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Today's episode is about the horrifying Hamas attack in Israel and the prospect of a new major

war in the Middle East. This past weekend, Palestinian militants from the Gaza Strip launched

a surprise invasion of southern Israel. They swarmed into Israeli towns. They broke into houses,

killed hundreds in broad daylight. They grabbed hostages that they shoved into vans

or pinned on getaway four-wheelers and bikes. This is the worst terrorist attack in many decades in Israel, and it is already being likened to that country's 9-11. Not only because of the immense

sudden loss of life, but also because of the shock. Gaza is a tiny strip of land,

approximately 25 miles long, seven miles wide. In the last 75 years, it swung from Egyptian

control to Israeli control to partial then full Palestinian control with several wars and uprisings

marking the turn of each chapter. In the last few years, Israel has been shifting its military

focus away from Gaza in the south to the other major Palestinian territory that is the West Bank,

which is controlled by another rival Palestinian party, Fatah. This southern border with Gaza

was supposed to be impenetrable, but as reported by Reuters, Hamas has been planning for years

to penetrate it and invade the neighboring towns. They even built a mock Israeli settlement in Gaza

where they reportedly practiced this awful terrorist attack. This weekend, the group staged a four-

part

operation as reported by Reuters and Axios. First, Hamas launched thousands of rockets out of Gaza

into Israel, overwhelming Israel's famous iron dome system, which they can use to shoot down

incoming rockets, at the same time that fighters flew hang gliders across the border. In the second

phase, a commando unit or several many commando units stormed the wall that divides Gaza from

the settlements, used explosives to destroy the barriers, and then sped through those cracks

in the wall and motorbikes. After the barriers were broken, bulldozers were used to widen the

gap so that more fighters could enter Israel in four-wheelers and bikes. Third, militants targeted

the Israeli army's southern Gaza headquarters, jammed its communications, preventing personnel

from calling commanders or each other. And finally, the attack itself, which killed hundreds of

people,

in which Hamas grabbed hostages and drove them back across the punctured border back into Gaza. As it stands, nearly 2,000 people have died, more than 900 Israelis plus hundreds of Palestinians. Thousands more have been wounded, thousands more will be wounded. And there are now reports that

with Israel returning fire back into Gaza, more than 100,000 Palestinians have been displaced. That is out of the 2 million that call the Gaza Strip their home. At the time of this recording, 11 American citizens have been confirmed killed in the attacks, and the U.S. believes several more were kidnapped and taken back to Gaza.

The news on its own is dreadful, and the cost in human life is only going to go up.

As I just said, Israel has returned fire back into the Gaza Strip, sending over a barrage of rockets that have destroyed several military buildings, but also brought down and turned to rubble apartments and mosques. A ground invasion is coming. Israel has now called for a full siege of the Gaza Strip, which is very dense and very, very poor. According to the Washington Post, Israel announced they will be shutting off electricity plus inflows of food and fuel, as Israel squeezes Hamas to destroy their ability to wage further war.

It could get worse. A broader war between Israel and its enemies is not out of the question, especially given escalating reports that the attack was strongly supported by Iran, a longtime enemy of Israel that also bankrolls the militant group Hezbollah out of Lebanon.

A multi-front war between Hamas in the south, Hezbollah to the north, and terror cells to the east would be shattering. And while live war between major powers in the Middle East is bad enough in its face, of course, in the broader context,

it is coinciding with another major war between Russia and Ukraine,

and saber rattling in China as it eyes Taiwan and an ethnic cleansing in the Central Asian state of Azerbaijan. And meanwhile, Serbia is building up troops along its border with Kosovo.

This is clearly a moment of tremendous global instability.

In the last few days, as I've obsessively read and watched reports about this murderous attack at a rave and families hiding in their panic rooms as they hear fighters shooting at their neighbors, I felt a lot of anger, a lot of sadness that this part of the world seems so trapped by this cycle of reclamation and hate, but also quite bewildered. How did this happen? Why is it happening now? Is Hamas attacking randomly, or is there a specific strategy? How could an invasion of this magnitude been kept a secret from an Israeli defense and intelligence community that is supposedly obsessive about tracking threats along its own borders? How could it remain a secret to our defense and intelligence communities? Overall, what I've been really hungry for is context. So today's conversation will, I hope, provide a great deal of context.

We have two guests today. Dan Reviv is the author of several bestselling books on Israel, Israeli-American Relations, and Israeli Intelligence. He was a CBS News national and international correspondent for more than 40 years, and he's here to help provide context on Hamas, Gaza, and Israeli politics. And then to help us understand some of the regional political dynamics, we have Jeffrey Sonnenfeld, who has been an advisor to several accords and peace talks in the Middle East in the last decade. He is president of the Yale Chief Executive Leadership Institute. I'm Derek Thompson. This is Plain English.

