

Chas Freeman on Iran, Gulf States & Decline of US Power

The US-Israel war against Iran may have triggered far-reaching geopolitical consequences that go beyond the battlefield. In this in-depth conversation, former US diplomat Chas Freeman breaks down the long-term impact of the war on Iran, Gulf states, global energy markets, and US power. Support Independent media to remain bold: <https://patreon.com/IndiaGlobalLeft> Link for donation: <https://paypal.me/sankymudiar> Freeman argues that the war may have ironically strengthened Iran, reducing the effectiveness of sanctions and increasing its energy exports. At the same time, Gulf monarchies are rethinking their dependence on the United States for security, especially as Israel's regional role becomes more aggressive and unpredictable. This discussion explores a historic turning point in global politics—from the decline of US hegemony to the emergence of new power alignments in West Asia. Key Topics Covered: Did the US-Israel war backfire by strengthening Iran? Are Gulf states reconsidering US security guarantees? Is Israel becoming a regional threat beyond ideology? Iran's potential role as a guardian of the Persian Gulf The future of energy markets and green transitions Could this impact the petrodollar system? Is Europe decoupling from the United States? Response to Norman Finkelstein: Is Iran strong militarily or just politically resilient? Featuring: Chas Freeman (Former US Ambassador, geopolitical analyst) Why This Matters: This is not just about one war—it's about a geo-historical shift that could reshape: Global energy flows Military alliances The balance of power in West Asia The future of US global dominance 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/+WNlqoiv1Rhg5NjEx> Subscribe for more in-depth global analysis, interviews & critical perspectives.

#Mudiar

Hello and welcome to another episode of India and Global Left. If you're new to the program, please consider subscribing. You can also become a YouTube member, a patron, or donate a small amount using the link in the description box. Without further ado, let me welcome our guest tonight, Ambassador Chas Freeman. Ambassador Freeman is an American retired diplomat and writer. Ambassador Freeman, welcome back to India and Global Left.

#Chas

Thank you, Jyotishman. It's good to be with you.

#Mudiar

Our last interview with you provided a helpful framework for many of our viewers to understand the larger picture of the war. It was, in fact, the day the Iranian president died. President Pezeshkian apologized, quote-unquote, to the Gulf states for having created the inconvenience of war. If you could take it from there and update our viewers on what has happened since then, and what the larger picture looks like now with regard to the war?

#Chas

Well, I think what's happening is a lot of strategic movement on all sides. It's become very apparent that the objectives of Israel, which is the progenitor of this war, and those of the United States are quite different. Israel seeks the collapse of the Iranian state, the annihilation of Iranian power—possibly the breakup of Iran into stateless entities, but at least the decimation, or I should say the annihilation, of Iranian society. The United States began with a very confused set of excuses for basically following Israel into this war—many different objectives, none of them obviously feasible. One of those objectives was regime change.

Regime change is much less than a state collapse as an objective. So what we're seeing now is these differences playing out. As I said last time, I believe Israel has a strategy that involves annihilating the Iranian state and disempowering the Gulf Arabs. I mean, Israel's quite happy to see the Gulf Arab energy production capabilities reduced, and thereby their wealth and global influence. It's also conducting false-flag operations on their territory to induce them to join in opposing Iran. And their attitude is very difficult—I'll come back to that. But on the Iranian side, the strategy has been equally clear.

And it is to stop accepting provocations and limited attacks from Israel, and more recently from the United States, and to respond fully to the existential challenge posed by Israel by mounting an existential challenge to Israel in return. I think the objectives of the Iranians have been quite clear—some of them longstanding, and ironically now being achieved in this war. For example, sanctions relief. The United States, out of a desire to keep prices at the gas pump, or petrol pump, low, has lifted the sanctions on Iranian oil. Ergo, sanctions relief for Iran. So Iran wins on that front. Iran's objective of battering Israel into at least a deterrent posture, if not destroying Israel, is proceeding. We've now seen a pattern emerge of tit-for-tat strikes and counterstrikes.

