

Nina Farnia on US-Israeli Attack on Iran & Why “Iran Will Survive”

We interviewed Professor Nina Farnia on the ongoing US-Israeli attack on Iran, the wider regional war, and the legacy of Ali Khamenei. Support Independent media to remain bold: <https://patreon.com/IndiaGlobalLeft> Link for donation: <https://paypal.me/sankymudiar> Is this a defining moment for Iran after two years of escalating war in West Asia? Has Iran reached a breaking point? And what does this conflict reveal about US foreign policy and its domestic consequences? In this in-depth conversation, Nina Farnia discusses: How the current US-Israeli attack fits into the broader regional war Whether Israel acts independently or as a proxy for the United States Why Iran views attacking Israel as confronting the US directly The role of Arab states in the unfolding crisis The revolutionary legacy of Ayatollah Ali Khamenei and what may change after him Redistributive justice in Iran under severe US sanctions Whether the war could push Iran toward a “garrison state” The resilience of the Iranian economy vs. the sustainability of US war strategy How this war may reshape domestic politics inside the United States As tensions escalate, this conversation examines the geopolitical, economic, and ideological stakes of a conflict that could reshape the region. Watch till the end and share your thoughts in the comments. Follow us on Substack: <https://substack.com/@indiagloballeft> Twitter: <https://twitter.com/Indiagloballeft> Instagram <https://www.instagram.com/indiagloballeft/> Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=61559411353392> Spotify: <https://open.spotify.com/show/69Y9iCWUv8ha3ATsPWtWk0?si=ee1f0de3de094f17> Telegram: <https://t.me/+WNIqoiv1Rhg5NjEx> #Iran #USIsrael #Khamenei #MiddleEast #Geopolitics #Sanctions #WestAsia #IranEconomy #USForeignPolicy

#Mudiar

Hello and welcome to another episode of India and the Global Left. If you're new to the show, please hit that subscribe button. Also consider becoming a YouTube member, a patron, or donating a small amount using the link in the description box. Let me welcome our guest tonight, Professor Nina Farnia. Professor Farnia is a legal historian focusing on the role of modern imperialism in U.S. law and politics. Her publications explore a variety of related subjects, including U.S. foreign affairs, economic coercive measures, and—most importantly for the current moment—Iran. Professor Farnia, welcome to India and the Global Left.

#Guest

Thank you very much for having me.

#Mudiar

I wanted to focus on Iran, of course, and we've been doing interviews—and many more to come—on the recent developments. But given your work and your writings on U.S. foreign policy and on Iran, I thought I'd start with some broader questions about U.S. imperialism in the region. So my first question is: how do you place this chapter of West Asia over the last two years or so, since the Al-Aqsa Flood operation? We've seen a genocide in Palestine, the fall of the Assad government in Syria, Syria being incorporated into the imperial sphere, war with Hezbollah in Lebanon, and now a series of wars, rather, with Iran. How do you define this chapter in the larger textbook of U.S. imperialism?

#Guest

So I think what I often say in my own work is that the Al-Aqsa Flood changed the world, and what we're seeing now are the reverberations of that. The reality is that U.S. imperialism is in severe decline. Right now, all over the mainstream media in the United States, there's concern about the air defense systems—that they're not going to last more than four or five more days, maybe a week at most. U.S. weaponry is slow to manufacture and extremely expensive, much more so than the cheap drones that the Iranians, Russians, and Chinese have. And there's a whole host of economic and political crises facing the United States and its own population.

So those are the objective conditions we're in now. What's become clear is that, in this moment of crisis for empire, the empire is becoming more chaotic and more aggressive. One could liken it to a cornered and injured animal, right? A cornered and injured animal is going to lash out to protect whatever remains of its health. That's precisely what the U.S. is doing right now. One of my colleagues, Toussaint Laussier, published an article on the 12-day war about the U.S. strategy at the moment, and he identifies it as a series of short, sequential wars throughout the world. The 12-day war was one of those short, sequential wars. This war was probably supposed to be another short one—but the Iranians have had enough.

