Iran Vows STRIKE on Dimona, US EVACUATES Middle East | Dan Kovalik, Ramzy Baroud & Mark Weisbrot

Danny Haiphong hosts journalist Ramzy Baroud, lawyer Dan Kovalik, and economist Mark Weisbrot for a massive show on Iran's new target bank as the US and Israeli build up to war, the connection to regional situation, and in the second half of the show talk to Mark Weisbrot on the Brazil elections and what the impact of a possible Lula loss means for the region and world. Ramzy Baroud's website and publication: https://www.palestinechronicle.com/ https://ramzybaroud.net/ https://cepr.net/publications/the-nation-brazils-decision-the-moral-compass-and-basic-humanity-of-political-leaders-really-does-matter/ Mark's latest article for CEPR Dan Kovalik: https://x.com/danielmkovalik PATREON.COM/DANNYHAIPHONG Support the channel in other ways: https://www.buymeacoffee.com/dannyhai... Substack: chroniclesofhaiphong.substack.com Cashapp: $Dhaiphong Venmo: @dannyH2020 Paypal: https://paypal.me/spiritofho Follow me on Telegram: https://t.me/dannyhaiphong #iran #iranwar #israel #dimona #trump

#Danny

Welcome back, everyone. As you can see, I am joined by attorney, activist, and author Dan Kovalik and Ramzy Baroud, who is the editor-in-chief of The Palestine Chronicle and the author of many books, to go over the latest developments. First, let's start with this brewing war on Iran. Iran says that it will attack Israel's Dimona nuclear facility if the United States and Israel restart the war, which all indications suggest is going to happen. Today, The Wall Street Journal published a video saying that the U.S. is now preparing for a massive strike on Iran using the USS George Washington aircraft carrier strike group. The journalist goes aboard the USS George Washington, showing off the bunker busters and other long-range missiles that are going to be used in that war.

Now, the United States has also been rushing diplomats and their families out of the Middle East. And now U.S. intelligence is warning that Iran is going to attack first and perhaps target U.S. personnel. And the genocide in Gaza continues. Israel has killed over 1,500 people since the so-called October ceasefire of last year—that's likely an undercount—including four in the last 24 hours alone. Ramzy, I wanted to begin with you. You know, you've been writing a lot about the axis of resistance, how Gaza is connected to it, and, of course, your own personal story relating to all of this. Maybe you can react to how this next phase of the war in Iran that's building is connected to the larger regional situation. Take it away.

#ramzy baroud

Absolutely. First, thank you very much, Danny, for having us. You know, you look at these headlines and you're just wondering, I mean, what's the point? I mean, what is it that you are trying to achieve now that you haven't achieved in multiple rounds of war, some lasting for weeks, killing the top leadership of the country, and yet not only achieving very little but actually empowering Iran? Iran is now winning what some historians refer to as the legitimacy war.

I remember that term from Richard Falk when he was speaking within the context of Palestine. He said that there are two kinds of war underway. One is the actual war, just the hardware and the bunker busters and that sort of thing. And the other is the legitimacy war. And he says that whoever wins the legitimacy war in the long run will always win. It's been proven historically. This is how colonialism ended in the Global South, because of the legitimacy war. Well, Palestinians have been winning the legitimacy war for such a long time. And if Israel had any claim to that, it was lost during the genocide. Now comes Iran.

Now, Iran for a long time was kind of somewhere in the middle, where it wasn't the most popular country globally, but on the other hand, people did not want another war, knowing what they know about what happened in Iraq, what happened in Libya, what happened in Syria, what happened in Yemen. We just don't want another war. It doesn't mean that people were big fans of the Iranian regime, but in the last few years, the pendulum of the legitimacy war has shifted dramatically. Iran is now in a position where it is in a state of self-defense, where whatever Iran does seems to be justifiable from the viewpoint of so many people, not just in the Middle East, but in the rest of the world.

