



## **Prof. John Mearsheimer on Israeli Escalations, Ukraine's Losses and More**

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**Glenn Greenwald (GG):** We are excited to have one of our most common guests, one of our most popular guests, if not the most popular guest. He is a political scientist and professor of international relations at the University of Chicago, he has written many books on international relations, has proven particularly prescient in his views on Ukraine and Russia, and the war that the West has been supporting there, when very few people were saying what he was saying, he was saying it very loudly. And I think a lot of people will acknowledge that he's been vindicated. We always love having him on our show. He's very, very informed and provides a lot of clarity into some of the most important issues that we're facing. Welcome, Professor Mearsheimer to System Update. It's always great to see you.

**John Mearsheimer (JM):** Glad to be here, Glenn.

**GG:** So, how do you know, I can't wait to talk about other things than current wars. But we have to keep talking about these current wars because the United States is financing them and arming them and using its standing in the world to keep them going. So let's start with the war in Gaza that Israel is prosecuting and has already been prosecuting for eight months, that killed 35,000 people. Certainly that's a conservative number, given how many people are under the rubble that they can't remove and can't count. But we just had a situation where the world watched dozens of women and children being incinerated in a fire and having no working health care system because their hospitals have been bombed. And now Israel says that this war will continue until at least the end of the year, for another six or seven months at least. So I think you can look at that in two ways. One is you can say this shows that Israel is really determined to eliminate Hamas, even if it means destroying the entire population of Gaza and Gazans themselves. Or it could mean that Israel is so desperate because they know they can't achieve that war aim, that they just want to keep the war going. How do you view the announcement by Israel that they will keep this war going until at least the end of this year?

**JM:** Well, I think it's important, Glenn, to understand what Israel's main goal here is. It's not to defeat Hamas, and it's not to get the prisoners back. The main goal is to ethnically cleanse Gaza. And what they're doing is, number one, killing large numbers of people and number two, making Gaza unlivable. If you just sort of look at what the Israelis have done, destroying hospitals, destroying schools, destroying administrative buildings, destroying the homes, or badly damaging the homes of, you know, 75 plus percent of the population, they're making the place unliveable. I would also note to you that a lot of people are dissatisfied that Benjamin Netanyahu does not have a plan for the day after. My view is the reason he doesn't have a plan for the day after is he doesn't expect the Palestinians to be there. So it's important to understand that what the Israelis want to do is keep the pressure on the Palestinians and see if they can cleanse Gaza. So that's what's going on. And I think that for that reason, this war will continue for a long time to come, and the Israelis will do very little to help the Palestinians get back to some sense of a normal life.

**GG:** So what you're describing as the real goal of the Israelis in this war, and I want to make clear that it's not just you saying this, but top Israeli officials, part of the government have often admitted that their goal is to take back both the West Bank and Gaza, to flatten Gaza, to make it essentially a place where no Arabs can live. And then the Israelis can go in and clean it up and rebuild it, and then it will be theirs. What you're describing, what those Israeli officials have said, they're trying to accomplish, is clearly the core definition of genocide. It's the cleansing of a certain group of people based on ethnicity or religion from a place, regardless of the motives. You have the International Court of Justice that just ordered Israel not to conduct a military operation inside Rafah because of the view that this will be a crime against humanity, far too many civilians will die, and they have a pending question of whether Israel is guilty of genocide and war crimes, which is supported not just by the South Africa but by many other countries. And then you have the United States, which is the main country funding and arming this war and protecting it, obviously being complicit in aiding and abetting it in every way. Do you think that the world now watching the International Court of Justice issue orders only for Israel to say, we don't care about that, we're going to ignore it and for Joe Biden to say and for other members of Congress to say, we might actually punish the International Court of Justice if they impede Israel. What effect will have that on how Israel is perceived and how the United States is perceived in the world?

**JM:** Well, you want to remember, Glenn, it's not just the ICJ, the International Court of Justice, although it is playing an immensely important role here, it's also the ICC. Right? It's the ICC that is trying to get arrest warrants for Prime Minister Netanyahu and his defence minister, Yoav Gallant. So there's sort of a one-two punch here. My view is that this is going to do enormous damage to Israel's reputation over time. What's happening here is that the ICJ and the ICC are creating facts. They're writing lengthy reports, they're issuing judgements. And these reports and judgements will be in the historical record forever. And they are a black mark on Israel's reputation that is never going to go away. It's also going to be a black mark on our reputation as well, because, as you said, we are complicit in what has become a genocide.