They've truly had enough. After the 12-day war, after the presence of Mossad and CIA agents on the streets—dismembering the bodies of Iranians, setting them on fire, causing massive urban warfare—and following nearly half a century of sabotage and other kinds of wars, the Iranians have had enough. So we're in a phase of struggle where, on one hand, you have the decline of the most powerful empire in world history, and on the other, you have the peoples of the world—specifically in Asia—fighting back. This is a pivotal moment in world history. It's truly a pivotal moment. If the war continues, it could be a defining moment for the future of U.S. imperialism.

#Mudiar

And if you could comment on the relationship between Israel and the United States within the larger framework of U.S. imperialism—given that many scholars like John Mearsheimer, and even diplomats or ex-diplomats like Alistair Crook and others, many of whom I've interviewed, are not necessarily from the left but still offer useful analysis—they often frame it as being all about the Israel lobby.

Some even claim that Donald Trump didn't want this war, that it was the Israel lobby that pulled him into it. So I'm curious about your thoughts on the role or relationship between the Zionist regime in occupied Israel and the United States.

#Guest

Yeah, I'm very familiar with that line of thinking, and I understand it—but it's incorrect. Israel is a proxy of the United States. Until recently, I used to call it a proxy, but in fact, it's more like a giant military base or garrison. It's the most important proxy, or military base, of the United States in the world. It cannot exist without U.S. support, and that's the critical factor here. A political-economic analysis—if you look at the financial flows—shows that Israel could not exist without U.S. support, whether that's support for its industry or for its weaponry. So the fact that Israel and the U.S. may sometimes disagree—and that's true, very true—over the course of many administrations, Israeli politicians and American politicians have often disagreed. But that doesn't suggest that Israel has dragged the United States into anything.

The Epstein crisis also doesn't suggest that Israel has dragged the United States in, because the reality is that Epstein lived here. He was operating here, in the milieu of the Western elite, and the work he was doing supported U.S. imperialism. It advanced the objectives of U.S. imperialism—and those objectives happen to align with Israeli objectives as well, because Israel is a proxy of the United States. And the Iranians are clear about this, right? This is what's important about the Iranian strategy: the Iranians know that striking at Israel is striking at U.S. imperialism in the region. And the fact that Israel doesn't have enough—according to the mainstream media right now, Israel doesn't have enough interceptors to last more than a week—puts not just Israel in crisis, but the U.S. in crisis as well.

#Mudiar

And what is your assessment of the GCC countries, given that there have been strikes now as we're speaking? Kuwait has confirmed that several U.S. warplanes have been downed by Iranian missiles, and we're really on the brink of something very uncertain in the region. So what's your sense of all these bases in Kuwait, Bahrain, the UAE, and Qatar? We've seen massive protests in Bahrain, and given the demographics and how they've been suppressed, these nations really seem to be on the brink at this moment. In the larger context of U.S. imperialism—and as Iranian officials have said, that Iran will treat host nations with U.S. bases as their own enemies in self-defense—what's your assessment of their role in the U.S. empire?

#Guest

So there are a couple of important factors here. Number one, and perhaps the most important, is that Iran has been very clear it is not in a struggle against the peoples of the region—it's not fighting the peoples of the Arab world, including those living in the Gulf countries. Its fight is with the U.S.

bases in those countries, which are hosted by regimes largely disliked or even hated by their own people. The best indication of this are the videos coming out of Bahrain and other Gulf countries, where people are actually cheering the fall of Iranian missiles on American bases. I mean, these videos are remarkable. So that's number one.

Number two is that Iran—at the end of the aggression against Yemen—Iran and Saudi Arabia, with the help of China, reached a *détente*. And that *détente* has been incredibly troubling for the United States, because the U.S. has historically viewed Saudi Arabia as one of its most important proxies. And now it looks like—this is just news coming in right now—Aramco appears to have been struck in Saudi Arabia. The Iranians are saying they will not be striking oil rigs or other oil and gas installations in the region again. So it's not clear who hit Aramco, but if the Iranians are being honest—and I think they are—it looks like there's an effort to drag Saudi Arabia into the war.