Dan Reviv, welcome to the show.

Real pleasure to be here. Thank you. Jeff Sonnenfeld, welcome.

Thanks. I'm delighted to be here as well. So I don't always do an explicit table of

contents for these podcasts, but there's so much for us to talk about here that I want to keep myself and listeners focused on the goals of this conversation. There are three pieces of context that I most want to understand better from the next 45 minutes to one hour of our talks.

Number one, I want to know a little bit more about history,

Gaza and Hamas and their relationship to Israel. Number two, I want to understand a little bit more about the political context, Israel's relationship to its neighbors and the internal politics of Israel and how they might be relevant for our discussion of this war.

And finally, number three, I wanted to talk about the future, the implications of the invasion of Israel, implications for the Middle East, implications for regional war and peace, and even global markets, international relations. Does that table of contents make sense to both of you? That was good to me. Good. Dan, let's start with you. In the open, I've already outlined the horror of this past weekend. Before we go forward, I'd like to go backward and to level set on a few topics for our audience. Hamas and the Gaza Strip, how would you characterize the relationship between Hamas in Gaza and Israel just before this weekend's invasion?

Well, just to be clear, no direct communication at all. Hamas is a radical Islamic faction in Palestinian society. It's been ruling the Gaza Strip since 2007, the result of a civil war in which Hamas fighters were killing Palestinian Authority Al Fattah fighters. That's the late Yasser Arafat's longtime movement. They're still pretty much in charge of most of the West Bank, but the Gaza Strip became Hamas territory, very radical group, absolutely committed publicly to never accepting a Jewish state of Israel, saying that historic Palestine, all of it's been occupied by the Jews not since the Six Day War, not since a few years ago, but since the creation of Israel in 1948, Hamas doesn't accept Israel. Therefore, Israel won't talk to Hamas. So is there constant fighting? No, skirmishes from time to time. Israel spent a lot of money reported to be a billion dollars building a wall and security fence around Gaza. Gaza residents and their supporters around the world say it's prison, biggest prison camp ever. And by the way, on the other side, a smaller border with Egypt, the Sinai Peninsula, there's also a wall. The Egyptians also block Gazans from leaving without special permission. So Gazans are locked up. They're misfortune because of the way the Hamas government has been since 2007. Now, these occasional skirmishes,

they make it in the news. Hamas, sometimes another radical group in Gaza, Palestinian Islamic jihad,

fires, rockets across the border, over the border fence, especially at nearby Israeli

pounds. There's an area in which tens of thousands of Israelis live. Some of them,

by the way, used to be settlers. There were Jewish settlers and the Israeli army in Gaza,

occupying Gaza until Israel left in the year 2005. So a lot of Israelis still live close to Gaza.

Do they feel safe? Yeah, on the whole, till this past Saturday, sometimes there'd be rocket fire,

but especially since Israel invented the iron dome missile defense system, iron dome shoots down more

than 90% of the rockets overhead. It's an incredible thing. And maybe Israelis near the border feel safer until this past Saturday. So again, until this past weekend, things were bad as usual.

But the border gates usually had a little official opening. You'd be absolutely checked. UN aid workers could go in. Some Gaza residents had medical permits and could go out for treatment in Israel