**GG:** A rhetoric that the United States used when it came to Vladimir Putin and the war in Ukraine, was that their goal was to re-establish or to affirm and preserve what they called a rules based international order. They heaped praise on the International Court of Justice when it concluded that Putin and other Russian officials were guilty of war crimes. And now you have this scenario where when you have a BRICs summit in South Africa, South Africa says we want Putin on our soil, but we're obligated by this convention of which we're signatory to turn him over to the court because he is now deemed a war criminal. And yet, at the same time, the US lost in the 1980s in the same court and then immediately withdrew and proclaimed itself immune, even enacted a law saying it had the right to use military force to remove any American officials being held in The Hague. This seems to me to be a kind of turning point because, as you've pointed out many times, we're not in a world any longer where the US is the sole superpower. It is now a multipolar world where you do have China exploiting this argument that the US isn't just a hypocrite, but the biggest threat to a rules based international order. Do you think that there's real damage not just to Israel, but to the United States, from everything the world is seeing in this?

**JM:** Sure. I mean, the United States went to great lengths to create the liberal international order or the rules based order, and we did it because it was in our interest. And, we've now ended up taking a number of very public steps that show that we don't really take the rules based order all that seriously. I mean, we're protecting Israel at every point. We vetoed UN Security Council resolutions, were putting pressure on the ICC to rule in ways that are favourable to Israel and so forth and so on. And this can only make us look like giant hypocrites who don't really take the rules based order seriously unless the rules favour us. If the rules don't favour us, we disobey them or we rewrite the rules. That's the way a lot of people around the world think about how the United States deals with the rule based order. And as you said, when you're in a multipolar world, this is problematic, because the other two great powers in the system have quite a bit of weight and can do all sorts of things to undermine the rules based order. And if you look at the Chinese, what they're doing is they're creating institutions of their own. They're trying to create an order of their own with things like the AIIB (Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank) and so forth and so on. And this is bad news for us.

**GG:** One of the topics on which you most focus as an academic and a scholar is the question of great powers and how they behave in the world, what motivates them. And I think central to that is this idea that if you want to be a great power, there needs to be credibility to your statements. When you issue warnings, when you make statements about your intentions, you have to follow up on those. Otherwise, you will be perceived as at least unreliable, if not in some way weak. Here we have Joe Biden over the past eight months inflicting on themselves, accepting a series of humiliations, he called the Israeli invasion of Rafah a, quote, "redline" which is president speak for if you do this, there will be serious consequences. The Israelis immediately said, we're going to violate that and ignore it. We don't care about your redlines and they invaded Rafah. And now the White House is left to try and say why it's not a full invasion. He didn't totally disobey Biden. At the same time, you have the Americans saying they wanted to bring aid into Gaza because the population is facing famine and

malnourishment by land. And the Israelis basically said no. And so Biden was forced to build a pier because our own ally who's war we're funding, said, we're not going to allow you to bring this aid by land and so we had to go build a pier, and now it's a pier that the minute some rain came broke up into small little pieces and floated away. In all of the studying that you've done, say in the post-World War II era about America's standing in the world, have you seen the willingness of the United States government to accept one humiliation after the next, the way they've done over the last eight months in service of Israel?

**JM:** No. I have never seen anything like this before. Look, as a good realist, I believe that material power or hard power matters the most, but like any sophisticated realist, I fully understand that soft power, diplomacy, your reputation, your credibility, all of these things also matter. It can't be pure hard power. And the truth is that the United States has always actually been very good at exercising soft power. We're very good at putting a velvet glove over the male fist, to put it in simplistic terms. And when it comes to what the Biden administration has been doing, we're not showing any evidence that we maintain our ability to exercise soft power. It looks like we've lost the magic touch, so to speak. And the consequences of this are grave.