So if Israel or the United States—and by the way, this is a combined air campaign—when Israel says, "We didn't coordinate with the United States," or the United States says, "We didn't coordinate with Israel," that's false, because you can't conduct an air campaign like this without close coordination. So the attack on Natanz, the Iranian nuclear enrichment center, which Israel says it did not carry out—meaning the United States did—does not absolve Israel at all of complicity or responsibility for the attack. First, in the indirect sense, because the purpose of the war has been set by Israel, not by the United States. And second, because the United States is basically aiding and

abetting an Israeli assault on Iran, and this attack had to have been coordinated. It serves Israel's interest in destroying Iran's nuclear capability.

This has been answered with an attack on Dimona, the Israeli nuclear facility. Similarly, an attack by Israel on the Iranian gas fields has been met with Iranian attacks on Qatar, the UAE, and elsewhere. So we're seeing a constant escalation, with each step in that escalation being taken by the attacking Israeli and American side. And I just want to say one other thing here: if one of the objectives of the United States was regime change, that has not only failed but proven greatly counterproductive. The murder of Ali Khamenei, the Supreme Leader of Iran, has had several consequences. First, he was the principal opponent of Iran building nuclear weapons.

He was also the opponent of a rising chorus within the Iranian establishment that argued Iran should build an ICBM capable of striking the United States and should abandon the range limitations he had personally imposed on the Iranian military. He had set a limit of 2,500 kilometers, but that policy has now been openly broken, with an unsuccessful attempt to strike Diego Garcia at roughly 4,000 kilometers from Iran. So the war is expanding geographically, and the implication is that, down the line, Iran will join North Korea in developing both a nuclear deterrent force and the missiles capable of delivering nuclear weapons to American territory.

So there are all sorts of knock-on implications from this. But not only that—the hardliners, the IRGC, the Revolutionary Guard in Iran, now seem to be in the ascendancy. I have to say, Israel appears to be following a deliberate pattern of murdering any moderate who might serve as a useful interlocutor for negotiations with the United States. They don't want negotiations. They fear Trump's volatility. They don't want him getting into talks with Iran. He vacillates from moment to moment—one moment declaring victory, the next demanding support from allies, which they have universally denied him. One moment he's talking about ending the war, the next about escalating it.

He's just threatened to take out Iranian power plants. The only result of that, as we know from previous experience, will be that Iran will take out the power plants of its neighbors, including Israel and the Gulf Arabs. A final point here is that the United States, in addition to probably having struck Natanz and thereby kicked off attacks on Dimona, made a mistake early on by attacking a desalination plant on the island of Bandar Abbas and depriving some 30 villages of their water. This so far has not been reciprocated by Iran, but it's a reminder that Iran has the capability to literally destroy the Gulf Arab societies, which cannot exist without desalinated water.

So what we're seeing is a pattern of escalation. And all of this, I would conclude, is in the context of effective Iranian pressure through Iran's administration of the Strait of Hormuz. Iran has not closed the Strait of Hormuz. It has not sown mines in the Strait, as far as we know. It has, however, effectively set up a toll booth and required anyone who goes through the Strait to pay for the privilege. In doing so, it has produced a very interesting situation in which the United States continues to bluster and apply only military force, with no diplomacy. But other countries—China, India, Turkey, and behind the scenes France and Italy—have been negotiating with Iran. And now

Japan has apparently joined them in achieving free passage for their ships, for a fee, through the Strait of Hormuz.

I suspect this is a long-term Iranian effort to dominate that key portion of the global oil and gas trade by having the ability to either turn the stopcock or not. So the Strait of Hormuz is now a toll highway, not a freeway. Very interesting. Donald Trump's answer to this has been, "Well, we don't use it anyway," which is not true, since we have the Fifth Fleet headquarters in Bahrain, for example. But, you know, those countries that do use it for purposes of energy supply chains should now take responsibility for opening it, now that we've enabled it to be closed to us. It's not closed to them. If they rely on diplomacy, they can now see that Iran will respond by allowing them to get their ships through.

Finally, Iran's own oil exports seem to have gone up. That is, Iran is producing more oil and shipping it in its own vessels or chartered vessels through the Strait without interference from the American Navy, which is standing off at some distance but has basically been told not to further destroy the world's access to energy and thereby drive up prices, even in the United States. Because, basically, prices of oil—as opposed to gas—are determined entirely by the global supply, not by the supply in any one country. Let me stop here. That was quite long. I'm sorry about that, but I hope it was informative.