or in the West Bank. And aid was coming in in the sense of food trucks,

cash aid from the country of Qatar. Things were normal tents. But again, this past Saturday changed everything. You said the people in Gaza are locked up. And Gaza has been characterized by some as the largest open air prison in the world. And their movement is clearly constructed on both sides, on the Egyptian side and on the Israeli side. Can you tell me a little bit more about their movement? Can they get out? How do they get out? And this is obviously a question that's really important given that Israel is now not having been invaded, now potentially marching their own soldiers into the Gaza Strip. It's a small area considering there are two million Palestinians living in Gaza. And some of it's very crowded, the city of Gaza and the Hondunas refugee camp, which has real concrete buildings, by the way. But then there's a lot of open space, kind of heading down the post toward the Egyptian side. And so there's open space. But can they go into Egypt? Like I say, Egypt considers Gaza Palestinians to be a security problem. So Egypt's not easygoing about it. But if you buy a ticket, if you're a Gaza Palestinian and you got a ticket to Cairo for medical treatment or to catch a flight to the outside world, you'd probably get a permit from the Egyptians in normal times. And on the Israeli side, as I said, in more quiet times also, you could get a permit for medical treatment or even perhaps to see your family in the West Bank. And by the way, Israel also granted on a typical day, as many as 20,000 work permits, Palestinians in Gaza, do construction work in Israel. Yes, it's known they're paid relatively little. They're not members of the labor union. But again, in normal times, there was this kind of modus vivendi where the Hamas government or faction hates Israel. Israel totally distrusts Hamas and generally would rather work with the more moderate al-Fattah faction that runs the West Bank. But there was kind of a balance. But again, from the Israeli point of view, who knew what Hamas was planning for October 7th? Jeffrey, let's bring you in. One of the biggest unanswered questions about these attacks is why now? And this weekend, you and Dan wrote an essay in Time that put forward a pretty interesting hypothesis, which is that the timing of these attacks suggests that Hamas, possibly with the backing of Iran, is trying to derail talks between Israel and some of her Arabic neighbors, including Saudi Arabia. You write, quote, by all accounts, Israel, Saudi Arabia, and the United States were inching closer toward a transformative three-way deal, which would have seen Israel and Saudi formally recognize each other within a security, defense, and economic partnership with the US. Just a week ago, Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman said that every day we get closer to a deal, while Netanyahu similarly stated he was confident of forging a historic peace between his country and Saudi Arabia. Saturday's invasion of Israel by Hamas seems to derail that in the short term. End quote. Jeffrey, the Saudi deal would have followed the Abraham Accords, which were bilateral agreements between Israel and Bahrain and the UAE. You were an active advisor in those talks. Help us place this attack in the context of this diplomatic momentum that had been building since 2019. Yes. Excellent question, Derek. This didn't just happen because the weather was right or because it was somebody's birthday or they wanted to celebrate the end of Simhastora. That isn't why it happened. What catalyzed this was the fact that genuine peace was becoming increasingly tangible. As you referred to it, the agreement that formally signed started extraordinary momentum three years ago with the UAE and Bahrain. Morocco has joined as well and other nations. In fact, the conference where this all began was in 2019 and I was there. It helped organize it. Just to be clear, you think this attack is a response to ongoing talks between Israel and Arabic neighbors? Well, you know, the old George Santayana admonition that those who forget

the lessons of history are bound to repeat them. But the problem with that quote is that it doesn't tell us that the echoes of history are sometimes larger and more devastating when they rebound, and they're motivated. There's a purpose. What did we learn? Say the last time this happened was the Israeli-Palestinian peace plan in 2000, right on the heels of the Camp David summit. There was a devastating second intifada that ruined any dreams of normalization resulted in the deaths of thousands of civilians needlessly. What provoked that? It was that they were coming to terms quite successfully. Of all things, Yasser Arafat was going to make this happen. Somebody who of course said a long career once as a terrorist himself now had shown incredible statesmanship, and there was a good deal of excitement that this was going to come to pass. So by all accounts, Israel, Saudi Arabia, and the U.S. were building up on the earlier Bahrain issued Abraham Accords, and we're joining with Bahrain and UAE and Morocco for regional progress, regional solutions that were focusing heavily on improving the conditions of life for Palestinians. So what you're saying is that we've seen this movie before, large attacks against Israel like previous intifadas spurred by the prospect of regional progress between Israel and her Arabic neighbors. I know that you and Dan potentially have a strongly helped theory that these attacks were narrowly designed to scuttle talks between Israel and Saudi Arabia. I want to hold on this point because I think it's really important, and I also think it's really complicated. The Wall Street Journal has reported that indeed, people on record saying this attack was encouraged by and partly planned by Iran, which supports Hamas. Before I complicate their reporting, Dan, can you talk a little bit about the relationship between Iran and Hamas? Well, first the differences that keep them apart or keep their relationship not quite so intimate, and that would basically be this. Iran is the leader of Shia Islam, the Shiites, whereas the Palestinians of, well, all of the Palestine area, but certainly Hamas and Gaza, a very, very religious group, are part of Sunni Islam, Sunni Shiites. They see the world for centuries now quite differently. They don't usually get along, but Iran has a huge goal, which is to weaken Israel. Think of Israel and Iran as rivals for Middle East domination. Israel claims it just wants to survive. Of course, Israel's critics and enemies say, no, Israel wants to expand all the time. Iran also claims it just wants to survive. But of course, its critics, including most Western countries, including the United States government, consider that Iran is fueling terrorism and not only Hamas in the Gaza Strip, but Hezbollah in Lebanon, which is a Shiite Muslim faction. Hezbollah in Iran are very, very intimate. And together, they saved Syria's president, Bashar al-Assad, after the civil war in Syria broke out in 2011, so with Russia's help, Iran and Hezbollah kind of saved him. So there's a lot going on, and it's around Israel, of course. And again, according to Western analysts, certainly the Israelis, Iran found that Hamas needs money. They're feeling all caged in there. They can't export, well, frankly, anything except for, I guess, terrorist ideology. And so Iran found ways of smuggling in money and goods, weapons, believe it or not. Some trucks actually make it from ports in the Ethiopia area, through Sudan, up through part of Egypt, through the Sinai Peninsula, and actually make it somehow through the Gaza Strip. It's incredible. It's Iranian smuggling, and some of it's done by ship in the Mediterranean. It manages to get cash and weapons into Gaza. So Hamas is obviously very grateful to Iran. And just this past month, Gaza leaders got out, I guess, to Egypt, almost for sure, and visited Tehran and visited the Ayatollah Khamenei, the leader of the Islamic Revolutionary State. And so it's widely suspected that Iran gave the go-ahead to this big operation, which is