**GG:** Now, you wrote a very consequential book with your colleague, Professor Stephen Walt, in 2006 entitled *The Israel Lobby*, which sought to document – for me it was a real piece of not just scholarship, but journalism – to document the power of this lobby inside the United States. The reason why we always defend Israel, why we feed Israel more money than any other country. There have been a couple of times in the past where Presidents Reagan and Bush 41, wanted to confront Israel and had some acts of resistance, but they were met with a lot of accusations of anti-Semitism and other things. And since then, no one's really done it. And your book sought to explain why; why is the United States so afraid to confront Israel. It seems to me that in addition to the Israel lobby, as you described it in your book, we now have a growing sector of the Republican Party who will acknowledge very explicitly that the reason they regard it as vital and paramount to support and defend Israel is because their religious ideology, their theology, compels them to see Israel as a blessed nation by God, as a nation that sort of stands above all others, that they have a moral obligation to defend Israel. How important was that in 2006, that motivation, and how important is it now when you look at just how much time Congress spends holding hearings on Israel and talking about Israel and enacting policies to Israel, going to Israel, speaking to the Israeli Knesset, how do you see that motive in Washington?

**JM:** Well, there's really two things that have happened here, Glenn. One is that Israel's behaviour has become more outrageous with the passage of time, and that means that the lobby has to work harder and harder each year to defend Israel. They push politicians harder each year, and the end result is that politicians have to dance to the lobby's tunes today in ways they didn't when we wrote the book. I think that the lobby is more powerful today than it was when we wrote the book. Of course, we wrote the article in 2006 and the book in 2007. But that's one part of the story. The other part of the story is that the Republicans understand that the Democratic Party is basically split on Israel, the progressive wing of the Democratic

Party, broadly defined, is quite hostile to Israel at this point in time and thinks Israel is committing genocide in Gaza. And the Republicans see this as an opportunity to get full support from the lobby and to turn the lobby against the Democratic Party. So almost every Republican in the land is going to great lengths and trying to kiss up to the lobby. And Joe Biden is really in a very difficult position as a result of this, because he's deeply fearful that he will alienate the lobby if he plays hardball with Israel. But at the same time, he understands if he doesn't do something to show that he can get semi tough with the Israelis, he doesn't have to do much, but just a little bit, he can then win over the progressives who are abandoning him in droves. But the fact is he's caught between a rock and a hard place, and there's not much he can do to win. And the Republicans fully understand this. And for that reason, the Republicans have embraced the lobby in ways that we have not seen in the past.

**GG:** It is really amazing, all over the democratic world, all over the world entirely, people are increasingly opposed to the Israeli war in Gaza. They are increasingly horrified by the things they're seeing. They want this war over. They've been cutting diplomatic ties with Israel, recognising the Palestinian state. And yet here in the United States, we're about to have a presidential campaign and a presidential debate where the two primary candidates are just going to be arguing with one another about who is more pro-Israel. There'll be no debate at all about this incredibly consequential and polarising and costly policy. They'll both be fighting with one another over who can be more pro-Israel. And I guess that, in a sense, has been what American politics has been for the last several decades. And I do want to just push a little bit or not push, but just kind of re-ask the question about, obviously, there's a finance pro-Israel lobby, there are American Jews who feel a connection to Israel the way lots of minority groups feel a connection to the country of their origin, whether it's the place they come from when they emigrate or Italy or Ireland, whatever, people have these kinds of connections, but you do now have an extremely vocal and I think increasing factor in the Republican Party primarily, that has caused this defence of Israel to become even more fortified and almost absolute, which is this evangelical and theological motivation. Do you think that that is a significant or non-trivial factor now, and why there's so much congressional support for Israel?

**JM:** It's non trivial for sure, but I don't think it's the key. I think that most of the people who feel that way are Christian Zionists, and I think the Christian Zionists are an important part of the Israel lobby, as Stephen and I articulated in our book, but I think that it's American Jews who are deeply committed to Israel and want the United States to support Israel unconditionally, who are really driving the train. And a lot of this has to do with campaign contributions. There's just no getting around that. You noticed that the other day, Donald Trump, visited a group of rich donors, many of whom were Jewish and he told them that he would basically deport the protesters. He'd arrest them and deport them. That's how he'd deal with all the unrest on campuses. I mean, this is hard to believe that he said that in a serious way, but he did. And the question you want to ask yourself is, why did he say that? And the point is, he wanted campaign contributions, and that's why he was meeting with these rich donors. So that is an important part of the story for sure.