And Iran is emerging as a regional superpower. And as a result, the legitimacy of Iran's allies in the region, like Ansarullah in Yemen, has also increased dramatically—exponentially. The Houthis—who knew about the Houthis prior to that? Let's be honest. I mean, we knew what was happening in Yemen. People did not have a very strong opinion about Ansarullah. But look at the situation now because of Ansarullah's intervention in the genocide in Gaza. So if you go to war against Iran again now, you are going to further empower Iran, further contribute to Iran's winning of the legitimacy war that's happening not just regionally, but globally as well.

#Danny

Yeah, Dan, your reaction to this whole rush to get diplomats out of the country? It usually is a prelude to a strike. But as Ramsey said, to what end? What are your thoughts about what's going on right now?

#dan kovalik

Well, I think it's a great question. I mean, if one were to believe, for example, that the U.S. government cared about the U.S. economy, cared about its own people, this would be a completely irrational war, right? I mean, we know that the economy could topple because of this, because of

the oil shortages and shortages of other important things, including food. So I think one has to conclude, of course, that that's not what this is about. This is not about furthering the interests of the U.S. people or even of the U.S. as a state. A lot of it, I think, has to do with Israel, of course—Israel wanting to expand and create what is called Greater Israel. It's in the process of doing that, taking over southern Lebanon, Gaza, and the West Bank. You know, you saw today they just displaced huge swaths of the town of Hebron. So I think it's part of that. And the U.S., of course, supports Israel's geopolitical goals in the region because those are the U.S.'s goals.

Israel's really the tip of the spear for U.S. hegemony in that part of the world. So I think that's a big part of it. But I also think it is about U.S. hegemony as well—that the U.S. has always coveted that region, the oil in the region. And of course, Jimmy Carter, remember, he created the Carter Doctrine, right? You know, it's an extension of the Monroe Doctrine. He said that the U.S. had a strategic interest in the Persian Gulf and that it had the right to act militarily to protect it. So, I mean, even going back to our human rights president, they wanted to control the Persian Gulf. And I think that's what this is part of as well. And again, I think Trump's pretty open about that—that he wants the Strait of Hormuz.

#Danny

Those are great points, both of you. Well, Ramzi, Netanyahu has commented very openly. According to reports, Israeli media asked him, “Is there already an Israeli-American joint plan of attack?” He says he's not commenting on the plan, so essentially saying yes. But maybe, Ramzi, you can talk about both the West Bank and Gaza, which Dan brought up. Maybe you could talk about why Iran is such a target right now. Despite all that you said earlier in terms of losing this legitimacy war and, in large part, losing on the military front, it still seems that the U.S. and Israel are very much committed. Both of them have said—and Israel said recently—that regime change is still the goal. Does Palestine have anything to do with this?

#ramzy baroud

Absolutely. Palestine has everything to do with this. You know, there's a metaphor that describes people who are facing desperate situations, and the only way they can go is up. It's about a ladder that's burning. And with every step you take on that ladder, the step burns under your feet, you know? So you have no other option but to keep going up. And I think that's what Netanyahu is doing. He's running forward. Forget about the garbage coming from Israeli media and analysts about, you know, fighting on seven fronts and winning on seven fronts. We know what winning and losing mean as far as Israel is concerned. We know that not because it's my definition or anybody else's definition, but because it's Israel's own definition. Israel sees victory as decisive.

For example, in 1967, with the help of the United States and Western allies, of course, they managed to defeat various Arab armies, and the result was more ethnic cleansing, more land theft, and the start of the settlement enterprise in the West Bank and Gaza. That's a decisive victory as far

as Israel is concerned. What has been the decisive victory in the last three years? Is there a single victory that one can say is consistent with how Israel defines victory and defeat? Gaza? The ultimate goal in Gaza was to defeat the resistance, and they failed. Yes, they killed a large portion of the population, but you can't control the behavior of a war criminal who is killing innocent children. I mean, how do you control that? No amount of resistance can control that. So that's not a victory. They wanted to ethnically cleanse the population. They're still there.