#Mudiar

Absolutely. I was really struck by your argument about the irony that the war has actually limited or decreased the negative aspects of sanctions and isolation that were there before the war, and how Iran has most likely been shipping more energy. If you could tell us a little bit about the situation in which the Arab states—particularly the Gulf states—have found themselves, given that they have long exchanged their autonomy for security by becoming, in a sense, vassals of Iran. The United States, on the other hand, has more recently seen its liabilities become very high. On one hand, the U.S. is declining in terms of influence, and on the other hand, Israel is expanding so much that it has been threatening the Gulf Arab states as well. So ideological opposition to Iran might even become less significant than the threat Israel itself is posing to them. I wonder what your reading is of their situation.

#Chas

Well, the war has changed the situation radically for the Gulf Arabs. They had been, as you suggest, moving slowly—not very visibly, but palpably—toward some kind of coalition with Iran to counterbalance Israeli dominance in the Levant and Israeli aggression against its neighbors. That has paused, if not ended. In other words, they're now furious with Iran for what it's doing to them. They're belatedly and grudgingly realizing that the presence of American bases on their territory is

not a defense but an invitation for others to attack them. They're also aware of the Israeli false-flag operations I mentioned, which are intended to draw them into the war on the side of Israel and the United States.

However, their own people have been so horrified—justly so—by the genocide in Gaza and by Israeli behavior in general that it's politically impossible for them to strike back at Iran if it looks like they're siding with Israel and the United States. Those who are paying attention to the situation in the Gulf states also know that Israel is attempting to annex about a third of Lebanon, south of the Litani River—first clearing it as a free-fire zone, much like Gaza, and then later settling it—which, you know, is classic Israeli expansionism. And once again, it illustrates the divide between Israeli objectives and American objectives.

The American ambassador to Israel, Mike Huckabee, is an infamous Zionist who endorses the project of Greater Israel. But very few in the United States do, other than some right-wing Christian Zionist elements who share his views. Israel is attempting, through this war, to realize its project of Greater Israel, which would extend Jewish control from the Euphrates to the Nile, including parts of Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, and Egypt. This is a formula that guarantees eternal hostility toward Israel from all these countries. And that is now part of the problem: to be associated with the United States is to be associated with Israel—and that's no longer acceptable.

Of course, the Gulf Emirates—monarchies, if you will—though "monarchy" isn't really the right word, because that comes from Aristotelian taxonomy. These are societies ruled through a process of consultation among family leaders and the broader society, sometimes rather nastily called "bedocracy," meaning rule by Bedouin. Anyway, these societies depend for their cohesion on strong leadership at the top, backed by formidable domestic surveillance, intelligence, and police establishments—many of them, ironically, now built on Israeli technology. That's been one of Israel's great points of attraction: it has perfected police-state technology through experiments in Gaza and the West Bank.

So, as well as within Israel proper, these societies now face a revenue shortfall. The combination of police-state management and, essentially, bribery of the public through welfare payments is going to become quite difficult for them. Some of the major plans that have been on the table—like Project 2030 in Saudi Arabia, the idea of an effective, smooth transition away from an economy based on hydrocarbon sales to one based on knowledge, a knowledge-based economy—all of this has been gravely damaged as a prospect. In the long run, the Gulf Arabs, who had sold themselves as islands of stability in a world of turmoil—a place where you could host data centers, do various useful things, where expats could go and live in luxury, where people from your part of the world, South Asia, could work in security—now face serious challenges.

People from India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Sri Lanka make up the bulk of the labor force in these societies. All this is now in jeopardy. So the uncertainties in Kuwait, Riyadh, Manama, Doha, and, uh, Abu Dhabi must be very great—even in, uh, even in Oman, which of course has been the exception

among them in maintaining an ostentatious neutrality vis-à-vis Iran. So, uh, they're in a very difficult position, and they have to make a choice. I believe there have been diplomatic discussions between them and Iran. I know that Saudi Arabia has just expelled some Iranian diplomats—well, military attachés and diplomats.