totally in Iran's favor, in part because of what Jeff Sonofil just spoke about, which is that Iran desperately does not want this Saudi Arabian-Israeli deal fostered by the United States. It could include Saudi Arabia getting nuclear energy legalized, it, of course, would strengthen Saudi Arabia. And they don't want Israel to seem like a success that's more accepted in the region. And so there you are. I also feel Iran is using Hamas as an instrument of proxy that the Iranians gave the green light to this very ambitious operation trying to penetrate Israel, which to everyone's surprise was a huge success for the terrorists. Now that I've given you all this time to explain this theory, I do want to emphasize that it is just a theory. We don't know for sure. You tell a compelling story. The Wall Street Journal has its own compelling reporting. It is, of course, possible that this invasion, this terrorist attack, is not directly or even remotely about talks between Israel and Saudi Arabia. There was one little detail in the reporting that I read that suggested it might be a little bit more, some combination of ad hoc and long-term strategy. So for example, Reuters reported in this really widely disseminated piece that Hamas seems to have been planning this attack for years. Years ago, it seemed to have created this sort of Potemkin-Israeli village that they could use to practice this attack. Do you see any tension, any discrepancy, between the idea that Hamas has been quietly planning this for years, maybe even long before talks with Israel and Saudi Arabia began, and this idea that it was the escalation of talks between Israel and Saudi Arabia that triggered the timing of these attacks?

Great. Dan will unravel any confusion that I create, but I would say, no, there's no inconsistency whatsoever. As the die was cast, this was very clear. I was talking to you about the very explicit, widely publicized, quite tangible progress laid out in 2019. So you've had four years of time. That isn't four months. That's four years that we saw very exciting, tangible progress. And Saudi had representatives there. The finance minister was there. At the very top of the Saudi government was there along with every Gulf Coast state who was not there, Iran. Was that an accident? No. It's obvious that the Wall Street Journal piece stands alone. I don't know if we can definitely connect the dots. Israeli intelligence, I don't believe, has actually confirmed what the Wall Street Journal is reporting, but certainly they're sending \$100 million a year of weapons. They're more than 70% of the entire expenditure on weapons that Hamas has comes directly from Iran. That's a pretty strong statement. The money tells you everything you need to know right there. No matter what whispered conversations or emails somebody has, just look at the money. That says it all. And then there's four years of history of building up, seeing that this threat is coming as Iran sees it. And yes, the Saudis want the nuclear assistance. In fact, Poland has just gotten that. I was just over in Poland two weeks ago, and they're very excited about a major deal they have with Westinghouse and Bechtel with the US support to help build nuclear reactors there. They want the same things in Saudi Arabia. There's a \$100 billion defense deal that's been held up that they want to get some more equipment in from major US defense contractors they desperately need. And of course, the US needs oil. And the Saudis, sort of the public secret here, is the Saudis have cut back by over a third the oil that they were pumping under President Trump. What are they up to? Who knows? Do they want to help the return of President Trump? Do they want to help President Putin? Who knows what? But they were pumping \$13 million barrels a day, and they voluntarily

