



MEIR SHEETRIT

Member of Parliament, former Minister of Internal Affairs, Israel

Mehmet Ali Birand, Editor-in-Chief and Chief Anchor for Kanal D

I want to go to Meir. First, is Iran, as a nuclear power, something that really should be eliminated? How important is that for Israel? Second, what do you say about this formula, which is very interesting? Just make a short comment and then I will come back to you, of course.

Meir Sheetrit, Member of Parliament, former Minister of Internal Affairs, Israel

I believe that peace is in the interests of Israel, without connection to anything. We would very much like to arrive at peace with the Palestinians. I support it with all my heart. I believe that the best way to make peace with Israel is to talk through the Arab Initiative, which can make peace, not only with Palestinians, but with all the Arab states. We need it. We need this kind of support and the Palestinians need this kind of support.

Iran, from our point of view, is a danger to the existence of Israel. [Inaudible] just stands on the stage of the United Nations saying that they want to wipe out the state of Israel. We take it seriously. We cannot allow a situation where Iran has nuclear weapons. We do not want to be the one who attacks Iran. I think that if this option should be used, it should be used by the international community, because nuclear Iran is not a threat to Israel alone. It is a threat to all of the free world.

Nuclear Iran means that nuclear weapons can be in the hands of terrorist organisations throughout the world. Nobody knows what they are going to use it for. Therefore, we must do everything possible to stop it. If it can be stopped by sanctions or diplomacy, good. If it cannot be stopped, it is better that this kind of action be done by the United States. We will have to act only if all of those things fail, we have no other way, and we see them building a bomb that, according to their view, is intended to attack Israel.

Mehmet Ali Birand, Editor-in-Chief and Chief Anchor for Kanal D

Do you believe that Israel can strike Iran without America's green light?

Meir Sheetrit, Member of Parliament, former Minister of Internal Affairs, Israel

If we have no other option, we will have to. I hope that we do not arrive at that point. I believe that since President Obama made a public commitment, during the last elections, that he would prevent Iran from having nuclear weapons, we hope that he will do it, not mainly by attack. I hope that he can do it through sanctions or diplomacy, not through military actions.

Mehmet Ali Birand, Editor-in-Chief and Chief Anchor for Kanal D

That is fantastic. This is the last question. How is it that it seems to be a trade of non-nuclear Iran for giving in with regard to the Palestinian problem?

Meir Sheetrit, Member of Parliament, former Minister of Internal Affairs, Israel

As I told you, I believe that we should go to Palestine and with Palestine to peace. It does not matter if it is with Iran or without Iran. They are our neighbours. They are friends. There are different governments of Israel. I was a member of many governments that supported peace with all of our hearts.

Mehmet Ali Birand, Editor-in-Chief and Chief Anchor for Kanal D



Are you supporting the Netanyahu government now?

Meir Sheerit, Member of Parliament, former Minister of Internal Affairs, Israel

I am in opposition to Netanyahu now.

Mehmet Ali Birand, Editor-in-Chief and Chief Anchor for Kanal D

I wanted to make it clear.

Meir Sheerit, Member of Parliament, former Minister of Internal Affairs, Israel

In the last government of Olmert, if you remember, Olmert suggested compromising, to have the Palestinians take over 95% of the West Bank. We would swap those territories with almost everything. He signed it and asked Olmert to sign. He asked for more time and then did not come back. His excuse was that Olmert was at the end of his term and he was not sure that Olmert could really deploy it. That is the reason why he did not sign, but I think we should go back to it. I accept the fact that we should give the Palestinians the possibility to establish a Palestine State on the basis of the '67 borders. To me, it is not literally the '67 borders, but the same quantity of territory, with swaps.

Mehmet Ali Birand, Editor-in-Chief and Chief Anchor for Kanal D

I wish that there were a number of people like you in the Parliament. Mona, do you want to add something on this question? Be quick and I will get back to you.

Mona Makram Ebeid, Former Member of Parliament, Egypt, Distinguished Lecturer, American University in Cairo, Member of the National Council for Human Rights

I will be as quick as the men.

I am going to answer this question because it is very interesting. Right now we have a great opportunity to bring these two populations together: whether it be two States or one State, that's not the problem. The problem is achieving peace. But the terrible decision made by the Israeli government, which has just authorised new construction in the West Bank, will break up the territorial continuity of the future Palestinian State.

Mehmet Ali Birand, Editor-in-Chief and Chief Anchor for Kanal D

Mona, sorry, but could you set aside the Israel issue to come back to it later? Let's just discuss the Iran question because I will come back to you. You will get a chance to speak. Did you want to add anything?

