



Trump's Iran Gamble: Operation Epic Fury and Death to the Dictator

March 3, 2026
Featuring Eli Lake
Hosted by Mark Dubowitz

DUBOWITZ: This is *The Iran Breakdown*. So, let's break it down.

Eli Lake, welcome to *The Iran Breakdown*.

LAKE: Oh, it's great to be here. I'm a listener myself. I love it.

DUBOWITZ: So, Eli, you and I have known each other, I think, almost 20 years.

LAKE: Yeah.

DUBOWITZ: I think we've both been working on the Iran issue for 20 years. I imagine if the – if the – my case, I don't know how old you are, but if the 38-year-old Mark Dubowitz was speaking to the 30-something Eli Lake 20 years ago about today's developments in Iran, we never would've predicted today's events.

LAKE: No, I – in many ways, I'm still trying to get my head around it. Trump himself is this kind of figure that we would say historically is kind of like he's bringing in a new order. He's violated lots of norms. The way that this has come about and the presumption behind it, that we can take out the regime from the air, which it looks like their – they've done or they're doing with Israel – and we don't need the boots on the ground. So, we don't have to be the peacekeepers and the army trainers and effectively sort of ignoring what was known as the Pottery Barn rules. If you break it, you own it.

You didn't need a vast international coalition, but that coalition has come together since the war started. It seems like in a lot of ways, all of the things that we thought we knew about geopolitics either – were just not true and they don't apply to this war. And I don't want to underestimate the damage that the Iranians have done, but they have, I think, in many ways looked to be a paper tiger at this point. More – they're not as ferocious. It wasn't the cascade of horrors that every other president was presented in when looking at – even aerial attacks on their nuclear program. And we learned that in Midnight Hammer. So, I mean, yes, there's a lot of assumptions about what we thought we knew. And yet here we are, and I think it is ultimately historic and a good development that finally this regime is collapsing before our eyes.

DUBOWITZ: Eli, I think that's right. I mean, our good friend, Rich Goldberg, calls me – always calls me a Nervous Nelly because I think it's true. I'm somebody who expects the worst and then gets surprised on the upside rather than expecting the best and getting devastated on the downside. So, I'm still nervous and cautious about how this will ensue, but I think you're right. The military performance has been spectacular, both the United States and Israel. I guess the question I have for you, and maybe we'll start with this because you are the host of really one of my favorite podcasts, *Breaking History*.

LAKE: Thank you.

DUBOWITZ: A tremendous podcast. And you had a really terrific series on Iranian history and covered it in lots of detail. I've been working on Iran file for 20 years and I learned a lot from the podcast. So, I would strongly recommend listeners to go to *Breaking History* and the Iran series that you did.

What can we learn about the potential for positive transformation inside Iran from what happened in the past? And, you know, without going into too much detail, what are some episodes in Iranian history that maybe foretell a positive development, but also are notes of caution?



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LAKE: Well, a couple things. The first I would say is that there – I believe there's a tension in Iranian history, which is if you go back to the late 19th century, there has been a kind of clamoring for holding Iran's leaders to account and having some sort of democratic transformation, which has resulted, we should say, in mixed results. But that led to the 1905 Iranian Constitution, the formation of the *Majles*, which is their parliament. And those institutions, very much modified, and in the case of the *Majles*, very much neutered, but they still exist. So, I like to point that out, that it's not like they've never known any notion of constitutionalism or there's never been any kind of representative government in Iran. That's not true. And even in the, you know, Islamo-fascist regime that is being destroyed today, they would still try to make it seem like they were democratic.