cut it down to \$9 billion a day. And it has nothing to do with profit margins. They're already making 75% profit margin. Tiffany's doesn't make that. So let's reset the table here. We've touched on Hamas and its relationship to Fatah in the West Bank. We've touched on a compelling hypothesis for the timing of this attack. It's possible relationship to talks to Saudi Arabia, Hamas's relationship to Iran. I think we finally have to talk about Israel. Dan, how in the world did Israel miss this? The barrier between Gaza and Israel is supposedly sealed not only by concrete and steel, but also by technology, drones, and other tech. Israel spends so much money to vote so much talent and treasure on intelligence and military preparedness. How do you think Israel missed this attack? Overall, I'd have to say complacency. That's similar to the accepted reasons for the Yom Kippur War, Israel being taken by surprise 50 years ago, that Israel thought Egypt and Syria would never do this, even as there were spies, especially a very well-placed man in Cairo right there in the Egyptian government, who told Israel that week this Saturday there's going to be an invasion crossing the Suez Canal. Egypt's going to do it. And Israel said, now, Israel's military intelligence couldn't possibly believe it. So even if there was a tip, I find it difficult to believe there was no tip and we don't know. So even if there were tips and indications and a few intercepted communications and text messages, then I'm afraid that the Israeli concept would have been so complacent as to think Hamas isn't going to do that, which again, I find weird because the Israelis cared about even the possibility that a small squad of Hamas fighters would cross. It's astounding. But Israel is taking a firm stand on the following since Saturday. Every political official, every officer in the army, this is not the time to investigate or to ask those questions. There will be plenty of time. Right now we're at war and we have to win this war. We'll talk about the war aims later. So I'll say it's complacency above all. One other factor folks may not have thought of normally. It is well known that Benjamin Netanyahu's government, since last November, has right-wing ministers. Right-wing in Israel means they want to keep the territory forever. They want to keep the West Bank forever, largely because of the Jewish roots back in the Bible. And so they don't want to give up the West Bank ever. They don't want an independent Palestinian state. Netanyahu has even shook Arafat's hand as part of negotiations, but not those right-wing ministers he brought into the coalition. And so they have stirred up a lot of things in the West Bank, the former Jordanian territory. And so there's a lot of trouble lately between Jewish settlers in the West Bank and local Palestinians, including some Fatah supporters, some Hamas supporters, some local heroes who have guns. There have been bombs on the side of the road. There have been clashes. And so because of what those right-wing ministers want, a focus on the West Bank and keeping it forever. Israel and its army took their focus away from Gaza, and they were complacent about everything happening on that. I said I wanted to talk about the internal politics of Israel. And I think this is a good place to have that conversation. Dan, as you alluded to, in the last few years, Israel has, they've dissolved government after government. It's been one messy election after another. Right now, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has been decried by Israeli moderates for a number of reasons. His effort to undermine bribery charges, the fact that his party pushed through this judicial reform plan that inspired protests throughout the country that were widely seen on television, even in the U.S. As you mentioned, he's allowed settlers to expand their presence in the West Bank, diverted some IDF forces to guard their presence in the West Bank. It's important, I think, not to over-determine blame here. It's not as if any one of these things

caused or triggered the Hamas invasion. But there are a lot of suggestions now in the media that even as Israel has been a party to these regional agreements and trying to make peace, some of its Arabic neighbors, somewhat ironically, this internal turmoil might have distracted its leadership from the threat from Hamas. Jeffrey first, then Dan, back to you. What do you make of this hypothesis? This hypothesis is a very good one. It's a very old one, as Abraham Lincoln has declared, and we've heard it quoted so often in the Illinois State Capitol in 1958, a house divided against itself cannot stand. You have the disunity and the distraction, as Dan was explaining so well. The focus, because they're trying to placate political right and key cabinet members on defense in the West Bank, took their eye off the ball. Something which we didn't mention, and I believe nobody in Israel would talk to you about right now, and five days ago, half of Israel would have talked to you about it, which had to do with the judicial reforms, highly controversial, with all these reserves as saying they weren't going to serve unless this effort to destabilize balance of powers and democracy was resolved. This is a way of trying to, many thought, protect demagogic corrupt instincts of Netanyahu with a corruption and greed and bribery. Nobody talks about that now. The country is as unified as Ukraine right now, and good for them. But that was a huge distraction, and that was bait. And by the way, the disunity in the U.S., not having a house of representatives was Kevin McCarthy's meltdown last week, also makes it less likely that Congress can respond nimbly. People notice that, so I think the distraction of the disunity is a huge point, and I'm glad you talk about it. The internal politics here and the internal politics, especially in Israel, were highly relevant.

It might surprise you that a group like Hamas is actually watching all that, including maybe American politics, but certainly Israeli politics. Israel is their big foe. They're monitoring everything in the Israeli media. It's suspected or said that Hamas even has spies within the borders of Israel. Well, yeah, almost for sure, because Palestinians would take their sides and send text messages with things they see. But yeah, they monitor Israel, and especially with Iran's upper-level advice as to what could be a good time as the Israeli enemy weakened right now. Yeah, it seems very sensible to me that they would think that Israel is distracted and weakened, and it could be a good time to really knock Israel off balance. And I can't say it often enough that terrorists succeeded this past Saturday.

Let's talk a little bit about the Israeli response. The latest reports that I have read, say Netanyahu has formally announced his intentions to send ground troops into Gaza.

Jeff, let's start with you. And then again, back to Dan. What is Israel's end game now?

