

FORECAST · US-IRAN · PERMANENT PEACE.

# Ceasefire Is Not Peace

*What Danny Citrinowicz, John Mearsheimer, and Behnam Ben Taleblu — three analysts with very different instincts — imply about the odds of a real U.S.-Iran settlement.*

By **Unmitigated Wisdom** · April 2026

**First**, all three analysts distinguish between a ceasefire and a permanent political settlement.

**Second**, they arrive there through different logics: Danny stresses mistrust and unresolved substance, Mearsheimer stresses unresolved final-status issues and structural constraints, and Taleblu explicitly says the odds of “real peace” are “slim to none.”

**Third**, the common conclusion is clear: pauses, extensions, deconfliction, and memoranda

One of the easiest mistakes to make in following the current U.S.-Iran crisis is to confuse movement with resolution. A ceasefire is not peace. An extension is not peace. A deconfliction framework, a memorandum of understanding, or another round of talks is not peace either. The real question is narrower and much harder: what are the odds that Washington and Tehran will reach a permanent settlement, publicly announced by both sides as ending hostilities on a lasting basis?

If you listen carefully to Danny Citrinowicz, John Mearsheimer, and Behnam Ben Taleblu, what stands out is not that they agree on everything. They clearly do not. They come from different analytical traditions, they assign blame differently, and they imagine different desirable outcomes. But when their reasoning is applied carefully to this specific question, they converge on the same broad conclusion: a temporary pause is plausible; a genuine permanent peace is not.

**Danny Citrinowicz’s pattern: pause is possible, durable settlement is hard**



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Danny Citrinowicz's great strength as an analyst is that he consistently separates tactical de-escalation from strategic resolution. Even before the ceasefire, his writing had a very clear two-handed quality: both sides could want some kind of political off-ramp, but the structural gap between them was still enormous. That is why, in March 2025, he warned that "the chances of escalation between the parties are increasing and are significantly higher than any agreement," and then sharpened the point days later by writing that "without a dramatic change in President Trump's positions... escalation now seems almost inevitable."

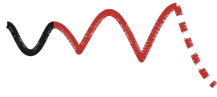
But Danny's point was never that diplomacy was impossible. His recurring argument was subtler than that: diplomacy was much more likely to produce a limited arrangement than a lasting settlement. Once the ceasefire arrived, that pattern became even clearer. On April 8, 2026, he wrote that the ceasefire "may signal the beginning of the end of the fighting, but given the deep mistrust between the parties, it must be treated with extreme caution. Until a ceasefire is fully in place, there is no ceasefire." Later the same day he put the matter in even starker terms: "The bottom line is that current negotiations are not driven by optimism, but by a shared interest in avoiding further losses rather than securing victory."

That is quintessential Danny. He can see why Washington might want a deal, why Tehran might want relief, and why both might want to avoid a larger war. But he refuses to confuse that with peace. In his framework, the underlying disputes — enrichment, sanctions, missiles, proxies, and regional leverage — remain unresolved. So yes, a pause is possible. But no, that does not make a genuine settlement likely.

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## **Mearsheimer's logic: meaningful peace would require settling much more than the nuclear issue**

John Mearsheimer gets to a similar conclusion by a very different route. He is less interested in the tactical theater of negotiations and more interested in whether the core political questions that drive the conflict are actually negotiable. In his appearance at Judging Freedom with Judge Andrew Napolitano on April 14, 2026, he made the crucial point as plainly as one could: "To get any form of negotiated agreement that puts an end to this conflict in a meaningful way, you have to deal with a whole host of issues. The nuclear issue is just one of them."



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He then explained what he meant by that “whole host of issues”: reparations, the Strait of Hormuz, Hezbollah and Israel, sanctions on Iran, and American military bases in the region. His conclusion was blunt: “I don’t see any evidence that those other issues were addressed.”

That distinction matters enormously. Mearsheimer is not saying that talks cannot happen. He is not even saying that a ceasefire cannot hold for some time. What he is saying is that a meaningful peace would require resolving a much broader conflict than the one usually described in headlines about the nuclear file. That is why, in the same appearance, he pushed the argument further and said, “The question you want to ask yourself is: how do we ever resolve this conflict...? And the answer is, I don’t think you can.” Elsewhere in the same discussion he added, with typical Mearsheimer starkness, that “the conflict is going to go on and on and on.”

Mearsheimer may well have underweighted how quickly a temporary ceasefire could emerge, but that is a different issue. His deeper point survives the timing miss. A pause is one thing; a final settlement is another. And in his view, the second remains structurally out of reach.

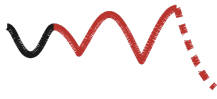
*“To get any form of negotiated agreement that puts an end to this conflict in a meaningful way, you have to deal with a whole host of issues. The nuclear issue is just one of them.”*

— John Mearsheimer, in his appearance at Judging Freedom with Judge Andrew Napolitano, 14 April 2026

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## **Taleblu says it most explicitly: “real peace” is “slim to none”**

Behnam Ben Taleblu is the most hawkish of the three, and that means his signal has to be handled carefully. He has a harder policy threshold for what would count as an acceptable agreement. But his usefulness here lies in the clarity of the distinction he draws. In his appearance at Washington Journal, he said the quiet part out loud: “I think the odds of real peace, particularly with two governments that have such enmity and mistrust... are slim to none.” He immediately paired that with a narrower concession: “But a codification of a ceasefire, perhaps deconfliction and de-escalation frameworks and a memorandum of understanding, that certainly is possible.”