I mean, there were presidential elections, even though the regime would sometimes interfere when they – when the Iranian people didn't vote the right way as they did in 2009, or – and they would always restrict who was allowed to run. And the representatives in the *Majles* were frequently overturned, of course, by the Council of Guardians – these clerics – this kind of institution that was set up after the 1979 Islamic Revolution. But it's just false to say that the Iranian people don't have an expectation or a genuine desire for democracy. And we know for more than 20 years, the Iran's democratic opposition has called for the position of the Supreme Leader to be eliminated, for a kind of return to the pre-Islamic Republic constitution. So, it's the idea that you have to sort of reinvent the wheel and introduce a population, all these things that's not true. On the other hand, there's an even longer tradition of an entity of Iran being ruled by a strong king.

And what I always think of as kind of an irony of Iranian history is that in 1979, when Ayatollah Khomeini finally, kind of, takes over – he really takes over the revolution, I should say, because there were lots of elements in that revolution – and his followers assert dominance when he comes back in February of '79. That – in that moment, there was this celebration that we have just ended 2,500 years of Iranian monarchy, only to then see the creation of the office of the Supreme Leader, which there's only been two that look an awful lot like a Supreme leader. So there is, I think, that in this respect, even though I've recently been writing – I would say – fair but critically of Reza Pahlavi, one of the reasons why I think people who know Iran see him as an attractive figure is because there's nobody else who could be the kind of person who every Iranian would say, "Okay, he's going to be running the country at least in a transition." And that does play to ideas of Iranian history.

And also, because the Iranian people, many of whom were not even alive under the reign of the Pahlavi Dynasty, kind of ask – look at the pre-'79 Iran as a sort of golden era compared to what they have now: constant war, failing infrastructure, a potable drinking water crisis, the total collapse of the Rial, a government that spends more money on trying to terrorize the Middle East and particularly Israel than it does in caring for its own citizens, and rampant corruption from a regime that at least says that it is upholding Islamic jurisprudence.

So, all of these things, I think we both would recognize there's been a legitimacy crisis for the Iranian regime now going on at least 25 years in my view, but that also doesn't necessarily mean that you – that there wouldn't be an advantage to having a central figure. Now, the only other thing I would add to complicate this is that the 1905 or the Constitutional Revolution between '05 and 1911 really didn't have a central figure, but that led to, you know, a pretty rough period, even though they had their constitution, it wasn't like the sort of glorious moment for Iran.

They were still dealing with outside powers. They were dealing with a totally collapsed economy. You know – there was a famine. I mean, there was a lot of problems in Iran, then that's what led to Muhammad Reza Shah [Pahlavi], the first Pahlavi Shah. So – but all of that said is that I see that as a kind of tension, tension between the king and democracy, and that's one of the factors that is kind of leading to this moment. But the one thing is – that is clear to me is that the vast majority of Iranians would like to be through with their current regime.



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DUBOWITZ: So, Eli, there is a tension, and I think there's a tension in President Trump's rhetoric and perhaps in his framing and an idea of where he wants to take this. Because on one hand, he has said, I think repeatedly now that this Venezuela-like situation with Maduro gone and a Persian Rodriguez in charge is something he would be willing to entertain. And that would be, you know, perhaps a army general or maybe – if there's such thing, a more pragmatic IRGC commander, who's willing to actually deal with America and sign terms of surrender and then essentially stop their nefarious behavior but leaving intact essentially the government and not going through a significant demolition of the regime. Because Trump has said – and I think we've got to be cautious about these historical parallels – but he has said, when asked why he wasn't going immediately to democracy in Venezuela, he said, "Well, we tried that in Iraq. We moved through de-Baathification that led to an insurgency that gave us ISIS." That's sort of how he put it.

So, on one hand, Trump may reach back into Iranian history and find an autocrat with whom he can deal. On the other hand, he has said to the Iranian people, including at the beginning of this war, "This is your once in a generation opportunity to take back your country." And taking back your country means the Iranian people taking back the country. And that certainly – I think underscores the desire for representative democracy. So, attention in Iranian history and attention in the president's rhetoric and perhaps his own end state.