Well, I think Dan has some very good thoughts on what an end game would be, and I won't speak for him, but I think it has a lot to do with eradicating the control that Hamas has and getting rid of Hamas as a viable governing faction of terrorists and looking to the Palestinian authority where they do have a very effective... As Hamas that drove out the, what was it, Dan in 2005, drove out the Palestinian Authority and Abbas who leads it in his late 80s and don't know how much longer he'll be in control. But there's a belief that there is somebody you can work with there. The door-to-door fighting, the high rise apartments, all the tunnels make it not only very hard, but just between us, a lot harder than Afghanistan that we promised would just take a few weeks or a few months to clear the Taliban out of Afghanistan. And lo and behold, 15 years later, we'd gotten nowhere and lost ground entirely. So we do have a harbinger of what... Nobody talks about what if the effort to eradicate Hamas fails.

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Dan, clearly regime change is at the top of the list for Israel. But regime change in the Middle East is messy, messy work. Maybe this isn't exactly akin to America's wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. But what historical parallel do you think we should be looking to here to understand the contours of Israel's forthcoming war in Gaza?

Our parallel to study in brief is Lebanon 1982, when Menachem Begin's government and General Ariel Sharon invaded Lebanon to try to clear out the PLO, which did not dominate all of Lebanon, Israel's northern neighbor on the coast. But the PLO had kind of its own territory. And the Israelis were sick of all sorts of little terrorist attacks from the north and found an excuse of one incident to cross over in a massive way, determined not only to clear out the PLO and make Arafat leave, which he did, he was forced to move to Tunisia in North Africa, the PLO people left as mediated by Western countries. But Israel went on to want to change the Lebanese government and install a Christian Lebanese ally of theirs, Bashir Jamil. And then he was blown up. We know now that that was Syria that assassinated him. And so the much weaker brother, I mean Jamil, was installed and Israel said, oh, at least sort of a friendly government. And then there was the massacre of Palestinians in Sabra and Shatila in Beirut by those Christian phalangists allied with President Jamil. The whole world turns against the whole thing. Ariel Sharon is blamed for not stopping the Christian phalangists from doing a horrible massacre. Israel is embarrassed, pulls out of Beirut, hangs out in southern Lebanon until the year 2018 years more of a fairly fruitless occupation trying to block the Shiite Muslims of Hezbollah. So Lebanon became Israel's Vietnam, a quagmire. Now, Lebanon's pretty big. It's a small country,

but much bigger than the Gaza Strip. I think the Israelis are probably overconfident, but they are incredibly intent on going in on the ground into the Gaza Strip, something they have hesitated and didn't want to do for years because of what Jeff Sanafel told us. It'll be so bloody and awful on both sides. In addition, more than 100 Israeli hostages being held, women, elderly people, all sorts of people, even U.S. passport holders, Israel doesn't want to kill them. But if you do an operation like that, you're accepting the notion that some will be killed by your own attack or Hamas kills them. But Israel's that angry? This is a war out of anger after what happened this past Saturday and how many Israelis were killed and the humiliation of having Israel's border crossed by a terrorist gang that has no air force and doesn't seem to have high technology. It's humiliating for Israel. And that's why wall-to-wall in the Israeli political constellation, there is a desire to go into Gaza to get revenge, but this time accomplish something because there've been other little probes into Gaza. They are intent on overthrowing the Hamas government, on finding their leaders, and in his piece at theatlantic.com, former Israeli ambassador to the U.S. Michael Lauren said almost certainly the deaths of Hamas's leaders, as though Israel doesn't intend to quit until they're dead or gone.