**GG:** And just to underscore the point within, I think, 48 hours, it was announced that Sheldon Adelson's widow – Sheldon Adelson, was a multi-billionaire who said his big issue was Israel, who refunded the Republican Party to keep it very pro-Israel – she announced, or someone announced on her behalf that they were going to create a pro-Trump PAC and that she would finance it on a level never previously seen in presidential politics. So the Adelsons, whose primary issue by far is Israel, obviously were responding to those statements by Trump where he said what you said as well, as I will be the most pro-Israel politician in our history.

**JM:** But you want to remember, Glenn, as I said before, and you have been saying in the conversation here, Israel is in real trouble. And these donors and these staunch supporters of Israel, these people in the lobby, these institutions in the lobby, they all understand that Israel is in deep trouble. So they're willing to find politicians who will support Israel hook, line and sinker and give them all the support that they need to win. And that's what's going on here. And the Republicans, again, understand that the Democrats are in trouble on this issue from a political point of view, because you have a huge number of Democrats, who believe that Israel is committing genocide. A huge number of Democrats believe that Israel is committing genocide and that the United States should move to cause a cease fire right away. And these rich donors do not want to hear that. So they're willing to support people like Trump, or make it clear to Biden that he better change his tune, or else they'll go to great lengths to defeat him in the fall.

**GG:** When you say Israel is in deep trouble, that these pro-Israel donors and activists understand that, what do you mean by Israel is in deep trouble? Is it that they're involved in a war for which they have no ultimate outcome or plan? Is it that they're more isolated than ever on the world stage and the international community, or is it something else? What kind of deep trouble do you consider them to be in?

**JM:** Well, I make two arguments. One is that Israel is an apartheid state. As Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International and B'Tselem, which is the leading human rights organisation in Israel, have made clear all three of those human rights organisations have made clear in extensive reports that Israel is an apartheid state.

**GG:** And excuse me for interrupting here quickly. So we have many top Israeli officials, including the former head of the Mossad, chosen by Bibi Netanyahu in 2015, who the month prior to October 7th published an article in The Guardian saying Israel is now either very close to, on the brink of or has become an apartheid state.

**JM:** Yes, but that's very important, Glenn, because that's just evidence that leaders in Israel understand this phenomenon, right? They understand that Israel is an apartheid state, and we all know what happened to South Africa. And the question you have to ask yourself is whether or not you think this is sustainable over the long term. And the answer is no. And I think that Israeli leaders are looking for a way out. To go back to what I was saying about ethnic cleansing before, I believe that one of the principal reasons that the Israelis favour ethnic cleansing is because it solves the apartheid problem. If you drive the Palestinians out of Gaza and then you drive the Palestinians out of the West Bank, you have a clear majority

of Israeli Jews running Greater Israel, and you don't have an apartheid state. The problem you have now, Glenn, is that there are about 7.3 million Palestinians and 7.3 million Israeli Jews, and the Israeli Jews dominate the Palestinians. They oppress the Palestinians. That's why it's an apartheid state. And that is a huge problem for Israel moving forward. But that's only one dimension of the trouble that they face. The other problem that they face is they're involved in a war where they are being accused of genocide, and where lots of people believe they're committing genocide. This is a huge problem. And the problem in very important ways is not going to go away. Why is that the case? You remember that in 2005, Ariel Sharon, who was no shrinking violet, pulled Israeli settlers and the Israeli military out of Gaza, and he turned Gaza into a giant open air prison. And why did he do that? Because he knew the place was a hornet's nest. And the last thing he wanted to do was stay in that hornet's nest. He wanted to get out, which he did. Well, if you look at what's happened, the Israelis are back in the hornet's nest. And is there any way of getting out? I don't see it. If they don't successfully ethnically cleanse Gaza, and let's certainly hope that they don't, that means the Israelis are going to have to run the place. They're going to be in the place for the foreseeable future. This is a disaster for them. The public relations dimension of that alone is going to be a disaster. This problem is not going to go away. There'll be more protests on campuses in the fall. And for as far as the eye can see, as long as the Israelis are in Gaza doing terrible things to the Palestinians, can you tell me how they're going to get out of there any time soon? I don't think so. That means they're in deep trouble. When you marry that to the apartheid problem, Israel's future does not look rosy.