LAKE: Well, a couple of points on this. I would love to know what Trump means when he says, "All the people we thought we could deal with are now dead." That suggests that he wasn't aware that – of the robust targeted list of the Israelis who I believe are taking out the regime officials. I can't believe that he wouldn't have known about that. I don't know how to interpret those remarks. There were all kinds of Iran experts who thought maybe somebody like Ali Larijani, who was a national security advisor and is effectively the – was de facto running the country, I think even before the war.

I think that, you know, there were some people who would hope that maybe he could be that Rodriguez figure, right? That he could be the interim guy. But based on his public statements, I'm not sure that that's in the cards. But what I hope is that it's such a corrupted shell of itself that we have to understand the context here. Like – before the current war that started on Saturday, the reason that the regime could – was – could no longer enforce the hijab rule on women is because they – people were just defying them. Women, you know, And the Women Life Freedom in this one narrow sense kind of won, which was the last time you saw this major national uprising. It'd been clear when I visited Iran at the end of 2002, and I was only in Tehran, but young people didn't believe any of the things that were coming from the Supreme Leader about living a pious life.

There are certainly a core of people who I think still support the – that system, but it's not the majority. It's nobody who would be in the future leadership class.

So, the – my hope is, is that there are going to emerge figures inside, maybe outside, I think Reza Pahlavi has good ideas for how he would understand the transition. That could then sort of present themselves as a place from which the corrupt, non-ideological, non-true believers could rally to. And one thing I'm watching closely is the Iranian National Army, as opposed to the Revolutionary Guard Corps, because the National Army was created by Pahlavi's grandfather. That is an institution that predates the Islamic Republic. And I just think that there's a much better chance that you will see those generals and those people with guns rally to what a transition versus, you know, some of the other institutions like the Revolutionary Guard Corps or the *Basij* militias.

DUBOWITZ: Okay. So, I want to shift from the Persian *Game of Thrones*...

LAKE: Yes.

DUBOWITZ: ...To the MAGA Game of Thrones.



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LAKE: Yes.

DUBOWITZ: You had a great article in the free press entitled “JD Vance's Iran Dilemma: The vice president is caught between Donald Trump and Tucker Carlson.” So, Eli, lay out the highlights of that. We'll also link in the show notes to your column and to your *Breaking History* podcast. But tell us what's going on in Washington. We don't talk a lot about domestic politics here on *The Iran Breakdown*, but we have a lot of international viewers who still may be quite puzzled, particularly by the character of Vice President Vance and where he sort of sits in the – in the Iran framework and also in the – sort of – MAGA game of thrones that's taking place as people are vying for the president's attention and persuasion.

LAKE: Well, JD Vance is widely considered the heir apparent to Donald Trump, and he is prohibitive favorite to win the 2028 presidential primary for the GOP. And one of the things that he has going for him is that Charlie Kirk – the late Charlie Kirk's organization, Turning Point USA – has already announced in their annual conference in December, that they were going to help get JD Vance elected to be president after Trump. And that represents a kind of ground game in domestic American politics that no other potential rival to Vance could possibly hope for. They're well organized, they're well-funded, and they really represent the young Republicans of the 2020s in a way that you could argue Young Americans for Freedom in the era of William F. Buckley represented the young Republicans, you know, 50 years ago.

So, he has a lot of institutional advantages. And one of those advantages is just being the vice president next in line and having a job that on the one hand, I think he is very busy. He's an important advisor to the president. He has – he plays an important role in many policy decisions. But on the other hand, he – his main job is, you know – there's an old joke in *West Wing*, “My main job is to have a pulse.” So, he gives him the flexibility to be political. And his political mentor, his very close friend, Tucker Carlson, who along with Donald Trump Jr., helped get – to persuade Trump to put him – to make him his running mate in 2024, has been on a real journey since the second Trump presidency began. And, he has articulated what he sees as, in his own words, the difference between America First and MAGA. America First, in his view, is very much of – I would – looks a lot like neo-isolationism.

