along with the writing that we've been doing, but we're building a new studio. The studio that we were in for the last three years is one that requires a big team of people in order to operate multiple cameras and the like. So this is sort of a toned down reduced version. We have one studio built, I've been using that a little bit, but we want to have a separate one. I hate to bore you with all the logistics, but that's the reason. And also I've been traveling a lot. I think I mentioned in the post that I did earlier today, announcing tonight's Q&A that I traveled twice to the United States in the last, like say two and a half weeks, including to do a debate, a two hour debate, about pretty much every topic there is to debate, that should be out on a very large internet platform – I can't say which – either this weekend or I believe actually it'll be next weekend. So look for that, I'll certainly let you know. But anyway, here we are. And for those of you who aren't familiar with what we do on Friday night, we basically have a Q&A session where we collect questions and comments and critiques and thoughts and suggestions and topics from our subscribers throughout the week. We try and get to as many of them as we can. Obviously we try to align some of them with the biggest of the items in the news. It would be strange if I didn't talk about the war in Iran, for example, or last night's FISA vote. But often we get topics that I can address that we don't necessarily choose on our own. It's an important way that I stay accountable and responsive and interactive, which I always consider to be a crucial part of my journalism in general, what I do here on Substack as well. So this has always been something that people have really responded to well. A lot of people were kind of insisting since we moved to Substack that we resume this part of it. We haven't been doing a lot of videos because of the travel, because of the rebuilding of the studio, so this is a good way to kind of dive back in. For those of you who don't know, we always put all of our videos, either taped or live, both here on our Substack page or if you're watching on YouTube, on our YouTube page. Often we try and do it on Rumble as well, though technically Rumble is a little strange sometimes with live broadcasts, but we always put it there as well. So there are lots of places that you can watch.

So we have a lot of questions; I want to try and dive right in. I try and keep these prefaces short, I didn't succeed that much tonight. Although I can go a lot longer with my preface; trust me I have before. So let's just dive right into these questions especially because it's a big news day, there's a lot to talk about. And the first question is from Richard Jaffe. This is about the war in Iran. I have to say today was a very strange day in the war in Iran because President Trump went to Truth Social and just began unilaterally insisting essentially that the war was over. The United States won. Iran essentially surrendered – but we didn't use that term. You may remember that a few weeks ago, near the start of the war, Trump said the only outcome of the war that he would accept is what he called unconditional surrender, which comes from World War II terminology. A lot of people like Mark Levine and Netanyahu and Lindsey Graham have been encouraging Trump to think about this war with Iran through the prism of World War II. And of course, World War II ended by the United States using two atomic bombs on Japan in order to provoke what we called unconditional surrender. And that was what Trump was calling for. So Trump basically has been trying to depict what happened here as some great American victory, making a lot of claims about what Iran agreed to, claiming that Iran agreed to open the Strait of Hormuz, forever, never to close it again, claiming that Iran will stop funding Hezbollah and Hamas, claim that Iran would voluntarily give over all of their enriched uranium that's buried underground, not force the United States to go and get it, they will just hand it over.

And even though there are reports today from the US government, the Israeli government, that the United State was in the process of lifting sanctions or even giving Iran tens of billions of dollars in unfrozen assets – we steal their money, they sell their oil, we steal their money, we freeze it, we keep it for ourselves – President Trump says, no, they're giving us everything, and we're not giving them anything in return. No money, no nothing. I find it very hard to believe that Iran would ever do a deal where sanctions weren't lifted. So Trump is not really explicitly denying that. But interestingly, what's so odd about it is that everything we kept hearing about what this deal was, which is Trump making claims about it on Truth Social and he started calling reporters and making all kinds of wild claims to them about how he got everything he wanted, they gave him everything, we gave them nothing, it's a complete great victory, and a lot of people who were worse supporters of MAGA were doing this kind of war dance, this victory dance, this like vindication dance: Look, we told you it ended so quickly, we got everything, we destroyed them, they surrendered, and the whole time, the strangest part was there was no announcement from any other country that any of this happened. It was just Trump being Trump. And it's not the first time Trump has claimed: Oh, they're on their knees begging, they want to give us everything they want. And a lot of people just took this at face value, including a lot of journalists because he called them and they like that. He calls them and they write down what he says and they run to Twitter like: Hey, I just got off the phone with President Trump. And every time there was a new reporter doing that, the claims about what Iran supposedly conceded escalated. They get more and more and more and to him in exchange for absolutely nothing. Obviously there's a ton of reason for skepticism, usually if a deal is announced to end a war, both parties announce it, that's what happened with India and Pakistan, that what happened in the ceasefire deal between Israel and Gaza, it's what typically happens in a war. But in this case, all we had