**GG:** Yeah and just on the South Africa point and the concern about being labelled an apartheid state because they brought down the minority rule government of South Africa, in part that really did happen because of this activist movement, which found expression in large part on campuses in the West and in the United States, demanding the divestment and sanctioning and boycotting of South Africa. And you've seen, and I think a lot of people didn't realise it at the time, a lot of pro-Israel journalists and activists and politicians have been very, very focussed on American colleges for a long time. They've been talking about what's going on there. They've made it a priority. They, you know, were celebrated when they forced out the presidents of Harvard and Penn for insufficiently cracking down on anti-Israel speech. They've enacted all kinds of laws banning supporters of the boycott movement of Israel. This has been something that they've been concerned about for a very long time. And ironically, the effort to crack down over all these many years is now spawning the opposite outcome that they wanted, where you have these college students who a lot of them never even thought about Israel before, this is the first time they're getting a look at the reality of Israel and its relation to the United States and it seems very, very difficult to imagine how this is going to get reversed, especially if Israel is going to continue this war at least through the end of this year.

**JM:** Let me make two points just to back up what you're saying. First of all, when I was young and I think this is probably true when you were young too, the mainstream media basically controlled the discourse about Israel. And the lobby and Israel supporters had a huge influence on how Israel was portrayed in the mainstream media. We now have an

alternative media where people speak in an honest way about what Israel is doing to the Palestinians. You're a manifestation of this phenomenon, and there are lots of other outlets that people can go to where they can get a sense of what really has happened over time in Greater Israel and what's happening today. And this causes huge problems for Israel. And this problem wasn't present in the past. The second thing you don't want to lose sight of is, again, when I was young and it was probably true when you were young, if you came to a university like the University of Chicago or Georgetown University, most of the students were white, right? There were a smattering of black students, for sure, but it was a very white campus. There hadn't been a lot of immigration. And furthermore, there were not that many international students on campus. What's happened over time is as a result of immigration, the United States has become a much more heterogeneous society. And you have all sorts of people who come from countries where there's no real sympathy for Israel. And you also have lots of international students, and very importantly, you have lots of students from the Arab and Islamic world who come, who get educated and who write books of their own, who become professors, who become the heads of Middle-East centres at universities. So they are in a position to tell a story, right, that contradicts the basic Israeli story about the creation of Israel and what's going on today. And that message that those people are sending out gets picked up by people like you. And people like me don't have to worry about being called by NPR or The New York Times who have no interest in talking to me, because I know that people like you will call me up and we can come on this show, we can talk about these things, and millions of people can listen to us discuss the issue in a rational, legal way. This is a huge problem for the lobby. And by the way, one final point. This is why the lobby is going after TikTok.

**GG:** Exactly. And it is interesting because, you know, I've known you for a long time, we've been talking for a long time, but I have absolutely noticed that in the past two years, because of Ukraine and now Israel, that you have a massive online following. When you go and appear on these shows, a lot of people are very interested in what you're saying. And just that alone didn't exist even 10 or 15 years ago, aside from the fact that people can now watch what is happening in Gaza because it's no longer centralised in the hands of a few tiny corporations who show you only what they want you to see or the government wants you to see. I think the point about TikTok is so important and we cover this a lot in our show, the proposed ban on TikTok has been lingering in Washington for years, and it couldn't get past, it was based on the argument that it gives China too much influence on our youth. And the reason why it suddenly got passed very quickly over in a bipartisan way within a couple of months after October 7th, and the sponsors of the bill and the people who voted yes will tell you this is because they became convinced that the reason so many young people have turned against Israel is because TikTok allows too much information to circulate about the realities of what's going on in Gaza. It allows too much information to circulate that makes people anti-Israel. And they went and they banned it like an incredible act of censorship, to ban an app that a third of the American population voluntarily chooses to use. And I just want to make one other point about the campus issue as well, just with all the ones that you made, which is, I also think that an extremely damaging trend for Israel in this regard is that there is a clear generational shift among younger Jews, 40 and younger, 30 and younger, that not only