Doesn't matter what happens in the rest of the country. He is very suspicious of the influence of Israel on Donald Trump. More than suspicious, he has condemned it. And Americans who are pro-Israel, he has blamed globalists and the old elites for allowing lots of immigrants into the country that have changed the character of our nation. These are very powerful ideas. And in some cases, JD Vance has articulated this as well. JD Vance is also, when he was a senator briefly from Ohio, a major critic of any kind of US support for Ukraine. And, you know, was willing to – although it's complicated in the case of JD Vance, because JD Vance believes that Israel is a good ally, in some ways a model ally because it doesn't need America to fight its wars for it. But certainly, JD Vance, when he sort of articulated his views, he delivered them to the Quincy Institute, which is allegedly a think tank whose vice president, Trita Parsi, created the pro-Iran regime lobby in America.

DUBOWITZ: Yeah. But Eli, what I found interesting about that choice of venue, because I remember that – when JD went and gave that speech. I thought it was kind of interesting. I mean, for JD Vance to come to FDD and give a speech, calling Israel a model ally would've been like, “Okay, of course we agree with you...”

LAKE: Yeah.

DUBOWITZ: ...Mr. Vice President.” He went to Quincy Institute, which is a neo-isolationist think tank led by a individual who has been one of the strongest supporters of the Iranian regime in Washington.

LAKE: Yeah.



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DUBOWITZ: And he went right into the belly of the beast and he said, "I support Israel." And I have to say, I've got disagreements with the vice president, particularly on Ukraine, but what I've seen publicly and what I've heard privately is interesting because he seems to be quite a steadfast defender of Israel. And I understand that he goes around the world and tells other countries, "Why can't you be more like Israel?"

Because they are, as you say...

LAKE: Yeah.

DUBOWITZ: A model ally, which is, by the way, the phraseology used in the National Defense Strategy that was authored by another supposed neo-isolationist or somebody who's skeptical of American power, Bridge Colby, who is number three at the Pentagon. And yet Bridge very explicitly used that language in the document. So, do you think there's an Israel exception to JD Vance's worldview? Has Tucker Carlson not persuaded his old friend of...

LAKE: ...Well, that's the part of it that's kind of unclear.

DUBOWITZ: ...Israel? Yeah.

LAKE: So, Tucker Carlson had a very hostile, and I thought, dishonest interview with ambassador to Israel, Mike Huckabee. And Tucker Carlson said a series of wild slurs against the Jewish state. His team deceptively edited a clip of the ambassador where it made him seem like he was saying that the Bible promised the entire Middle East to the end, it would be fine. When, in fact, if you watch the entire clip, what you see is Huckabee saying several times, "Israel doesn't want to take over the rest of the Middle East. This – they just want this small part of the land." But, you know, it was edited in such a way – or that – it was cut off at the point where he said it would be fine if Israel – And so that caused a minor diplomatic incident.

You know, I would expect that if Trump saw that, he would say to himself, because Trump is very fond of Huckabee, "What the hell is Tucker doing?" I even wrote a piece that Tucker [sic. Trump] had privately asked Tucker to, you know, tone it down, you know, when it comes to his really virulent criticisms of Israel and pro- Israel supporters in the MAGA coalition. But when JD Vance was asked about it, he said, "I think it's a really important conversation for the right to have right now." And I thought it was really interesting. Now that's not committing to the Tucker view, but it's awfully soft when you look at that entire interview where among other things, you know, he was saying that, you know, he would like to see Israelis genetically tested because apparently, you know, he had kind of resurrected this theory that, you know, has been dead – discredited for many years that Jews today are descendants of the Khazari kingdom and not – anyway, that's kind of irrelevant.