were Trump's claims all day that he was making a Truth Social and then he eventually gave a press conference where he made very similar claims.

And I just want you to know two things about this. One is, even if you want to believe Trump's maximalist version: We gave Iran everything they could possibly have asked for, they surrendered, they're not getting anything in return, even under this Trump version that's utterly uncorroborated, et cetera, Iran did get something very significant, which is Iran has been saying from the start that they will never agree to a ceasefire, let alone a conclusion to the war unless Israel stops bombing Lebanon. That was something that was going to almost jeopardize, that almost jeopardized the ceasefire to begin with; was Pakistan, which had mediated the talks between the United States and Iran, said the deal includes the cessation of hostilities, not just between the US and Iran but all of their allies, including Lebanon. And then immediately Netanyahu did that gigantic massacre in Beirut, killed upward of a thousand people in about ten minutes all throughout Lebanon but also in densely populated Beirut. And then the Israelis and Americans began claiming that, oh no, it doesn't entail cessation of hostilities in Lebanon. But today President Trump said that he was prohibiting Israel, ordering Israel to no longer bomb Lebanon, that this was enough. And right after Trump did that there were reports of Israeli bombing in southern Lebanon. But Trump says that that's something he gave to Iran, is a promise that Israel would stop bombing Lebanon.

The Iranians, of course, are allies with Hezbollah and have an interest in making sure that they don't abandon Hezbollah. Hezbollah entered the war in support of Iran, began attacking Israel after Israel attacked Iran with the United States. So even there, there's conditions that Trump himself is saying he agreed to meet when it comes to the Iranians. But after a few hours of all these wild claims floating around, the Iranians came out and they said: None of this is true. We would never give our enriched uranium to Trump. This is as sacred as Iranian soil. They said the Strait of Hormuz is not open. It is open only in coordination with the Iranian military. You have to get their approval. You have to get their coordinated routes. And they were tracking devices and platforms that were showing that there was very little traffic entering the Strait of Hormuz. Trump, of course, is still claiming that the United States military is blockading the Strait of Hormuz, but only with respect to oil coming from or in relation to Iran. But Iran seems to have been vindicated by the fact that there's almost no international traffic transgressing through the Strait of Hormuz today. Iran says that there is no deal. And then Trump came out also and admitted there's no deal. He said, I think we're very close. I'm sure we're gonna get a lot of great things. They asked him, they said, Iran says: You're still very far apart. He said: Well, we'll see if we are. I don't think we are, I think we're very close, we should get a deal over the weekend. And if we're far apart, then we'll just have to deal with that.

One final point is that every time Trump makes one of these announcements, and he's made them many times before, that the war is ending, we don't think we're gonna have to go much further, we're getting to deal with Iran, the stock market, the oil markets go wild. There are these gigantic leaps in prices or drops in prices. And every time there's aberrational activity where people seem to be betting quite heavily in unusual amounts about some event that's