Derek, if I could add something to steal a point of something that Dan just wrote in an article we're drafting now, is that this myth of invincibility that's been shattered has them furious, that this is not only perhaps the most hard-line government in Israel's history, but since the War of Independence, but it is amazingly the first time we've had such intrusions that even in the Six-Day War in 1967, as Dan has written, Israeli territory, there's no serious advancement into Israeli territory, the huge Sinai pencil that was captured, the Gaza Strip, the West Bank, the Golan Heights were great victories then, and the Yom Kippur War exactly 50 years ago, which Dan and I actually covered together for News Radio, the enemy armies only captured brief pieces of those territories, but not the original within the 1967 boundaries before that. So this is a huge change, it's a huge shovel to the face. Well, obviously the U.S. does not need a lesson in how waging war out of humiliation and anger can lead to an expensive and costly quagmire. This has already been called Israel's 9-11, and it would clearly be beyond unfortunate if Israel had a similar 20-year experience as the U.S. had after our 9-11. Dan, you just read from an article in The Atlantic published by Michael Oren, former Israeli ambassador to the U.S., deputy minister in a prime minister's office. I actually want to quote from the penultimate paragraph of that article and have both of you respond to it. This is Michael Oren writing, quote, the conclusion of this war could still be far off with an Israeli ground incursion into Gaza almost certain to be launched. It's difficult to imagine Hamas in the West Bank, Hezbollah in Lebanon, and even radicalized Israeli Arabs remaining passive. A regional war in which terrorists fire tens of thousands of rockets at Israel and Israeli forces fight on multiple fronts is a very real possibility. Iran might also exploit the chaos to further enrich its uranium stockpile and rush to make nuclear bombs, end quote. This is a cavalcade of near worst case scenarios. A single front war between Israel and Gaza becoming a multi-front war between Israel and Gaza in the south, Israel and Hezbollah in the north, maybe Israel and terrorists out of the West Bank to the east. Also Iran coming into the fray, and meanwhile all this work that people have been doing on Israel normalizing relations with her Arabic neighbors being scuttled. Dan, you first and then Jeff, what worry here in this laundry list of deeply profound worries do you find most plausibly chilling?

I'd say most plausible is that the Hezbollah, the Shiite radical party in Lebanon which gets everything from Iran will open fire. They have reportedly more than 100,000 rockets ready. And some of them are good Iranian rockets that in other words could be aimed at targets and they'll go even farther than in that war between Israel and Lebanon in the summer of 2006. And so if Iran decides to stir up even more trouble, that's what I think is most likely the Israeli citizens who are Arabs. And mind you, 24% of Israel's 9.8 million people, in other words about 2.4 million people, are not Jewish. They are Israeli citizens. They are Arabs. Many of them call themselves Palestinian Israelis, Israeli Palestinians. And yeah, this is one of those moments they have to think about who they sympathize with more. But I have been reading blog posts

by some who have huge followers saying that what Hamas did crossing the border into Israel and slaughtering people like at that big outdoor music festival and on the streets, etc. and killed quite a few Arabs, dozens of Arab citizens of Israel, they're rejecting Hamas like crazy.

So I really don't think that the Israeli citizens who are Arab are going to rise up.

Don't fear that one. The West Bank, yeah, the thing is that we talked about the Al-Fattah, relative moderate faction, running the Palestinians' government, so to speak, which rules part of the West Bank. Israel kind of keeps an eye on them and limits them. But in any event, those are the moderates. There's a rising number of Hamas fighters and agents in the West Bank. And so Ambassador

Oran is worrying about that. Could happen. So as I say, my biggest worry is northern Israel.

By the way, that is a big reason that the United States moved the sixth fleet,

that is the Gerald Ford and aircraft carrier and the destroyers and other ships that go with it, much closer to the shores of Lebanon, Israel, and Gaza. You say, well, what's the U.S.

there for? Well, believe it or not, if some U.S. citizens and hostages are released,

then the U.S. military will get involved in shepherding them out of the country and getting them back to the U.S., sure. But it's to make a threat. And in my opinion, if Hezbollah does too much and really endangers Israel's security in Israel's north so that Israel can't cope with it,

I do expect the guns on those American destroyers and battleships to be aimed at the Hezbollah units in southern Lebanon. I think the U.S. would do that.

Jeff, what do you think are the implications of war between Israel and Gaza for

Biden's relationships in this region? Biden's relationship with Netanyahu,

Biden's ongoing talks, or the White House's ongoing talks with the Saudis?

Well, I think that's a great transition point because an implication of what Dan's talking about has to do with something foundational in geopolitics and economics that Lebanon is very weak and very unstable right now. And with Hezbollah controlling the southern part of Lebanon,

they're not in that strong shape. And I think they're aware that I think they're conscious of the genuine threat that Dan talks about of being a target of U.S. military intervention.

Forcefully, should they make this survivable, an existential threat for Israel from the north, you also have an interesting challenge for the Biden administration where we've seen almost every oil industry expert you'll read or talk about the year and a half ago got it completely wrong.