My point is, is that, you know, Tucker is clearly kind of playing with fire and Tucker has himself personally intervened with Trump. He's, you know, a very important part of the MAGA movement. He has access to the White House, he meets with Trump, and he has urged him not to do this war, to tell Israel they can't do it. And that's been Tucker's view. He's expressed that. And then if you add to this, the other guests that Tucker has had on his show in the last two years, they include, you know, kind of popular historians – I'm using historian very generously here – who believe that maybe Churchill was the villain of World War II. They include Nick Fuentes, who is a kind of self-proclaimed admirer of both Hitler and Stalin, and, you know, has been a vicious critic of JD Vance himself. And so, this has kind of, in the last few months, created a lot of pressure on JD Vance.



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Are you going to talk to your friend? Are you going to publicly distance yourself from Tucker, who is clearly going down a road right now that most of the Republican Party, I think, rejects? And a lot of Trump's, you know, most, you know, vocal supporters and important supporters, people like Mark Levin are being attacked by Tucker every day. And there is a kind of tension like, "Well, what's your relationship with this guy?" And it's been – that's where this is coming from. So, what's interesting is that for the entire weekend – for 48 hours – JD Vance did not say anything – and this is somebody who is addicted to social media – after the Operation Epic Fury begins. And finally, last night, we saw him. He went on Jesse Waters on Fox News. And it was interesting what he said because he did not repeat what Tucker Carlson's line has been and other popular podcasters like Megyn Kelly who have said, "This is a war for Israel and the president was lured into this, you know, quagmire by Benjamin Netanyahu and Netanyahu's supporters in the United States." That's the line from Tucker.

It's the line from Megyn Kelly. Incidentally, it's also the line from Iran's foreign ministry and it's the line, you know, you would find that on, you know, any number of fringe internet websites. And, you know, sadly, many voices inside the Democratic Party as well. So, what we saw is that, you know, JD Vance did not say anything like that. He said, "No, we had to make sure that Iran would never ever get a nuclear weapon."

But – and he explained that this is not going to be an endless war and that Trump would never allow that to happen and that it was unfair to compare this to Iraq and Afghanistan. So, I think he was sort of the loyal, you know, the loyal number two in that...

DUBOWITZ: ...Well, to be fair, Eli, I mean, I just wanted to clarify, he said that after the war started, but he also said that before the war started. I mean, he actually came out...

LAKE: Yeah.

DUBOWITZ: ...Quite strongly, publicly, saying that, you know, Iran was being completely recalcitrant at the negotiating table...

LAKE: Yes.

DUBOWITZ: And not willing to accept a zero-enrichment deal, which as he said, made no sense because there's 23 countries in the world that have civilian nuclear programs without enrichment. And I understand that he was calling for, not a symbolic strike, but quite a decisive blood.

LAKE: Yes, that's what the *New York Times* was reporting, and I can confirm that. But on the other hand, he also – I mean – what I – my reporting is also that he worked with others, mainly like General Dan Caine, to make the risks known to Trump. Now, there's different ways you can interpret that. My sources said, you know, he was very vocally opposed in June to the 12-Day War, and he was less vocal this time, but he preferred to have that case made by the military professionals, like the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. But we'll see kind of how it turns out because I think that there's a part of JD Vance who understands that there's a significant segment of the right that are going to vote in primaries that are dead set against the war at least now. Now that might change if there is success and we'll see. But it doesn't help that one of the most popular and important kind of influencers, I would call Tucker Carlson, a movement leader of sorts within MAGA, has started the war by claiming that is – it has come about as a result of the machinations of the Israeli prime minister and prominent pro-Israel Americans.

That's, by the way, an echo of traditional antisemitic tropes and it's dangerous stuff. It's also false, by the way. Trump put an end to that today when he was asked that in the White House. He said, "No, of anything, I pressured Israel," which I thought was great answer. And, you know...



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DUBOWITZ: ...He also said, by the way, important to clarify, he also said, "I am MAGA."

LAKE: Yes.

DUBOWITZ: Tucker and Megyn Kelly are not MAGA. This is the second time that Trump has slapped Carlson back...