about to happen with the war in Iran, and oftentimes, usually, they turn out to be very pro-right, and a lot of people are making tons of money on these constant, seemingly weekly announcements that the war is over. Hopefully, the war is over. Any decent person should want the war to be over. But this triumphalism that emerged today from MAGA people, from war supporters, was absolutely bizarre to watch. And it didn't happen from all of them; like the more serious ones, the ones who really want Iran destroyed, as opposed to the MAGA people who just want to applaud whatever Trump's doing, people like Lindsey Graham and Mark Levine are again, expressing anger about the possible end of this war. They're enraged that Trump purported to bar the Israelis from attacking Hezbollah more. They're angry that the regime is still in place in Iran, that we didn't bring freedom and democracy to the Iranian people. They still have ballistic missiles. There are still sites where there's suspected nuclear activity going on. But nonetheless, I mean, as far as I'm concerned, given how dangerous this war is, given how wrong-headed and illegal and morally unjustifiable it was to start it, anything that ends the war, including letting Trump think he won, everything is fine with me, but we did purposely choose a comment that was reflective of this general sentiment about how we won everything, the war is so brilliant, Trump is so brilliant, he's a great war hero, and I think a representative comment, a thoughtful comment and representative of this sentiment came from Richard Jaffe who said, quote, "Brilliant one-two punch from Trump. Step one: systematically dismantle Iran's military industrial base and degrade its proxy network. Step two: choke off the regime's cash flow by blockading all oil exports. Within weeks, storage fills, production shutdowns, and restarting becomes slow and expensive. That combination starves the IRGC of funding while keeping direct pressure on the regime itself. Let's hope we keep the boot on the neck until Iran cries uncle and hands over the 900 kg of enriched uranium."

Okay, I mean, yeah, if everything perfect happens like that, then you could have a stronger case that the United States, I guess, won in some way. But for now, none of that has happened. There is no handover of the 900 kg of enriched uranium, according to the Iranians. They're not doing that. They aren't going to do that. And Israeli and American reports say that Iran has at least half of their ballistic missiles, tons of drones, the capacity to make more – yeah, we destroyed things in their country. We killed some of their leaders. There's a big cost to that. We lost at least 13 American soldiers, I think it's going to prove to be much more. Lots of casualties, dozens, if not hundreds. On the first day we blew up 170 Iranian schoolgirls, which we were supposedly there to liberate, to say nothing of all the other civilians that were killed throughout this war. Those are real costs if you actually believe anything you were saying about liberating the Iranian people and caring about their interests or whatever, but even from purely American perspective, gas prices went up, maybe they'll come down, probably not to the extent that they were before, but this perception that the United States just goes around bombing and attacking and invading and blowing up whoever we want, including countries that have not attacked us and are not about to attack us, let's remember that in the last 30 years, the United States has seen multiple major terrorist attacks on American soil, on the American Homeland, continental United States, 9/11, the Boston Marathon attack, the Pulse shooting, attempted bombs in Times Square, on airplanes, and then more minor ones that still killed a lot of people, Fort Hood. If you look at every single

one of them, attacks on the United States on the homeland over the last 30 years, the total number that came from either Iranian terrorists or Shia-terrorists is zero – zero. They were Sunni terrorists that came from the countries that we actually propped up and embraced, like Saudi Arabia and other parts of the Persian Gulf. And so Iran is not a threat to the United States. We went to war with them because we said Israel was about to attack them. And the more the world perceives the United States as this kind of bully that just starts wars whenever we want, we don't have any regard for international law, we impose that on the people, we don't do it ourselves, there's a reason why countries in regions traditionally dominated by the United States and Europe, like Africa, like Central and South America, like parts of Asia, are turning to China and away from the United States. And I think people should think about the reason for that. Why is that? Why are people, why are countries around the world not wanting to seek the United States as their primary partner and turning instead to China?!