And the U.S. has already said they want to drag the Gulf countries directly into the war, and they also want to pull in the E3 countries—Germany, France, and the UK. I'm sure the E3 are already providing some level of coordination and support for the U.S. and Israel. So I think, in terms of the war itself, we're at an inflection point. If Saudi Arabia and the Gulf countries are convinced to enter, that changes some of the calculations. Though, frankly, I'm not sure how much, because the U.S. has also shown it's not capable or willing to defend all of those Gulf countries plus Israel, given the problems with its air defense systems and weaponry.

#Mudiar

Absolutely. I guess it's a good point to ask you a little bit about the resistance against the empire. And maybe a good place to begin is by discussing the legacy of the martyred Ayatollah Sayyid Ali Khamenei, given his strong voice and work against imperialism in the region—his role in the 1980s during what was, I'm not sure whether to define it as a proxy war or a direct war, but the Iran-Iraq War. He was one of the leading figures in building the security and administrative apparatus. And after '89, taking on the spiritual and religious role, he helped build the country. He was one of the leading architects of its administrative mechanisms. So if you could tell us a little bit about his legacy and what might change after him.

#Guest

Yeah, so he was a remarkable figure. And if you look right now on social media, images are being posted and circulated about his relationships and his work. As part of his legacy, he's viewed as one of the great 20th-century revolutionaries. He sat with Fidel Castro, Hugo Chávez, Maduro, Thomas Sankara, Mandela, and Mugabe. That's the crowd, I guess, to use colloquial language, that he ran with. His last state visit before becoming Supreme Leader was to China, and there are great photos of that visit. He was active and fought in the Iran-Iraq War. He was jailed at one point—he was a political dissident, imprisoned and tortured prior to the revolution. He came to power in 1989 following the death of Ayatollah Khomeini.

He's viewed within the Iranian political sphere as somewhat of a moderating figure. What that means is he was able to bring together a variety of different political factions. Iran has a very diverse political environment—contrary to popular belief, it's actually very diverse. And he managed to bring together those various factions with their different interests and expectations, not just maintaining stability but creating strength from that diversity.

And that was part of the state-building project the government undertook after the Iran-Iraq War—the U.S. proxy war—and the establishment of the Islamic Republic. It's important to remember that the Islamic Republic came to power in 1979. Iraq invaded Iran in 1980, at the suggestion of the United States and with U.S. support. That war lasted until 1988. Khomeini died in 1989, and that's when Khamenei came to power. He was really responsible for building the state and shaping the nation-state we now see as the Islamic Republic.

Throughout the '90s, there were many reforms, and even up until now, there are still many reforms that remain up for debate among the Iranian public. But these are healthy debates, indicative of a strong society and political milieu that is engaged, looking toward its future, and trying to determine what that future looks like. What's really important about Ayatollah Khamenei—and this goes back to the beginning of my comments—is that he was a committed anti-imperialist. He was truly, deeply committed to anti-imperialism. There's an interview circulating on social media that he did with *60 Minutes*, I think when he was president, where they ask him who the primary enemy of Iran is.

And he says, "The United States." He had a very rigorous analysis of U.S. imperialism and its role in trying to defeat the Iranian revolution and the Iranian struggle. I'll end by saying that he was a very close mentor to Sayyid Hassan Nasrallah. Nasrallah did a series of interviews that are posted on Khamenei's website, and they're very interesting. He talks about particular moments when he or Hezbollah were struggling, and they went to Khamenei. Khamenei provided calm, direction, and patience, but he also offered a strategic acumen they couldn't find anywhere else. He was a very important figure for the region, for the resistance, and for Iran.

That being said, you know, among believers—and I would say even among non-believers—there's this idea that martyrs never die, and that in some instances, martyrs are even more powerful after death than they are in life. Khamenei's assassination by the United States may have been a political miscalculation because, you know, much of the world is up in arms now about his death—not just because it was illegal, vicious, and savage, and that he was assassinated in his office along with his family and grandchildren, right?—but also because there are many people throughout the world who saw him as their leader, as their spiritual leader. And they've come out, and a lot of them are calling for revenge. They're very angry. So we'll see what, if anything, comes of this.