And you would say, well, maybe they are desperate enough that they want to leave. But if you actually look at the numbers of people applying to leave Gaza versus people applying to enter Gaza or to come back to Gaza, there are more Palestinians who actually want to return to Gaza than people who want to leave Gaza. So not only have they failed to defeat Palestinians in Gaza and failed to ethnically cleanse them, but they have also failed to break the spirit of Gaza or the connection with Gaza, even though 92% of all previously standing structures in Gaza have been destroyed. Yet people are still there. The same thing applies to South Lebanon, the resistance there, and the people of the South.

The same thing applies to Yemen and, of course, Iran. But what option does Israel have? Israel understands, based on what we have seen from the CIA reports leaked to various media outlets, that Israel is facing a civil war. Israel is facing implosion. Israel is facing total collapse. This, again, is terminology that doesn't come from independent media or from the left. This is the terminology of Israel itself. Yesterday, there was an article in The Telegraph talking about the total collapse of Israel. You would never have imagined this kind of political discourse existing anywhere regarding Israel, you know, three years ago. But it is the reality.

So Netanyahu is doing all of these things out of desperation. He's doing the same thing over and over again, hoping to achieve different results—the very definition of madness. And he wants you to think, he wants all of us to think, that there is a plan. There's always a plan for Israel. And some of us, unfortunately, believe that nonsense and say, “Oh yeah, it's all part of a master plan.” There is no master plan. If Israel could have changed the outcome, it would have changed it in the first week of the Gaza war, in the first week of the war on Lebanon. But it has failed to do so. And now it's just doing the same thing over and over again.

#Danny

Yeah, those are great points. And, you know, Dan, in this video, which I won't play because of copyright issues and all that, the Wall Street Journal's so-called reporter, an embedded reporter, walks around the aircraft carrier strike group with someone called the “gun boss.” And with a smile on his face, he shows her the bunker-buster bombs and long-range missiles that they're going to use against Iran. And again, I emphasize “with a smile on his face” because it reminds me of what Ramsey just said: this invincibility narrative. Israel has it. Israel constantly promotes it—that everything it does is a victory, and there's no way that it could be collapsing, as the leaked CIA reports suggested. But nevertheless, Dan, does this kind of invincibility narrative obscure real

problems and make it more difficult for those of us who are trying to understand the situation to see through it? What do you make of it?

#dan kovalik

Yeah, I do. I think, of course, both the U.S. and Israel have invincibility complexes, if you want to call them that. They believe that they will always win, although, you know, history has shown, certainly in the case of the U.S., that, honestly, they rarely win a war. When was the last war they won? But at the same time, both countries are willing to engage in massive destruction of other nations, whether they win or lose. And they see some victory just in that. And that's what I'm concerned about in terms of Iran: that they are willing to bring that country to complete destruction, even to the point of maybe using nuclear weapons. And again, Trump has threatened to destroy the civilization of Iran, a 3,000-year-old civilization.

So I take those threats quite seriously, and I worry that Israel especially might be willing to use nuclear weapons. That is always the threat that's looming out there. And, you know, there was a recent report that the Israeli military heads have decided that Israel just has to continue fighting forever. You know, its existence just depends on warfare, in a way that the U.S. is also dependent on it. And I think Israel is willing to fight even if it means it's ultimately destroyed in the process—the so-called Samson option. So I think there's a lot of irrationality happening here, and that's quite scary, I think, for all of humanity, really.

#Danny

Yeah, and Ramzi, your reaction to that, given that Iran has said that they will strike the Dimona nuclear site, which many believe is the site where Israel’s nuclear weapons arsenal is developed and tested, etc.? What are your thoughts on this, given that, you know, I think there’s a divide in the United States and the West? Most people view Israel as either, you know, fighting on its first front, which is, of course, Palestine—the genocide, the occupation, the continued siege, etc.—or at war with a so-called bigger country like Iran. But these things are quite connected, it seems, and I think its nuclear arsenal is a big red flashing light pointing to that. What do you make of Israel having this so-called Samson option and how it influences the ongoing struggle in the region?