Brazil, for example, is the second largest country in the hemisphere. The largest country in South America right in the United States backyard, the sixth largest country on the planet. For decades, the United States was Brazil's largest trading partner. That's no longer the case. Now China is Brazil's largest trading partner and you see this repeated all throughout the world. And China has not fought a war since 1979. In the last 47 years, China has not fought a single war. And obviously they're doing quite well as a country by every metric. I don't mean civil liberties. I don't mean from the perspective of their citizens, but in terms of economic prosperity, in terms of technology, in terms of their military, in terms of becoming a world power. They have exploded in influence and power and growth, economic growth, growth of every kind over the last half century – while the United States – even though they've not fought a single war, the last war they fought was a one month border dispute with Vietnam in 1979 – look at how many wars the United States has fought in that time. That's why we're a country drowning in trillions of dollars in debt while our communities are falling apart, our infrastructure is shit. I'm always amazed whenever I visit the United States, which I constantly do, every place I go, I was in Los Angeles last week, I was in Miami and New York the week before, and you just see the infrastructure crumbling in airports and bridges and roads. And you compare that even to a country – I was in Malaysia six months ago, which is just booming; to say nothing of Asia and the Persian Gulf. And you can see the transfer of wealth because we are spending all of our resources on wars, on going to debt to pay for them, on building this gigantic military while our citizenry crumbles.

And so, okay, we weaken the IRGC. How was the IRGC a threat to the United States? During the Democratic Party's obsession with Russiagate, one of the reasons why I always knew and kept saying that aside from all the other problems I had with Russiagate, that it was a subversion of democracy and attempt to reverse the election, the CIA and the FBI manufactured it, it was journalistically fraudulent, it was dangerous to tell Americans that their grievous enemy was Russia since they're sitting on the world's largest nuclear stockpile to just feed them anti-Russian hatred every day to prevent American and Russian officials from being able to speak, aside from all those problems I had with Russiagate, the problem for the Democrats I always knew politically was that Americans don't care about Vladimir Putin. They don't wake up and think about the Kremlin or what's happening in Moscow. They

don't wake up and confront the problems their families have or that they have with health care and with the fact that they can't afford housing or start families or have to work multiple jobs just to try and keep above water – just to say nothing of the difficulty, virtual inability to have one parent stay at home with children, which ought to be the option of every family in an advanced society –nobody woke up and was thinking: Oh, this is Vladimir Putin's fault. And so the fact that Democrats just badgering on and on and on about Russia, created this huge disconnect between what the Democratic party was talking about, what liberal media was talking about on the one hand and what Americans cared about on the other. I think the same is true with Iran. I've never heard anybody, except inside the political class, claim that Iran is the cause of great problems for the United States, for American citizens.

So we'll see how much of this brilliant, ingenious success, this great war triumph, actually comes to fruition. Even if it all does, I still think this war is a monstrosity. But the fact that Trump is running around on Truth Social, just spouting out things, anybody who's observed Trump knows that this is what he does. He's always done that. I got the greatest building in the world. It's the greatest goal. Nobody ever thought it was possible; this is Trump from selling buildings in Manhattan to talking about his game show on NBC prime time, to running in campaigns, to his ballroom, to his library. I mean, everything is the greatest. Everything is the greatest success. Of course, skepticism is required when Trump is just out there spouting that Iran unconditionally surrendered basically and gave Trump everything he wanted in exchange for nothing. Why would the Iranians possibly do that? Obviously, they have a strong enough military to keep the Strait of Hormuz closed. They were pounding the crap out of American military bases in Bahrain and Saudi Arabia in Kuwait, in Iraq, in the United Arab Emirates, in Qatar. And they were pummeling Israel. Yeah, they were getting pummeled too, but Iran is a formidable military force still not anywhere close to surrendering to giving Trump everything he wants.