But it does look like, from the U.S. standpoint, it may have been a strategic miscalculation. The miscalculation they always make—and this is due to their racism, frankly, and white supremacy—is that they think by committing what they call "decapitation strikes," right, which is what they've done

to President Maduro of Venezuela, what they did to Sayyid Hassan Nasrallah, and so on, that they will kill the resistance or destroy the nation-state. This comes from the belief that our peoples are incapable of having political, strategic, or historical depth. The fact of the matter is that Khamenei said it himself: he is one man with one body, and it is the Iranian nation that is going to carry this struggle and fight to defeat U.S. imperialism. And that's what we're seeing now. You know, Khamenei passed a few days ago—he was killed a few days ago, I should say—but the struggle continues, and it appears to be escalating.

#Mudiar

Can you also briefly talk about some of his economic redistributive programs, if you like—particularly under the circumstances of severe sanctions that have led to slower growth, higher inflation, a currency crisis, and so on? The Iranian state has been trying its best to redistribute resources toward its people. If you could tell our viewers a little bit about that.

#Guest

Yeah, I really appreciate your question and the way you framed it, especially in light of the sanctions. Iran faces one of the most severe sanctions regimes in the world, which involves the actual freezing of its assets—its cash in bank accounts around the world—the seizing of its ships and tankers on the high seas, and, in addition, shutting it out of markets almost completely. Until recently, it was almost entirely denied access to vital medical supplies and capital infrastructure, and so on. So these sanctions are incredibly severe. In the late 2010s, Khamenei announced an initiative he called the “resistance economy,” where he said they were going to try to build a domestic, sovereign economic infrastructure that would no longer be dependent on the outside.

And it has been, actually, in less than ten years, I think, quite successful. Sartori Sadeghi and Christopher Weaver wrote an article about this in **Middle East Critique**, where they describe how Iran has a thriving biotech industry. It is now an exporter of household appliances. It has thriving industries across multiple sectors and is increasingly self-reliant. This self-reliance has spread throughout society, where the wealth produced both from oil and gas sales and from this resistance economy is basically redistributed through an excellent healthcare system, an excellent education system, and an agricultural sector that is—I can't remember the exact figure—but I think around 60, 70, maybe even 80 percent self-sufficient now.

I can't remember the exact figure. Iran is one of the biggest suppliers in the world of multiple foodstuffs that people consume on a regular basis. The literacy rate is in the high 90s. The figures are quite staggering for a state that has been under direct siege for almost half a century. It's remarkable what Iran has been able to do—what the Islamic Republic has been able to do—in terms of human development. And I'll end by saying that the Human Development Index, according to the

UN Development Program, is around 80, which is comparable to Cuba's—another communist country that is under severe siege by the Americans. So what we see is that redistributive impulses and redistributive policies can actually work despite sanctions.

#Mudiar

I wanted to ask you one specific question about the impact of the war on the domestic political economy of Iran, because some experts or analysts have said that this war is also an attempt to turn Iran into a garrison state like North Korea—in other words, to divert critical resources that would normally go into important sectors of the economy, like healthcare, industry, and education, entirely toward the war. How concerned are you about the impact of the war on Iran and its key sectors?

#Guest

That's an understandable concern. It doesn't look like the U.S. is going to be able to sustain this war for very long—that's the reality. Of course, things can change, right? On the battlefield, things change quite rapidly. But it doesn't look like the U.S. has an appetite for a long war. The U.S. population doesn't have an appetite for a long war at all. Something like 85 or 87 percent of the U.S. public is against it. The U.S. is entering another round of elections, so I don't think this is going to last. Certainly, the Americans don't want it to last that long. They also made ceasefire overtures over the weekend, to which the Iranians said they were not interested.

So it's not clear to me that the Iranian economy is going to, you know, fall apart as a result of this war. The other factor is that, I mean, we have to be honest, Iran has been in a sort of low-intensity war with the United States and the forces of imperialism, including the Zionists, for many, many years—for decades. And so no one, I think, is better at handling this kind of hostility than the Iranians. In fact, when Russia came under very severe sanctions after the NATO war was launched in Ukraine, they went to Iran and learned from Iran how to deal with those sanctions. And so that's another factor I think is important. Lastly, they've been getting ready. I mean, the reality is they've been getting ready for this. They knew it was coming.