Mona Makram Ebeid, Former Member of Parliament, Egypt, Distinguished Lecturer, American University in Cairo, Member of the National Council for Human Rights

Yes. The decision taken by the Israeli government risks more than just alienating the Hebrew State from its European friends and provoking a crisis with the Sunni axis allied to Washington. In other words, Egypt, Turkey, Saudi Arabia and Qatar, which have all supported Hamas. It risks starting a fire from which no one will escape unscathed, if it continues.

Mehmet Ali Birand, Editor-in-Chief and Chief Anchor for Kanal D

Let us have the American view on that.

Edward Djerejian, Founding Director of James A. Baker III Institute for Public Policy, former US Ambassador to Syria

In terms of the Iranian nuclear issue, I think it is important to know what the costs and benefits of military action against Iran would be. We have just recently produced a report of about 30 former national security advisors, headed by



Zbigniew Brzezinski and Brent Scowcroft in Washington, with no advocacy as to whether military action should be taken or not, but examining the costs and benefits. I think it is important to put this into the equation.

The bottom line is that if Israel attacks Iran alone, it will delay the Iranian Nuclear weapons programme by two years. If the United States attacks Iran alone, or with Israel, it will delay the Iranian nuclear weapons programme by four years. As such, let us not think that a military action against Iran is the end of Iran's nuclear weapon's programme. To eliminate the programme would mean a full-scale military action in Iran, which nobody, I think, would contemplate.

The other aspect, I think, that is very important in all of this is that if Iran adheres to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, of which it is a member, and the IAEA safeguards are still there, there will be an alert time of up to four months, if it does actually build nuclear weapons, which would allow-

Mehmet Ali Birand, Editor-in-Chief and Chief Anchor for Kanal D

Do you have a timetable on that?

Edward Djerejian, Founding Director of James A. Baker III Institute for Public Policy, former US Ambassador to Syria

Yes. It is from one to four months.

Mehmet Ali Birand, Editor-in-Chief and Chief Anchor for Kanal D

That is when they are going to have the bomb?

Edward Djerejian, Founding Director of James A. Baker III Institute for Public Policy, former US Ambassador to Syria

Yes. If they make the decision to make the bomb, there will be a period as short as one month and up to four months where the international community, in particular Washington and Israel, would have that knowledge and in which military action could then be decided upon. It is important to know these facts.

The costs, I think, are apparent to everybody in this room. The benefits are what I just said. It is a delay. It is not an elimination of the programme. However, the costs are asymmetric warfare, the temporary closing of the Straights of Hormuz, which would obviously spike the price of oil. It would be temporary, but in a fragile global economy, that has massive consequences. There is also terrorism; Iran would certainly do whatever it could via Hezbollah and possibly Hamas and other groups, to get at Israel. There would be great destabilisation in the Middle East itself. I just wanted to put out those facts, to frame this debate about military action against Iran.

Mehmet Ali Birand, Editor-in-Chief and Chief Anchor for Kanal D

Do you believe that US intelligence has the capacity to understand what Tehran is going to decide?

Edward Djerejian, Founding Director of James A. Baker III Institute for Public Policy, former US Ambassador to Syria

Right, that is a very legitimate question. We have had intelligence failures in the past, like in Iraq with the claim that Iraq had weapons of mass destruction. It did not. That was a massive intelligence failure. However, what I am saying is that as long as Iran adheres to the Non-Proliferation Treaty and the safeguards, we will have a heads-up, intelligence wise. Also, it is rather transparent. Another key indicator would be if Iran decides to withdraw from the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. That would be a big red sign.

Mehmet Ali Birand, Editor-in-Chief and Chief Anchor for Kanal D

That would be a sign. Do you believe that Mossad can get the signs much more easily than the Americans?

**Meir Sheerit, Member of Parliament, former Minister of Internal Affairs, Israel**

As I have been Minister of Intelligence, of course, I cannot share what I know with you. However, independently, I think that the United States is looking over there and is watching over there. We are watching. Other countries are watching. I believe that what Mr Djerejian said is true. If anything happens and if Iran makes a decision to move to a bomb, we will know it. There is no doubt about it. I want to stress that it is not only in the interests of Israel. It is in the interests of the United States as well. I believe that nuclear Iran means total revolution in the Middle East. Iran can sweep all the Arab states in different directions and the United States will lose its own partnership with all the Arab States in the Middle East. All of them will leave the United States and move to Iran. Therefore, I believe that it is not only Israeli interests, it is also in American interests to prevent Iran from being nuclear.