



thruMYeyes

with PROF. BOLAJI AKINYEMI

THE WEEKLY FOREIGN-POLICY BRIEFING

SESSION 260 · THURSDAY 5 MARCH 2026 · FROM THE ARCHIVE · Syncterface Media

FROM THE ARCHIVE

NO BRAKES LEFT

The United States and Israel attack Iran and kill its Supreme Leader.
The restraint that used to stop this has gone.

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Session 260 — a war begun in the middle of a negotiation.

FROM THE ARCHIVE

No Brakes Left

The United States and Israel attack Iran and kill its Supreme Leader. The Professor's argument is not that the war is unprecedented, but that the restraint which used to stop it has gone.

A panel edition recorded four days after the strike that began on a Saturday morning. Prof. Bolaji Akinyemi leads the analysis, joined by Festus Oshifeso, Dr. Thomas and an ambassador the recording renders as "Lewu," with read-aloud comments from Ambassador Igali and Prof. Tunde Adeniran. **The through-line is restraint: every American president since 1945 knew when to resist an Israeli prime minister, and what is new is not the ambition but the disappearance of the brake.**

Contributors this evening: Festus Oshifeso; Dr. Thomas; an ambassador the recording renders as "Lewu" (also heard as "Leo" and "Liu" — the moderator corrects himself on air and the guest remarks on being given "a new name"); with written comments from Ambassador Igali and Prof. Tunde Adeniran read aloud. The ambassador's name could not be confirmed against the show's canonical spellings and is flagged for confirmation.

An archive edition, recorded 5 March 2026, four days after the opening strikes. Events, casualties and diplomatic positions are described as they stood that week and have almost certainly moved since.

01 · THE BRAKE THAT EVERY PRESIDENT KNEW HOW TO USE

The Professor opens on a claim about the office rather than the man. Since the end of the Second World War, he argues, every American president has been pro-Israel and every one of them has also known when to apply the brakes — when to read an Israeli prime minister's aims correctly and

refuse to be pushed into a reckless war. He is explicit that they were not saints and that mistakes were made. The point is narrower and sharper: the restraint was institutional, and it held.

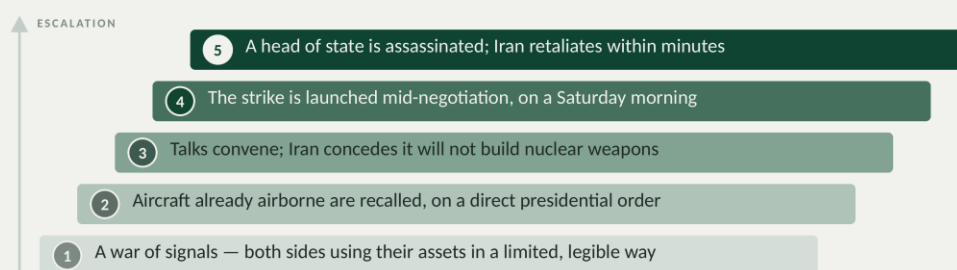
He dates the failure to a convergence rather than a single decision — a moment when the recklessness of the Israeli political elite and the recklessness of the American political elite met, and both parties came to believe the gods of war were calling them. His reference point is the twelve-day skirmish of the previous year, which he insists on calling a skirmish so that the word war retains its weight. During that episode, on his account, Trump ordered Netanyahu to recall aircraft already in the air, and was obeyed. That was the brake working. This time it was not applied.

“Every American president had been pro-Israel, but they also knew when to apply the brakes and when to resist the pressure from Israeli prime ministers to get involved in reckless wars.”

— Prof. Bolaji Akinyemi

How the brake came off

How a war of signals became a war of aggression — the sequence as the panel described it, from last year's skirmish to this week



SESSION 260 · NO BRAKES LEFT

Sequence as described on this broadcast

The evening's four movements, as the panel took them — drawn from this broadcast, not a comprehensive account of the conflict.

02 · A DOCUMENT, A FATWA, AND THE MEETING THAT NEVER HAPPENED

The most consequential claim of the evening concerns timing. The Professor describes a document circulating publicly, said to originate with a Qatari foreign-ministry officer whose job was to take minutes of the American–Iranian negotiations. On his reading, it shows that Iran had already conceded the contentious point — that it would not produce nuclear weapons — and that the assassinated Supreme Leader had issued a fatwa forbidding them. The next session was to have taken up delivery systems, ballistic missiles, as the second item on the agenda.

The attack came instead. He frames this as the second occasion on which the Americans walked away from a negotiation they themselves had convened, and draws the harder conclusion: that diplomacy was being used as a tactic of delay to mislead an opponent. He is careful about the provenance — the document is "going around" and is described as supposed to come from that officer, not verified — but the argument built on it is the evening's centre of gravity.

“The Americans were the ones using diplomacy as a tactic for delay to mislead their opponents. So in a way, we are dealing with a war of aggression.”

— Prof. Bolaji Akinyemi

03 · WHAT THE LAW ACTUALLY PERMITS, AND WHAT IT PLAINLY DOES NOT

On the killing of a head of state, the Professor is unequivocal: it is one of the things you do not do in war, and it is a violation of international law. He reaches for a recent comparison — when Russia alleged that Ukraine had struck a residence of President Putin, Kyiv denied it at the top of its voice, because everyone understood that such an act would have crossed a red line.

He then does something the format rewards, and invites disagreement into the room rather than settling the question himself. He recounts listening to a professor of international law who conceded at the outset that some of her colleagues would sign on to anticipatory self-defence — the doctrine that a state may strike first — but that most would not, and that the doctrine requires an attack that is genuinely imminent: troops on the boundary, a finger already on the trigger. On the evidence available, he argues, there was nothing to suggest Iran was about to attack either Israel or the United States. He adds a constitutional point alongside the international one: Trump did not go to Congress for approval to start the war.