LAKE: ...He also said, "I don't care what Carlson says," or something like that. I think he was in a bad mood when Rachel Bade got him on the phone...

DUBOWITZ: ...Well, bad mood or not. I mean, back in June, if you remember, he also slapped Carlson back...

LAKE: ...Yeah.

DUBOWITZ: When Carlson was advocating against the 12-Day War and he basically said if Carlson – he called him "Kooky Carlson." He said if he wants to get himself a TV channel, and again, he once more reiterated, "I am MAGA and I'm the president and commander-in-chief." So, I find it interesting for two reasons. One is Trump is being quite assertive

LAKE: Right.

DUBOWITZ: In hitting back against Tucker Carlson and Megyn Kelly. And the second thing is, I mean, Eli, it seems to me the vice president is taking an enormous political risk by wrapping his arms around this war. It would've been, I think, easy for him...

LAKE: Right.

DUBOWITZ: ...To have – he doesn't want to distance himself from the president and the commander in chief. He is the vice president. But he could have been much more careful and much more nuanced in creating enough daylight so if things go wrong...

LAKE: Right.

DUBOWITZ: ...Can then say, "Look, that was the president's decision, not my decision. You know me. I'm opposed to all wars," and then run on that. But I think if this goes badly, it's going to be a political albatross around Vance's neck, and it surprised me.

LAKE: In fairness – well, the other side of that though is if he was trying to have it both ways, I think that in that case, you know, Trump would smoke that out. And, you know, the one person besides Tucker maybe that could deprive Vance of the presidential nomination would be Trump if Trump decided to back somebody else in '28. And while all signs point that Trump will probably end up supporting his vice president, he has not yet said when asked a few times in the last year, "Will you be endorsing JD Vance in 2028?" He has not said yes. He said, "We'll see." Now, that is how – that's Trump's modus operandi. I mean, that's how he operates. He's first and foremost a show man he likes to keep people engaged. But, on the other hand, I think that Vance understands that he doesn't really have many choices here. What really this tells me about is sort of like – how long can this go on with Tucker?



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Because one of the points I made in the column that came out today was that, you know, up to now, Vance has been able to have close friend relationships with both Trump and Tucker, and we might be in a – seeing the beginning of the end of that. And that at a certain point, maybe it would be best for both parties if Tucker sort of said, "All right, I'm on my own now." Because clearly that that's where Tucker's heart is at this point. I mean, Tucker has suggested that Israel was behind the JFK assassination. We are talking – we are in a land of make believe. And, I'm just saying it's one thing for a president every four – you know – on – in election years to try to go, you know, as Trump did – went on Alex Jones, right? You know, In 2016, because he wants the people who listen to Alex Jones to vote for him. And I understand that. But Alex Jones was not advising the president on monetary policy.

The difference is that Tucker Carlson has become Alex Jones in many ways, in terms of being a conspiracy theorist and somebody who is incapable of sort of giving a reliable narration of reality as we know it. And is also, in some ways, you could argue, an important advisor to Trump. He helped pick the vice president.

DUBOWITZ: Well, true.

LAKE: He does have access to the president. He goes to the White House.

DUBOWITZ: He does, but the president doesn't seem to be listening to him.

LAKE: Well that's also true.

DUBOWITZ: Not on Iran. Not on Israel. And those are the two issues that Carlson is obsessed with. The president seems to be literally ignoring his advice. The other thing I found interesting, what I think you probably found amusing as well, is that the Qataris...

LAKE: Oh, I love this. I love it.

DUBOWITZ: Explain to our viewers what happened.