But here we are, it's now April, the midterm election is about five months away, and Trump seems incapable of focusing on affordability and domestic issues because he's constantly involved in these foreign conflicts, the exact hype that he said he was going to avoid. So, if the war ends April 6th, which is about seven weeks after it started, I'll be happier than if the war ends seven months after it started. I want the war to end, but I'm not going to affirm or uphold this fiction that it was some great victory for the United States, that we somehow made ourselves more secure. Iran was not a threat to the United States. We shouldn't have bases in the Middle East. We don't need military bases in the Middle East. All those countries will voluntarily sell their oil to us. We don't even need oil. We're a net exporter of oil. We're there to protect Israel. And Iran and Israel definitely have adversarial interests. They're the two largest powers in that region. Israel wants Iran smashed because if Iran is shattered into little pieces, Israel has no more counterweight in the region. They dominate that entire region. No one can stand up to Israel. So I get why Israel wants a war with Iran. And I guess if Iran's capabilities are degraded in a way that's beneficial for Israel, but none of what was promised here has actually happened. The Iranian regime didn't fall. The people didn't rise up. There's no freedom or democracy in Iran. The IRGC is very much in power; arguably even more radical and hardlined people are in charge. The population is weakened, they're united behind

their leaders as every population gets when they're attacked by foreign powers. Iran has plenty of ballistic missiles, plenty of drones, plenty of industrial capability to create more. They have small boats to terrorize, boats that pass through the Strait of Hormuz, they can wreck the economy at any time, they can hit energy and gas infrastructure in the Persian Gulf. The Houthis could get involved and close the Red Sea, which could create – they have plenty of cards, plenty of cards. They're not unconditionally surrendering anything.

I mean, yes, the United States achieved air superiority, total air superiority, not total, but close to total in Iran. If there were a ground invasion, you'd bet on the US military against the Iranian military. But the same was true in Iraq. We had total air superiority in Iraq and the Iraqi military dispersed in weeks. It was a guerrilla war. That went on for years. We killed tons of Iraqi leaders, including Saddam Hussein, his two sons in the first months. What did that mean? What did get the United States? Nothing. No one doubts that. But the issue always was Trump has two choices, both of which are bad ones. He started this war. Number one, end it very early and have no credible way to claim that the United States won. I can guarantee you Iran is not going to stop fighting and agree to a ceasefire and give up all these things without having sanctions lifted and getting their assets back. In other words, basically the Iran deal; except Obama didn't have to go to war to get the Iran deal. Or he can go and try and fulfill all these war goals. These were to bring freedom and democracy to Iran; like he said on the first day was his main goal. That's what he told the Washington Post. All the stuff about Iran killing 30,000 people or 40,000 or 80,000, or 100,000 people whatever number you feel like picking on any given day. None of that is addressed. There's no different government in Iran. I mean, obviously the people who were killed were replaced by other people of the same ideology or sometimes even more extreme. The United States can go start a war anytime and steal people's resources. We can go and start war in Saudi Arabia and just take all their oil. It doesn't make it a war that should be fought. Nor does the fact that we just got to kill a bunch of Iranian leaders and blew up some stuff, bridges and oil refineries and petrochemical plants. None of that means it was a good war. None of it means it is a just war. None of this means it was a wise war. None of the means we won.

And it was kind of amazing today, and maybe it was just online, especially on acts where there's a very heavy presence of like the hardest core MAGA followers, like the ones who see Trump almost like as a transcendent leader and want to believe everything he says and want to believe that everything he does is good and right and are very unwilling or at least highly reluctant to criticize him, and that's a very dominant force on X – it might've created this perception that more people were buying into this than were. And I think the polls show that Americans have been against this war from the start, and that opposition rose as the war went on. I think it's important to keep that in perspective. But we obviously have some Trump supporters and conservatives; I hope we do still in our audience, and I understand that you want Trump to do well, but you shouldn't sacrifice your own critical thinking, your own autonomy, your own dignity in order to affirm things that are just not true. And I get the questioner is not saying we got all these things, he's saying if we got these things, but you know, if I like sprout wings today and then like use it to fly to Jupiter and find some tonic that gives me and my loved ones guaranteed immortality and eternal that'll be a pretty good thing,

but those are big, big ifs. So I don't spend a lot of time thinking about that. We're very, very far away from this triumphalist scenario that Trump spent all day spreading.

END

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