don't feel a very strong connection to Israel, but have become very alienated by it, especially by its right wing tilt, by the kind of extremism, the lack of plurality. And at a lot of these protests, as you all know, there are also a lot of Jews, a lot of anti-Israel Jews and pro-Palestinian Jews who have become part of this movement as well. And it makes it, as you said, much more difficult to demonise these movements and demonise people who are critical of Israel's, anti-Semites – you know, I remember back in 2007, you and Professor Walt, they really set out to destroy your career and all of media was calling you anti-Semitic and your book anti-Semitic, and that's why I think a free internet is so crucial, because you now have a counter to that that is by no means small and trivial. There are millions of people who get their knowledge and their news from independent media that didn't exist 10 or 15 years ago. And I think that has changed the dynamics so much.

**JM:** Glenn, I want to make two points. One is when Steve and I wrote the article and the book, virtually all of our defenders were Jewish. Virtually all of our defenders.

**GG:** Including me at the time.

**JM:** Including you, that's correct. Second point I want to make is I think that as a result of the fact that the lobby defends Israel successfully at almost every turn, has led the Israelis to become careless. And as a result of this, they've gotten themselves into a heap of a lot of trouble, when you factor in the internet. Now, what exactly am I saying there? First of all, with regard to the leaders, you remember in the immediate aftermath of October 7th, the Israeli leaders said some absolutely horrible things about the Palestinians and what they plan to do to the Palestinians. They were calling them animals. They were talking about killing all of them and so forth.

**GG:** Starving them.

**JM:** Starving them, exactly. And these were not low level officials. This was the top tier of leaders in the Israeli government. The things they were saying, it's just hard to believe that anyone would say those things publicly, maybe privately, but publicly. And I remember there was a piece in Haaretz, that was talking about the ICJ deliberations, in The Hague. And the Haaretz headline said, The road to The Hague is paved with comments by Israeli leaders, because they were showing genocidal intent. So that's one dimension. The second dimension is that Israeli soldiers have been taking videos of themselves doing horrible things to the Palestinians and ransacking Palestinian houses and so forth and so on, and then posting those videos on the internet. And of course, they're ricocheting all over the world. And you say to yourself, why would you do this? I think it's absolutely horrible that they would even do these things to begin with, but to film yourself doing these horrible things and then post them somewhere on the internet is a prescription for really serious trouble. So the Israelis are documenting their own gross misbehaviour and making it possible for people to see what they're doing. And unsurprisingly, given that we have all these outlets, these alternative media outlets like your show, it's no surprise that Israel is in really deep trouble. And this, again, is why the lobby is working overtime these days.

**GG:** So I definitely need to get to Ukraine. I have a couple of questions for you there. It's always changing and it still is. But before we get to that, I just wanted to have one final question about the Israeli-Gaza war, which is: Recently, there was a kind of border scuffle between Israel and the Egyptian military, where one member of the Egyptian military was killed. And we also had this act where the Israelis bombed the consulate in Iran, in Damascus and then the Iranians launched a kind of retaliation that ended up, and I think, predictably so and deliberately so, barely having any kind of damage done to Israel. So clearly the people in that region, the countries in that region, have not wanted to have the war escalate. And I think that's the reason it hasn't. But I have two questions about that. One is, is there a danger to this Israeli-Egypt, this tension, that that's obviously going to keep growing? And two, now that we know the war is going to go on for a lot longer, are these leaders in the Gulf states and other ones in the Arab world going to start feeling more and more pressure from their populations to take more aggressive and acrimonious steps against Israel?