LAKE: So, one of the many things in this, like, long hour and a half monologue that Tucker posted, you know, on Monday is he said, "I have exclusive information that Israeli Mossad agents in Qatar and Saudi Arabia have been arrested." And, you know, Qatar, you know, Trump – Tucker has talked about buying an apartment in Doha. He's interviewed their prime minister. He's, you know, he's fairly close. He likes the Qataris. Came out today and said, "That's not true. We didn't arrest any Israelis or anything like that." So, sort of knocking that down. And then the other part of it is that, and this is kind of to the big story, which is the war. The Qataris are now attacking Iran. It's extraordinary. I never thought I'd live to see the day. And that is in part because the Iranians once again miscalculated. And when they started random – I mean, it's almost like, it reminds me of one of the last – one of the last scenes in *Scarface* with [Al] Pacino where he is like, "Say hello to my little friend," and he just starts randomly spraying bullets everywhere. That's Iran.

And what was the response from Saudi – the Saudis who were at least publicly on the fence saying they supported the diplomacy, even though we now know that Mohammed bin Salman was urging Trump to do it, but they've joined the war. Qatar has joined the war. The United Kingdom, at this point, reversed their position and they've joined the war. So, if anything, you know, what we're seeing is even though Trump did not go into this with a coalition of the willing like George W. Bush or George H. W. Bush before he expelled Saddam Hussein's army from Kuwait, he's getting that international coalition, kind of after the fact in a way, which is also interesting. So, there hasn't been a kind of diplomatic price that the United States or Israel has paid either.



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DUBOWITZ: So, Eli, I want to wrap up with this because you've also been a keen observer and obviously a great reporter on the nature of the US-Israel relationship, which as you say, is under some political assault here in Washington on both the left and the right. But it occurs to me that what we're seeing actually in the skies is the most extraordinary coordination that the United States has ever had with a military partner at the peer level. I mean...

LAKE: Yes...

DUBOWITZ: ...World War II, obviously we closely coordinated with our British friends, but they were certainly a junior partner in the European struggle against Nazism. And yet, the Israeli Air Force, my understanding, has flown at least half of the combat missions in the past four or five days. They've flown those missions from a thousand miles away, whereas our folks are flying obviously from carriers and from Middle Eastern bases that are closer by. You've alluded to this. The Israelis have really been the ones to be taking out the high-level military security and political leadership of the regime as we – and rightly so focus our attention on the massive military arsenal that Trump has promised to destroy. And more recently, we're going after key nuclear facilities along with the Israelis. What – to what extent as you think forward, if this is successful – and it's still a big if – but if this war proves successful, do you think that level of US-Israeli military and intelligence – and political and diplomatic cooperation – will strengthen pro-Israel voices in the MAGA movement?

LAKE: Oh, that's a great question. I think there's a couple other context here and that is – on the one hand, Israel is facing some of the worst polling I've seen in the United States, and it's certainly in Europe. Some of the things that mainstream politicians are saying now about Israel, I can't believe, you know, if – they're kind of unprecedented. So, there's reason to be concerned about the US-Israel relationship, of course. On the other hand, the – Israel has demonstrated a kind of military and intelligence prowess that at least I think would translate to kind of almost a revolution of military affairs – in that it's perfected this thing and we saw the version of it in Venezuela. Which is that you do not need to have a massive invasion and ground force to take out the leadership of your enemy. And that was just demonstrated in Iran. That is extraordinary, and that is because of intelligence innovations, but I think also technological innovations.

And the American military is benefiting from that as we speak in this joint operation. So that's one thing. I would expect going forward that Israel technology and innovations will be incorporated into the American military, and there's a lot that our military's going to learn. One thing, it's unclear whether it was demonstrated over the weekend, but Iron Beam, which is a laser-based missile defense system, which doesn't need these very expensive interceptors, kind of ideal for America's Golden Dome that Donald Trump talks about. So, this is a very cooperative relationship. And it also gets to something else, which is a big lie from the Tucker crowd, but also the left, which is that America is fighting wars for Israel. That's not true. Israel is fighting wars in many ways, you know, with America, for American national interests, but Israel's also got a lot of skin in the game. It's not just you know – when – you know – we were able to have that very successful Operation Midnight Hammer with the B-2s because Israel had taken out the air defense system.