They were talking about these soaring oil prices. They were going to JP Morgan saying \$400 a barrel and things like that. We never got even very close to maybe \$120 a barrel. And even with the crisis right now, we're still in the high 80s today, which is stunning. And mainly it's really been

between the 60s and the 80s is that this is something that just motivates the Saudis enormously. They want a stable global economy. They'd like a nicer slice of things. And in fact, they had militated for some anxiety with Israel's success after the Yom Kippur War. That's when they wound up getting control of Aramco is Nixon and Kissinger panicked and basically gave it to them nominally. That was 100% controlled by U.S. companies is that they're looking at the economic outcomes here. But there's also another undercurrent that's very confusing on the Shia Sunni divides here are less simple than meet the eye that as I'm sure all your listeners know that Iran is Shia and Saudi Arabia as Sunni and a lot of the Gulf Coast states split out along with Saudi Arabia. But Hezbollah, Hezbollah of course is strangely their Shia. So if you're going to try to figure out how the and those are very deep religious divides. So Hamas and Hezbollah have very different histories, but they also different religious philosophies has to Iran and Iran has shown itself to be quite expansionist and interventionist, which threatens a lot of the Shias of the Gulf Coast states that has again economic and religious undertones to it. So I can't see that they're going to be passive either. So they've they've basically been saying to the Palestinians enough of this already. This is Gulf Coast states and Saudi Arabia. Let's move on and resolve this conflict. And it's being stirred up as we began this discussion with Iran. Let's move on to my final question, which is really more broadly about just like the state of global disorder. This is David Lee and heart writing in the New York Times, quote, Russia has started the largest war in Europe since World War Two. China has become more bellicose toward Taiwan. India has embraced a virulent nationalism. Israel has formed the most extreme government in its history. And on Saturday morning, Hamas brazenly attacks Israel, end quote, that hasn't even mentioned the state of ethnic cleansing in Armenia. You know, altogether, Dan, are you concerned that these are signs that the world is slipping into a new period of global disarray? I'm afraid I am. I'm older than you, Derek. I've got grandchildren. They live in the United States of America. To be frank, I sometimes do. My wife and I are on the road all the time. Foreign houses, foreign places still involved with, you know, keeping up with news and politics. With the other ex-patriots, we meet Brits, Australians, Canadians, Americans. The world's horrible. Thank heavens we're here in some corner of Costa Rica or Italy or whatever. Yeah. So we know that our choice of lifestyle has been because of that. So you asked whether I'm worried. Yeah, yeah, absolutely. And I'm generally an optimist about things. So if things swing too far over to one way, that pendulum will swing back. Order will follow disorder. True democracy, freedom, justice will follow a trend toward fascism and narcissism among leaders who spread fear, sometimes helped by some parts of the media. We will swing back to an era that, well, to me, as a lifelong CBS broadcaster, to the Walter Cronkite era, when it comes to the media, fear not. So of course I'm worried. And so I look to good governments and good people to do their best in every case. Solutions will be imperfect. You can't block some things that seem inevitable. Globalization. People will be moving around the world. You can direct it to get good outcomes, of course, on a personal level of your families, because maybe that's all you've got. That's where I'm at there. Jeff, I'd love you to answer the question as well. And it seems to me that, you know, as someone involved in these treaties and peace accords and negotiations between countries in a period that is at least in late Pox Americana or post-Pox Americana, the US is not the power that we were in the 1990s, early 2000s potentially. Whether events like these or how events like these threaten your belief that the US can impose a kind of world order

over parts of the world that are in disorder. Well, this is the only point in this discussion where I disagree with my colleague and co-author and lifelong friend, Dan Raviv. You should go back

to reading Voltaire's *Candide* and realize that the horrors of humanity have existed country by country, continent by continent. And his time in once fascist Italy or Latin America is not going to provide any safe escape is that what we see and have seen before is that we're not for courageous individuals, because this is not a question of just economics, geopolitics, and mass massacres. We've always, sadly, we've always had them. What we haven't had before are two countries

that each have around 6,000 thermonuclear weapons pointed at each other. That's what's different.

Everything else we've talked about in this show is tragically more of the same,

what we have through history. To break it, had it not been for this more of the most right-wing isolationist in American history, I believe it's a center from Illinois, a Republican,

of course, Arthur Vandenberg, who had an epiphany in 1929. And he decided that to change his perspective, he went through a sharp break and wound up becoming in favor of NATO,

but especially in favor of the Marshall Plan, is that we saw the leaders from de Gaulle to Churchill that took us through World War II were all deposed after the war instead of being celebrated.

And we saw Europe in incredible disarray. And there were strong right-wing elements,

Franco lasted, and some people say he's still running things. He's lasted for a very long

time in Spain, is what happened is we saw some people show leadership. And Arthur Vandenberg

led the GOP to back General George Marshall and Truman to rebuild with the Marshall Plan,

which is something about three times the cost of what we need to put into Ukraine.

That was remarkable that that happened then. And we can see that will happen now. There will be strong leaders who recognize that America first doesn't mean America alone.

Dan Raviv, Jeff Sannenfeld, thank you both very, very much.

Real pleasure, Derek.

Plain English was hosted and reported by me, Derek Thompson, and produced by Devon Manzi.

We'll see you back here every Tuesday for a brand new episode. Have a great week.