**JM:** Well, they're already feeling enormous pressure. It may grow with the passage of time, a lot depends on what the Israelis do, but the pressure from down below, especially in a place like Jordan where you have a huge Palestinian population, is a problem for the king. So I think that will happen for sure. With regard to a conflict breaking out between Egypt and Israel, I don't think that's going to happen. And the reason is the United States has huge leverage over Egypt. It's very important to understand that. I haven't looked at the numbers for a while, but, you know, a few years ago, the number one recipient of American aid was Israel. The number two recipient was Egypt, and number three recipient was Jordan. And the fact that Egypt and Jordan were two and three, and I would imagine it's still the case today if you leave Ukraine out, the reason that's the case is the deal was related to Israel. Once they signed peace treaties with Israel and had good relations with Israel, we gave Egypt and Jordan huge amounts of money. We were bribing them to behave themselves towards Israel. And they have done that. And the fact is, they're heavily dependent on that money. That's especially true of Egypt. Egypt does not want to cross the United States. The United States would bring it to its knees, bring Egypt to its knees economically. So I think the Egyptians will bark a lot, but they're not going to get into a war with Israel. Furthermore, if they got into a fight with Israel, this is a Bambi versus Godzilla situation. The Israelis would clean their clocks and they fully understand that. So I don't see much trouble there. I would just say a word or two about the Iran case. You remember it was on April 1st that the Israelis bombed the Iranian embassy in Damascus. And this led Iran to retaliate against Israel and actually against the United States as well, because we got into the fight on April 14th, and then of course, the Israelis retaliated against Iran with a minor, retaliatory attack on April 19th. It's very clear that neither the United States nor Iran wanted a conflict. It was the Israelis who started it all on April 1st, and it was the Israelis who wanted to precipitate conflict between the United States and Iran. And neither the United States nor Iran wanted that fight. So we went to great lengths to work with the Iranians. We worked with the Iranians to orchestrate the events of April 14th and April 19th, to make sure that that one did not spin out of control.

**GG:** All right, let's move to Ukraine. We just have a little bit of time left, but I do want to get your thoughts on that, because basically from the very beginning of the war, you were saying

that this war is so misguided for the West to be encouraging and fuelling because there's simply no way that Ukraine can defeat a power as great as Russia, the population difference alone, let alone all the other disadvantages with Ukraine, even if it has NATO funding, made it almost certain that eventually Russia would win, or at least never get expelled from Ukrainian territory, which is what the Americans in NATO defined as victory. And at the time, very few other people were willing to say it, either because they didn't see it or believe it, or because they were so scared of saying anything against Ukraine because of the media accusation that you are a Kremlin apologist or propagandist or whatever. I think everybody now acknowledges that you've been vindicated in this. Even the Western media is now admitting that the Ukrainian war effort is on the verge of collapse. The Russians are advancing in all sorts of ways. There's all kinds of challenges and problems that Ukraine faces. Just in terms of the battlefield itself, like the war itself, what do you now make of that?

**JM:** I think your description is apt. I think that the balance of power has shifted over the past two years. The Ukrainians looked like they were doing quite well in 2022. You remember the war started, in February of 2022, and for the rest of that year, the Ukrainians looked like they were on a roll and we thought at the time that sanctions were going to work, and we thought that we could defeat the Russians. But the Russians mobilised their forces in late 2022 and over the course of 2023 the balance of power shifted, and it's now shifted much more in 2024. So the Russians have a significant advantage in manpower. I would guess they have a two to one advantage in manpower. And furthermore, the Ukrainian forces are worn out. They get very little rest and relaxation. They don't get pulled off the frontlines and get a chance to recharge their batteries. The average age of the Ukrainian soldier is said to be 43 years old. This is an army, when you look at its manpower levels, and the quality of the manpower is in really deep trouble. Then when you look at the weaponry on both sides, the Russians probably have about a ten to one advantage in artillery. The Ukrainians are forming new brigades, and instead of forming armoured brigades or mechanised brigades, they're forming pure infantry brigades because they don't have enough tanks and armoured vehicles to create mechanised or armoured brigades. The Russians, on the other hand, are pumping out tanks and artillery rounds and artillery pieces like crazy. So the balance of weaponry is decisively in favour of the Russians, and that balance is growing more and more favourable for the Russians. And then the final factor regarding the battlefield has to do with air power. What the Russians did is they had this huge inventory of dumb bombs. These are bombs that, you know, don't come that close to hitting the target when you drop them. But they created these little packages that you could put on the bomb, each bomb, that made it a smart bomb. And in effect, what you could do with that bomb, then, is put it in the pickle barrel. So the Russians have these big bombs that they're dropping from the sky because the Russians control the air and these bombs are deadly effective. They're big and they're accurate. So when you marry all these things together, the balance of manpower, the balance of weaponry on the ground and the balance of air power, it's clear that the Ukrainians are doomed.