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That distinction is exactly the one this question requires. Taleblu is not merely rejecting diplomacy because he dislikes the regime. He is saying that diplomacy is much more likely to yield a holding arrangement than a final peace. In the same appearance, he also said that “the chance of an actual good diplomatic agreement right now is slim to none,” while allowing that there could still be “some sort of framework for deconfliction.” And he explained why: on the final-status issues — Iran’s right to enrich, the remaining uranium, and the future of the missile program — “that’ll be darn near impossible to get a good deal on in this short order.”

That matters because it clarifies that even the most hardline of the three is not saying “there will be no diplomacy.” He is saying something narrower and more relevant: there may be a ceasefire, there may be deconfliction, but “real peace” is another matter entirely.

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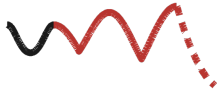
— Behnam Ben Taleblu, in his appearance at Washington Journal, April 2026

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## Different route, same conclusion

Once these three frameworks are placed side by side, the convergence becomes hard to ignore. Danny Citrinowicz sees a negotiation driven by mutual exhaustion and fear of further losses, not by reconciliation. Mearsheimer sees a conflict whose meaningful resolution would require settling a much broader set of issues than the nuclear file alone. Behnam Ben Taleblu sees “real peace” as “slim to none,” even while explicitly conceding that codified ceasefire and deconfliction arrangements are possible.

They are not describing the same world in the same language, but they are all drawing the same line: do not confuse management with resolution. The most plausible outcomes are not peace in the strong sense of the word. They are pauses, ceasefire extensions, deconfliction measures, face-saving formulas, and more talks. Those outcomes are real. They matter. But they are not what a permanent-peace question is asking about.



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## **The caveat: analysts can underprice the speed of a truce without being wrong about the durability of peace**

There are caveats, and they should be stated plainly. Danny likely underweighted the speed with which a ceasefire could emerge once the costs of continued fighting became acute. Mearsheimer also appears to have underweighted the possibility of a short-term tactical off-ramp and at times sounded too close to saying that escalation was the only immediate path left. Taleblu, meanwhile, should be discounted somewhat because his substantive threshold is stricter than the market's threshold; he is more willing than the other two to dismiss a possible arrangement as inadequate in principle.

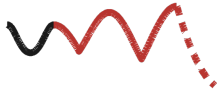
But those caveats do not overturn the central synthesis. If anything, they sharpen it. A ceasefire can come faster than expected. Extensions and vague frameworks can materialize. The two sides can keep talking. And yet none of that is the same thing as a permanent peace settlement. Analysts can underprice the speed of a tactical pause and still be correct about the difficulty of turning that pause into a publicly announced, lasting end to hostilities.

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## **Bottom line**

The burden of proof should now be on anyone claiming that the existence of a ceasefire, or the prospect of another round of talks, means that real peace is close. The reasoning of Danny Citrinowicz, John Mearsheimer, and Behnam Ben Taleblu points the other way. Danny points to pause without resolution. Mearsheimer points to too many unresolved final-status issues for meaningful peace. Taleblu points to “slim to none” odds of “real peace,” even while allowing that ceasefire and deconfliction frameworks are possible.

That makes the central forecast surprisingly simple. A temporary ceasefire, extension, or deconfliction framework is plausible. A permanent peace settlement is not. The most likely diplomatic outcome is not full resolution but continued management: a process that buys time, reduces immediate risks, and postpones larger questions rather than settling them.



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That may still be better than the alternative. But it is not peace. And if you take the combined logic of these three analysts seriously, the odds of a formally announced, lasting end to hostilities between the United States and Iran remain low.

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#### EXPERT SOURCES

1. Danny Citrinowicz — public X posts from March 2025 and April 2026 on escalation, ceasefire, and the nature of the negotiations. Key lines include: “the chances of escalation... are significantly higher than any agreement,” “until a ceasefire is fully in place, there is no ceasefire,” and “current negotiations are not driven by optimism, but by a shared interest in avoiding further losses rather than securing victory.”
2. John Mearsheimer — remarks in his appearance at Judging Freedom with Judge Andrew Napolitano, especially 14 April 2026. Key lines include: “to get any form of negotiated agreement that puts an end to this conflict in a meaningful way, you have to deal with a whole host of issues. The nuclear issue is just one of them,” “I don’t see any evidence that those other issues were addressed,” and “The conflict is going to go on and on and on.”
3. Behnam Ben Taleblu — remarks in his appearance at Washington Journal. Key lines include: “I think the odds of real peace... are slim to none,” and “a codification of a ceasefire, perhaps deconfliction and de-escalation frameworks and a memorandum of understanding, that certainly is possible.”