I assume that the embassy remains open because the greatest utility of diplomacy is exactly in times of war—something the West routinely forgets, but which the Chinese have demonstrated on numerous occasions, including during the 1962 border war with India, when they kept their embassy in Delhi open because that was essential to finding an end to the war. Same thing with Vietnam in 1979: the Chinese embassy in Hanoi remained open even as fierce battles occurred, with Chinese forces advancing on Hanoi. So I think there are discussions going on, and the Iranians have made it very clear that the price for respite and relief from attacks is dissociation from the United States—no more American bases.

I should say that the utility of those bases was greatly compromised right at the outset of the war, when the radar sets that were essential to both air traffic control—the choreography of the air attacks on Iran—and also the guidance for missile interception by THAAD, the Theater High Altitude Air Defense, or by Patriot point defense systems, were taken out. The same goes for the Israeli equivalents, which are the Arrow and David's Sling, backed at lower altitudes against essentially unguided, very slow rockets by the so-called Iron Dome. All these have been rendered problematic right from the start. I think the interception capability of Israel and the United States has now been greatly attrited. That's how the missile got through to Dimona.

It didn't hit the nuclear installation, but it came close. And one doesn't know whether Iran was deliberately missing the research station or not, because the next step in the escalation would be an Israeli nuclear attack on Iran—or not. You know, maybe Iran has the accuracy to hit the nuclear station at Dimona, in which case there would be a cloud of radioactivity extending over much of Israel and even into Egypt. Nothing to be welcomed by anybody, huh? But at any rate, there's an escalation process going on, and there's no way to stop it. And here we have a final observation: this war, as I said the last time we met, is not something that Israel and the United States can stop.

Only Iran can stop it. Iran now controls the Strait of Hormuz directly from shore-based batteries, which the United States has recently bombed with heavy ordnance but has not eliminated. And it retains a supply of missiles. In fact, it's apparently manufacturing more deep underground as we speak, to enable it to carry on this war for years, not months. So Israel has finally met an opponent that will do to it what it does to others. What Iran has not yet done, but must be sorely tempted to do, is assassination. This is a major element in the Israeli campaign. It has been used by the United States, for example, in the first Trump administration against General Soleimani.

And Iran so far has held back. Whether it's done so out of religious scruples or for some other reason, what its calculation is, I don't know. But I fear it will not hold out forever under these assaults. I mean, we have open statements from Israeli officials—like Minister of Defense Israel

Katz—saying that any Iranian official at all is fair game for assassination. One wonders why that wouldn't apply to Israel under the formula of Rabbi Hillel, a famous figure in Jewish thought who seems to have been forgotten in Israel. He said, "Do not do to other people what you do not want them to do to you." And Israel is violating that with an apparent sense of impunity.

#Mudiar

I'll come back to some of the questions I have on Israel and Iran, but if I could ask one follow-up on the Arab states. As you spoke about many of the dilemmas the Gulf Arab states are facing, it seems to me you're talking about two broad sets of problems or dilemmas. One set is more long-term—economic and developmental—having to do with alternatives to hydrocarbons. Some of these challenges come from the global transition to green energy, while others stem from internal issues, like running out of oil and gas reserves. We've seen that with many of the Emiratis, who ran out of oil and had to find alternatives in tourism, real estate, finance, American corporations, and so on. And some of those problems, it seems to me, were already visible even before Operation Al-Aqsa Flood, or what is better known as October 7th.

#Mudiar

My question to you is, did they see the security aspect as a dilemma only recently? Because even over the last decade and a half—if we're thinking about the post-occupation of Iraq, how states broke down in Iraq and Syria, and the problems generated by the rise of non-state actors like ISIS, al-Qaeda, al-Nusra, and so on—it seemed to them that the exchange of autonomy for security with the United States worked very well. The societies around them were collapsing because of state failure, while they were protected. But now they seem to be in a very precarious situation, given that Iran is attacking them. So I wonder, do you think they had foreseen the security issue as a dilemma before, or is this a very sudden realization?

#Chas

No, I don't think they did see it. I think it's a sudden revelation to them—an unwelcome one. Um, I know there are two things. First, they were aware of the vulnerabilities that overdependence on the United States created, and they had been very carefully diversifying their international military relationships, both in terms of arms procurement and in terms of exchanges with others. So they had reached out to China, India, Russia, and some individual European countries to diversify their base of military relations. So anyway, they have a dilemma there too. There's been a recent \$6.5 billion arms sales proposal for them from the United States.