**GG:** So one of the, and this is my last question for you, actually I have a lot more questions for you, but just respecting our time, yours and the shows, I'll just ask one more, which is one of the consistent themes you have voiced since the beginning, and I remember I think I've

asked you this every time you've been on is, the US and NATO set a definition of victory that seemed almost impossible to achieve, which was working to expel the Russians from every inch of Ukrainian territory, including Crimea. And so anything short of that, the Russians keeping Crimea, the Russians occupying any part of the eastern provinces of Ukraine, would automatically be defined as a defeat of NATO and the US by Russia. Something that is a humiliation that NATO and the United States, I think, will do everything to avoid. So that brings us to this kind of escalatory language we're now hearing, not just President Macron's musing about the possibility of deploying NATO troops and having them fight directly alongside the Ukrainians against Russia, which would be World War III. But also, there's a lot of pressure on Biden, and he's now doing it in part, to lift the restriction that has been on the use of American weapons since the beginning of the war, that American weapons cannot be used to bomb inside Russia, to bomb targets inside of Russia. Do you think there is any scenario in which the US or NATO will accept defeat as they defined it, or will they do increasingly escalatory things to try and prevent it? I mean, what is the danger here?

**JM:** Well, I think your description of how we painted ourselves into a corner is correct. And we show no evidence of backing off. I mean, the really smart thing for us to do at this point in time, not only from our own point of view, but from Ukraine's point of view, in Ukraine's best interest would be to try to negotiate some sort of settlement, right?! Right now, before more Ukrainians die and before they lose more territory. But if you look at what we're doing, we're going in exactly the opposite direction, as you described it. So the question is, what are we going to do as the situation on the battlefield continues to deteriorate? It's now clear that we've basically given the Ukrainians a green light to hit Russian territory, the Russian homeland, with these missiles, like the ATACMS missile that we've given to the Ukrainians. I actually think the Russians will counter those missiles. And I think it will end up not being that big a deal. But I may be wrong. And if I'm wrong, the Russians have made it clear, Putin has recently made it clear that the retaliation from Russia will be significant. And who knows what that means? It could mean that the Russians will attack bases or storage sites in Poland or somewhere in the Baltic states, who knows for sure. But the Russians will play hardball if those ATACMS missiles and SCALP missiles that they get from the French, are really having an effect. So I'm actually hoping that those missiles don't work so we don't have escalation. But it's hard for me to see where this one all ends, given that we're committed to winning and the Russians are winning, which means we're losing. I would imagine that at some point we're going to get a frozen conflict, right? That's what's going to happen. It's going to look like the 38th parallel on the Korean Peninsula. But even if you get a frozen conflict, Glenn, I think both sides will continue to go after each other. Not in terms of a hot war, but in terms of looking for opportunities to undermine each other's position. The Ukrainians and the Americans will go to great lengths to cause the Russians problems in those areas of Ukraine that they annexed to Russia. And the Russians will go to great lengths to sow dissension in Europe and to cause trouble in terms of transatlantic relations. So I think as far as Europe is concerned, you can see nothing but trouble for as far as the eye can see. All this tells me that that decision on April 8th to bring Ukraine into NATO was really a catastrophic decision. The consequences of that, the negative consequences of that cannot be underestimated. If that decision had not been made and Ukraine had not moved to become a member of NATO, it

remained a neutral state, Ukraine would be intact today, and we wouldn't be talking about a possible escalation involving a great power war. We wouldn't even be talking about a war in Ukraine. We made a catastrophic decision. And the Americans are principally responsible. And in fact, it was the Bush administration that is principally responsible for this disastrous decision.

**GG:** Professor Mearsheimer, it is always a pleasure to have you on the show, even though oftentimes, maybe almost always, the message is not necessarily uplifting. I'm thrilled that you've developed this sort of rock star status online, where more and more people are hearing you. I think that is only a positive thing, and I know you're heavily in demand. So we always appreciate, when you take the time to come on our show. Thanks very much and have a great evening.

**JM:** My pleasure.

**GG:** Always good to see you. Bye bye.

**END**

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