Khamenei gave multiple speeches over the last period—since the Al-Aqsa Flood—basically preparing the population for this moment, especially after the 12-day war. They told people, you know, don't be wasteful, preserve water and bread and flour. And so, it seems like there was significant readiness for this moment. Now, this isn't to say that Iran isn't going to suffer. In fact, I think Iran is going to get hit very, very hard. Just yesterday, the U.S. and the Zionists started bombing hospitals, and we saw videos and images coming out that are akin to the early days of the genocide and the war on Gaza. So, I think we're in for a period that's going to be very, very bloody, especially for the Iranians. But I don't think that's going to destroy the Iranian economy or the Iranian nation-state.

#Mudiar

I wanted to ask you about the impact of this war on U.S. domestic policy, politics, and the economy. Throughout the genocide, we saw a massive shift in public opinion within the United States. And as you've said, 75 to 85 percent of U.S. citizens don't support this war—including, maybe, a third or even more of Republicans. Would this war expose U.S. foreign policy and imperialism in West Asia even more to Americans who have, until now, perhaps been unaware of it or of its extent?

#Guest

Yeah, I mean, I think nothing could expose U.S. imperialism and its savagery more than the genocide in Gaza did—excuse me—because it was live-streamed. The genocide in Gaza, I hate to say this, but the fact of the matter is that it wasn't a historical aberration. Europe, the West, and the United States have committed many genocides throughout the period during which they controlled the planet. The genocide in Gaza was like those genocides. The only things that make it different are that it was live-streamed and that they used modern technology, right? And modern technology is particularly violent and effective. That being said, the U.S. public is tired of these wars.

Headlines in the U.S. over the last couple of years have been about the war-weary American public that does not want another war—things like that. Just this morning, I did a quick review of the mainstream media, the big American newspapers, and they're all saying the same thing. They're all concerned about how this is going to play out when the markets open today. That's a very serious concern. I think President Trump is doing a press conference at 8 a.m.—in about 20 minutes—likely to get ahead of the markets. It's not going to work. And even if it does work a little bit, as long as this war drags on, it's not going to get far.

So that is a major factor that's going to affect the U.S. public. Also, the U.S. public is weary of its own struggles—economically and financially. You know, neoliberalism has completely taken hold of U.S. life. Public resources are no longer available to people the way they were before. Whatever modicum of public support or welfare state that existed before has been completely decimated. Right. And as you probably know, under the guise of immigration enforcement, there are basically brown shirts running in the streets of major U.S. cities—especially those that are heavily Democratic or run by leadership that has come out against the Trump administration.

And so, on the one hand, this is important for two reasons. The people in those cities feel under siege, right? On the other hand, there's also a political, retributive aspect to this, where the Trump administration is actively trying to suppress its liberal or centrist opposition. And this is very significant because the political divisions in the United States are only growing—they're only worsening. Historically, wars like the Iraq War brought Americans together, right? For better or for worse—well, for worse—Americans united in support of that horrific war. This war does not appear to have that consequence.

And I don't really know if there's any way to change that trajectory, especially as there are images today of caskets shrouded in American flags coming home after just two days—just two days. The

Americans say three were killed; the Iranians are saying over 500 were killed. Whatever the figure, if it's somewhere in between, in two days that's a significant number. It's an incredibly significant number. So I don't see an easy out for the Americans, especially if the Iranians continue to reject ceasefire overtures. It seems that the only option on the table that the Iranians will accept is a retreat from the region. They want a retreat of U.S. imperialism from the region.

#Mudiar

We'll leave it there. This was a very helpful conversation, and thank you so much for joining us.

#Ayushman

Hi, my name is Ayushman. I, along with Mudiar Jyotishman, have started this platform. Over the last two years, we've tried to build content for the left and progressive forces. We've interviewed economists, historians, political commentators, and activists so far. If you've liked our content and want us to build an archive for the left, I have two requests for you. Please consider donating to the cause—the link is in the description below. And if you're not able to do so, don't feel bad; you can always like and share our videos with your comrades. Finally, don't forget to hit the subscribe button.