They remain wedded to American systems. I think they're now going to have to look, as I've indicated before, to double down on the partnership—in the case of Saudi Arabia, with Pakistan, and thereby with Chinese technology, which is the backbone of Pakistani military strength. And they're going to have to move to divorce themselves from many American systems. Whether the United

States is sophisticated enough to hold on to some of those relationships as the overall dependence on the United States collapses will be an interesting question. You mentioned the transition to green energy, and here I want to say that one of the major knock-on effects of this war has been to create a huge market for Chinese technology globally.

Every country now, including your own, will want to double down on renewable energy—solar, wind, nuclear—and electric vehicles, in which China is the undisputed leader in the world. These are now going to become very much the focus of many more countries. The United States, of course, is the exception. Donald Trump has a love affair with the oil companies and the internal combustion engine that will be hard to break. But I don't see how even neighboring Canada will be able to resist the temptation of independence from fossil fuel sources. You know, even if Canada, for example, has ample fossil fuel within it, its price level is determined globally. I mean, there's basically a reservoir into which many streams of oil flow, and from which many streams of oil flow out.

And it's the level in the reservoir that determines the prices, not which stream you happen to sit on. Russia is also, I should say, a major beneficiary of this war—not only in terms of relief from sanctions on its oil, which it has obtained for nothing, but also in terms of the imminent weakening of Ukraine. Because the weapons that might have been supplied to Ukraine in the future—bought by the Europeans for transfer to Ukraine from the United States—are being shot off in West Asia. They're not available. And we know that the American military-industrial base is very rickety and weak, and not able to ramp up production on a surge basis. Finally, the United States, of course, in a military sense, has been greatly weakened, not only by the depletion of our munitions but by the damage to our reputation.

And here I want to say that one of the great mistakes of American popular military thought—maybe the product of video games and hubris combined—is to imagine that the success of war can be measured by the damage inflicted on the enemy: how many buildings you blew up, how many ships you sank, things like that. But in fact, we're seeing a repeat of a lesson we should have learned from Vietnam, which is that you can bomb the bejesus out of the enemy, destroy all kinds of things, but that does not destroy the enemy's will to fight or even its capacity to fight. As I said the last time I was with you, the Iranian strategy emulates Muhammad Ali's rope-a-dope strategy: let the enemy punch himself into exhaustion while you wait until he's weakened enough for you to deliver a knockout blow.

That is exactly what seems to be playing out. So, to sum up, I think Iran is not going to give up. It does not want a ceasefire. It does not want negotiations. It agrees with Israel on that. Israel and Iran both see this as an existential struggle that must be continued to the end. The United States is not in tune with that. Donald Trump does not know how to get off the escalator he's just come down. And, you know, he may invent Mexican rapists or something—he seems to come up with a new idea every few minutes—but that's not going to suffice to end this. And the global impact of this

is mounting, not just economically in terms of a probable surge of inflation from higher energy prices, not just in terms of the redirection of investment toward green energy sources, not just in terms of the empowerment of China and Russia.

Also, of course, drawing them closer together—the Power of Siberia gas pipeline, which has been under discussion for over a decade—now seems to be moving forward as a real project, drawing China and Russia into greater interdependence, something that strategically is not in the American interest. Um, but finally, I think people should pay attention to the comments of the wimpish Europeans. Europeans have this wonderful habit of wringing their hands while sitting on them in response to crises. This time, they're speaking out. We're hearing more and more people saying, "Let's get out of NATO, end the American bases on our territory." The Atlantic Alliance is broken.

There's a big demonstration today—there was one in Madrid, in Spain—demanding that Spain expel American bases and leave NATO. And so, American imperiousness has drawn a backlash, which is reflected not only in the refusal to send forces to the Strait of Hormuz, but in a more fundamental strategic decoupling. And so, no, I think the long-term implications of this—horrifying as the short-term damage from the war is to the Iranians, who are being badly pounded; to Israel, which is being battered; to the Gulf Arabs, who are being chastised and punished—as horrifying as all that is, it's the long-term implications, the strategic implications, that should concern us most. The United States is destroying itself as a global power.