“One of the things you don't do in war is to go and assassinate the head of a country. It's a violation of international law.”

— Prof. Bolaji Akinyemi

04 • MARTYRDOM, MISREAD

The Professor turns to a question of comprehension rather than capability. It has been said, he notes, that the Supreme Leader and his closest supporters knew they were being hunted — and that to die in such a confrontation is, in Shia theology, close to the highest accolade available. The split from the Sunnis over the succession to the Prophet is itself bound up with that theology of martyrdom. What looks from outside like carelessness was, on this reading, nothing of the kind.

From this he draws an inference that widens well beyond the individual: if the Israelis and the Americans can make so basic a mistake about the beliefs of the people they are fighting, what else are they getting wrong? Festus Oshifeso presses the same point from a different direction, likening Shia Islam's institutional weight to that of the Roman Catholic Church and warning that bombing Tehran is more likely to harden its more moderate residents than to turn them.

“If the Israelis and the Americans can make this simple, basic mistake of misunderstanding the theology of their opponents, what other mistakes are they making?”

— Prof. Bolaji Akinyemi

05 • THE BILL, AND WHO ENDS UP PAYING IT

Festus Oshifeso argues the conflict was never really about nuclear weapons, and that Israel's object is regional dominance — with Libya, Syria, Yemen, Lebanon and Iraq already removed as rivals and Iran the last one standing. He builds the economic case in detail: roughly a fifth of the world's oil moves through Hormuz, the Gulf states import some eighty per cent of their food, and around sixty per cent of their water comes from desalination. Strike that infrastructure and the petrodollar loses the very economies that recycle it back into the United States. He argues Washington cannot win from the air, would need something in the order of three million troops on the ground, and has no public appetite for it — and that the venture could end the American empire rather than secure it. These are his projections rather than settled forecasts, and he offers them as such.

Dr. Thomas reads the objective more narrowly. This is not a war about victory or defeat, and not a regime change either — had it been, he notes, there would be a successor standing ready. The mission, on his account, is to decapitate the military infrastructure Ayatollah Ali Khamenei spent

three decades assembling, before it reaches a level at which neither Israel nor the United States could tackle it. He also doubts it becomes a world war: Russia is doing nothing, and China is positioned to take the economic gains rather than the risks.

“America cannot win the war by just dropping missiles and bombs and planes. They actually have to put boots on the ground to win in Iran.”

— Festus Oshifeso

06 · A WAY OUT, AND NIGERIA'S PART IN IT

The evening's constructive turn comes from the ambassador the recording renders as Lewu. Iran, he argues, is a civilisation of more than two thousand years that will not consent to becoming anyone's banana republic, and is therefore in an existential posture — it will fight to the last man, and he reaches for the kamikaze analogy to say so. If neither side will capitulate, the way out is a back channel: sane countries and medium powers convening negotiations that the belligerents cannot convene themselves. He names India as a possible route to persuading China, and adds Brazil, the Pope, and Nigeria — "don't say we are small, we are part of the world." He also points to United Nations Resolution 377, the Uniting for Peace mechanism first used over Korea in 1950, as the means of acting when the Security Council is paralysed by veto.

The Professor endorses the proposal and adds Nigeria's domestic dimension, prompted by a written question from Prof. Tunde Adeniran asking whether Nigerians should have been warned off taking sides in a conflict that is not in the national interest. The reaction of Nigerian Shiites should have been anticipated, he argues; Israeli and American flags have been trampled in Lagos and Abuja, and a foreign war is becoming a direct threat to Nigeria's own unity. His prescription is specific and unfulfilled: the president or the foreign minister should address the nation, positioning the government as protector of all faiths, and it is not too late to do it. Ambassador Igali's written comment supplies the counterweight — Iran struck back within minutes, which suggests it too came to Geneva with a loaded gun. The Professor agrees without hesitation, tracing the absence of trust back to the 1953 coup against a prime minister pursuing an oil policy in Iran's national interest, and to Trump tearing up an agreement that took the Security Council years to reach.

“It is unfortunate that the world has allowed two men to control our civilization.”

— Ambassador "Lewu" (spelling unconfirmed)

THREADS TO PULL

- If the leaked minutes are genuine and Iran had already conceded on weapons, does that make the strike a pre-emption of a deal rather than of an attack — and who would ever negotiate with Washington again on that basis?
- The Professor says the brake was institutional, not personal. If a norm held for eighty years and then didn't, was it ever a norm, or just a run of presidents who happened to choose restraint?
- Ambassador Igali's point cuts both ways: if Iran could retaliate within minutes, it was armed and ready mid-negotiation too. Does that change the culpability, or only the symmetry?
- Resolution 377 exists precisely for a paralysed Security Council, yet it is rarely invoked. Is that because it doesn't work, or because no medium power has been willing to spend the capital to try?

- If a distant war can put flags in flames on Lagos streets within four days, what does that say about how much of Nigeria's domestic stability is now hostage to foreign policy it has no hand in making?

Watch Session 260 in full on the Syncterface Media channel. New episodes every Thursday, 7pm WAT (7pm UK, 2pm ET).

More analysis: tmeinsights.com · profbolajiakinyemi.com

This was a live panel broadcast; contributions may be republished with attribution, and contributors may request removal. The ambassador's name ("Lewu"/"Leo"/"Liu") could not be matched to the show's canonical spellings and is flagged for confirmation before circulation, as are the audience commenters named on air. The Qatari minutes described in section 2 are presented as the Professor presented them — a document said to be circulating, not a verified source. The closing item on an eleven-point US Congress security agreement concerning Nigeria was deliberately deferred to the following week and is not covered here.

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