So, it was a very, you know – wasn't as risky a mission as it would be otherwise. And then add to that, that Israelis are living in bomb shelters right now because they are, you know, being targeted by the ballistic missiles of the Iranians. Americans are not, you know, seeing a disruption of their daily lives because of what Iran is doing right now. So, I mean, I just think that that's important to sort of correct the record. As for MAGA, I mean, I just think if this succeeds, and there are ways we'll know it will succeed. If you see after the fighting stops, a massive push of Iranians in the streets demanding a new government and you see some sort of transition, I think that will count as a major success. It's a world historic success and Trump will get the benefit, but so will Israel. And I think it'll be very difficult to say that this was a war of choice, another endless war on behalf of Israel.



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I think that argument will just not – you know, I don't think it'll be able to make that argument with a straight face in MAGA. And I think Democrats would be in peril if they made that argument because it wouldn't stand up to reality. Right? I mean, you can say all kinds of things, but if it doesn't ring true, you'll have your activists cheering you on as you lose another election, which we saw which happened to the Democrats when it came to other issues like, you know, gender ideology or, you know, their position on the police. So that's danger as well for both parties. So that's my hope is that, you know, the success and the facts on the ground – but I would just add to this, and I think it's related. I was blown – I mean, I was really surprised to see European governments that were very hostile to Israel, I don't know, six months ago before the Gaza War, kind of, came to the ceasefire, pretty much demanding – agreeing with the Israeli and US position that Francesca Albanese should be fired, or that you're seeing, I think it was Germany had recently said that they don't want to support UNRA in Gaza going forward.

I never thought I would see the day where you'd see major European capitals taking a position like that, but they're – and that is policy that really matters in a way that some of the optics, as bad as they are – you know, don't have the same kind of substance. I mean, do you agree with that? That it's...

DUBOWITZ: I do. I do. And I would add to that just that, you know, you're seeing European governments now, with the exception of the Spanish, who are terrible under a left – radical left-wing leader. But with the exception of the Spanish, you're seeing more and more European governments supporting this effort against Iran, the president of the European Commission...

LAKE: Yeah.

DUBOWITZ: You've obviously – you've seen the Japanese come out and allies really around the world. Who really, at the end of the day, they may have major disagreements in the United States, and Israel and other things, but they understand what a threat the Islamic Republic is, not only to the Iranian people, not only to the Middle East, but to – but to European countries that are in – right now – in Iranian missile range. I would just conclude to this. I do hope and pray, and certainly on *The Iran Breakdown*, we talk about this a lot, that we will see a free and democratic Iran...

LAKE: Me too.

DUBOWITZ: ...And prosperous for Iranian people. I do think the president has defined the war objectives more modestly, even though they're not modest. The war aims, he's defined, as we are going to severely degrade, in his view, destroy the Iranian missile program, the Iranian nuclear program. And particularly with US cooperations, severely degrade and destroy Iran's terror capabilities. And then open up the streets, open up the space, as President Trump says, for that once in a generation opportunity for the Iranian people to take back their country.

I do hope the president, working with other leaders, when this war is over, will lead double efforts of maximum pressure on the regime, maximum support for the Iranian people, and maximum fracturing of the support base of the regime. Even those objectives, if the president reaches, I think that's a resounding success. And I think, then, that paves the way for potentially the end of this regime and for a free, democratic, and prosperous Iran. But Eli, I just want to thank you so much.

LAKE: Thank you.

DUBOWITZ: Thank you for your phenomenal reporting on this issue for so many years, for your great work at the free press, and we're looking forward to *Breaking History* coming back.

LAKE: It's coming back. We got it good – we're working on it now.



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Okay. Thank you so much, Mark. Alright.

DUBOWITZ: All the best.

LAKE: Thank you.

END