#Mudiar

Yeah, I think it may not be an exaggeration to say—again, focusing on the long term, as you said—because newspapers tend to focus on the short term, and it looks very different. I think it was the Annales School historian Braudel who said that historians who can't focus on long-term trends are like journalists focusing only on events, because they miss the larger patterns. And as I listened to you, I thought it might not be an exaggeration to say that this war—I don't want to romanticize it—but the moment we're going through may be truly revolutionary. First, as you said, it's propelling Iran toward a kind of guardianship role in the region.

The Persian Gulf and the neighboring Indian Ocean may be seeing, for the first time since the breakdown of the Safavid Empire in 1736, a major shift—because since then, Iranian history has gone through a very tumultuous phase. Secondly, I think the transition toward green energy is really profound, because the last phase of the industrial revolution was all about the search for cheap, usable energy, and now we're trying to move toward not just cheap but clean energy. There's been a lot of reluctance, particularly in the Global South, for legitimate reasons—because there's a trade-off between development and saving the planet, and saving people. And this search for cheaper, more effective energy—Chinese green energy, in particular—might be very revolutionary, as you said.

And one last comment would be on the financial aspect. Over the last 50 years or so—since the 1970s, as the neoliberal turn financialized the global economy, and particularly since the '90s with

the petrodollar system—because, as you said, if there’s a rethinking about buying American weapons, it could really destabilize the dollar system. A lot of the recycling of these reserves happens through the dollar bond market. Basically, the transatlantic system depends on how much money the Gulf Arab states send to the transatlantic financial system. So what you’re saying, basically, is that these are really, really profound moments we’re going through in a larger historical template.

#Chas

Well, I agree with all that. Let me add another factor—and that is, if Europe decouples from the United States, where does it go? Does it form a partnership with India, with China? Does it come to grips with the reality of Russian power in its own sphere, or not? And finally, since we're running out of time, I'll just say this: our amazingly stupid Treasury Secretary, Scott Besant, when he tried to justify lifting the embargo on Iranian oil sales, said, “Well, you know, we still control this because they have to use dollars.” You know, that’s basically an invitation to start trading in yuan, or rupees, or some other currency—euros, perhaps.

Anyway, basically, it’s something that’s totally disassociated from SWIFT—the dollar transaction center in Belgium—which is the basis for American control of global trade and investment. So it’s not just the end of the United States, or at least the eclipse of the United States for a time, in terms of military power projection capabilities. And by the way, you can’t get between Europe and Asia except across this war zone. So basically, we’re seeing a huge diversion of civilian air traffic through places like Azerbaijan, because Russia is off-limits to Western airlines due to Western policy. You know, Chinese airlines are making a killing flying across Russia—on routes and over distances that are denied to their European and American competitors.

So I think what we're seeing is indeed what the former German Chancellor, Scholz, called a **Zeitenwende**—meaning a hinge moment in global history. And finally, I'll just say I really appreciate your comment on history and historians, and the myopia of the press with its focus on very short-term events—always down in the weeds, very seldom rising high enough to see the overall terrain and how it's moving, how it's changing. I think we all should learn from this: before you start a war, you should consult a historian. And I don't know if your specialty is history, but if it is, you may be in more demand in the future.

#Mudiar

Well, some of the historians were horrible before the U.S. occupation of Iraq. I mean, the things they predicted were entirely wrong and misleading, so I'm not sure. But there are good historians and bad historians, and let's bracket them.

#Chas

There are historians who are worth reading, and—for my own country, sadly, the United States—it's important to read the history of the Roman Republic and its downfall. It's also important to read the Chinese histories of the dynastic cycle, which suggest that constitutional orders have limited lifespans, and that whatever the situation is at present may not extend into the future. Nothing is forever. A useful thing to bear in mind when you start wars that hand you ephemeral victories.

#Mudiar

We'll leave it there. I had so many more questions on Iraq in particular, and on the military balance of power. In fact, one of the viewers of our last program with you was Professor Norman Finkelstein, and he said it was very helpful for him. He especially appreciated the analytical framework you provided. But one of the questions he had was about the military balance of power. He said he'd heard many things about Gaza—he grouped you with several others, fairly or unfairly—and he was referring to the narrative that Hamas was an effective military resistance. In his view, that was probably a wrong narrative. He also said he's cautious about the strength of the Iranian side. I wanted to ask you about that, but we're running out of time. If you could give us a brief comment on it, then we can close.

#Chas

Well, I'll just say Norman Finkelstein is both brilliant and fearless. I actually agree with him. Hamas is an indomitable expression of Palestinian nationalism. Before it had any military capability, it had a political existence and aspiration. It has not been beaten or defeated militarily, in the sense that it still exists. But the military aspect of it was always secondary. So I actually agree with Dr. Finkelstein on this point. As far as the military balance is concerned, there are other things going on that we might talk about in another session, and they include the development of science and technology outside the Atlantic region.

You know, the Australian Strategic Policy Institute, which I'm sure you're aware of, tracks now 74 areas of science and technology and finds China to be in the lead in 68. I don't know who has the other six at this point. But we are seeing, in effect, a kind of return to a pattern that existed before the rise of the West 500 years ago. And that is that great civilizational societies—India was not a state, China was, but India was many states within a civilizational context—these two societies were globally dominant in terms of wealth, power, science, and technology. And I mean, it's no accident that the so-called Arabic numerals, or actually Indic numerals, originated in India.

And it also shouldn't surprise us that Persia is a great civilizational society on its own, which at various points has incorporated parts of India. So we're dealing with a return to patterns that were the norm 500 years ago. And this is kind of important. If you're—well, of course, the magnificent civilizations of the Western Hemisphere were wiped out by European-introduced disease and

conquest. But I think maybe they're coming back too, in their own way. So we're seeing a shift in the pattern of global distribution of wealth and power that is really quite remarkable. And I'm going to talk about this, I hope, a little bit.

I've somehow gotten involved in an annual lecture at the University of Cambridge in the UK, to a group of Chinese bureaucrats—corporate bureaucrats, state-owned enterprise officials—who are about to take the leap into the highest echelons of leadership. And I've been thinking about the implications of what is called the Columbian exchange—anyway, the intercourse between the Western Hemisphere and the rest, which changed the world fundamentally. I mean, you could not imagine the cuisine of Andhra Pradesh without chilies, but they came from Central America. What about the potato? You know, I think North Indians like that. And peanuts, which are also from Brazil originally, and chocolate, if you have that affliction, from Central America.

The tomato—from Mexico; corn from Mexico and the Mississippi Valley; squashes, zucchini, for example—all of these came from a civilization now vanished in the Mississippi Valley. And of course, in the Americas there were no sheep, goats, pigs, horses, or cows, and very limited animal protein. So anyway, that moment in 1492, now a little over five centuries ago, fundamentally changed the world by, for the first time, creating a single world in which the distribution of power on a global level was significant. We're still in that world, but the distribution of power within it is shifting radically. And I think it's largely returning to the pre-Columbian pattern. I won't be around to see it—whether I'm right or not, you may be.

#Mudiar

This reminds me of Lenin—I think it was in 1916. He was talking to some young Russians in Switzerland, if I'm not wrong, but please correct me if I am, viewers. He said that the revolution in Russia would happen. Maybe I'm not too young to see that, but this will happen. And months later, in February, in Russia, the revolution broke out in the middle of the war. So... you never know. And yeah, I mean, you've spoken about the significance of energy and U.S. hegemony, which, again, in another word, has been colonialism in the longer sort of historical framework. And one of the theses in this "great divergence" literature between the Western Hemisphere and Asia, let's say, argues that the discovery of cheap, accessible coal production in Britain and the discovery of colonies were central to this kind of great divergence. So all of these things came together in our discussion.

#Chas

You've inadvertently reminded me of an Indian American—meaning South Asian American, I think Muslim—comedian who, when he was asked why Columbus discovered America, said, "He was looking for us."

#Mudiar

We'll leave it there, Ambassador Freeman. This was a fascinating conversation. I wasn't particularly looking for the long-term implications of the moment you're going through, because in preparing for this interview I was reading more and more news, so I was thinking about the short-term things. But it was a great pleasure that you spoke about the long-term ones. Thank you so much for your time. I appreciate your answers. My pleasure, Jyotish.

#Ayushman

Hi, my name is Ayushman. I, along with Mudiari 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, don't feel bad. You can always like our videos and share them with your comrades. Finally, don't forget to hit the subscribe button.