#ramzy baroud

Right. I think it's interesting, though, about Dimona. I don't see a lot of discussion about the fact that you have a country that already has nuclear weapons. And it's known—I think they call it something like the world's most well-known secret or something like this. And it's not just that we know they have nuclear weapons. I mean, you know, Vanunu and others have spoken about it, reported on it. And, you know, we have actual documented evidence of their existence. The Israelis themselves talk about it. And we know who gave the weapons to Israel. We know about Shimon Peres and the relationship with France, and how France contributed to the building of the first

nuclear reactors and such. And we also know that the Israelis have threatened to use nuclear weapons in the last few years. I mean, repeatedly, actually. What was his name?

The Minister of Heritage in Israel, Eliyahu, who said that, you know, if we can't achieve what we want in Gaza, we can always drop a nuclear bomb on Gaza. And here we are in a situation where it's actually Iran's nonexistent nuclear weapons that are such a cause for alarm globally, for the West and for the United States. But those with actual nuclear weapons, who are threatening to use them—we're not supposed to even talk about that. So will Iran bomb Dimona? I don't know. But I think ultimately Iran has made a decision that there can be no return to the last 40 years of this kind of, you know, Iran being isolated, Iran being under siege. Israel kills an Iranian scientist here and there in a covert operation, and Iran is like, okay, we reserve the right to respond at the proper time, and so forth.

I don't think Iran ever wants to go back to those years, even if, at some point, the Americans and the Israelis decide, "Well, maybe this is our best option. They just go back to the days of the siege, and we just maintain that and keep the Iranian boogeyman. We can use it during elections, and everything is okay." Iran has made a decision that Israel and the U.S. cannot, under any circumstances, be allowed to do so. And they are willing to do whatever it takes. And they have proven it. I mean, we have seen what the Iranians have said and delivered. So when they say something, I think we need to take it very seriously. Because, again, the old game and the old rules, as far as Iran is concerned, have fundamentally changed.

#Danny

Yeah, yeah. And Dan, is there any precedent for what's going on right now, not just with regard to Iran, but in the region? It seems like we are in quite a unique historical moment. A lot of Ramzi's points made me think about that in terms of the quagmire that the United States is in, and Israel as well. And yet, there's still all the posturing and all the attempts to keep this thing going—this endless war and, of course, all the atrocities that go with it.

#dan kovalik

Yeah. I mean, I think the form it's taking is certainly unique, where you have this hot war, and then it cools down for a while, and then it heats up again, and then cools down for a while. It's very strange to watch. But in terms of endless wars, I mean, the U.S. has been involved in an endless war really since its founding, you know, against someone or another. And, of course, we've had long, protracted wars like the one in Vietnam. You talk about a quagmire—I think that was the word that most people used to describe the war against Vietnam. Again, it was a different type of war and much more sustained over a period of around 10 years. And, of course, millions of Vietnamese were killed, and the country was destroyed in large measure.

So was Korea, by the way, during a very similar conflict. And I fear that Iran, you know, could suffer the same fate. Now, those countries survived, obviously, Korea and Vietnam, but after incredible environmental damage and, again, millions dead. But that's what's on the table. That's what's being threatened. And of course, people forget that Iran is a much bigger country than, say, Vietnam or Korea. And it has something like 90 million people. So if the U.S. and Israel decide to go on a major, you know, demolition project in Iran like they've done elsewhere, I mean, it would be untold, untold misery and death and destruction that you're looking at.

#Danny

Dan, your microphone is skipping a little bit, or there's a little bit of interference sometimes. I don't know if you want to reload, maybe. Yeah, I'll come back. Yeah, I'll do that. You want to check that, yeah, and see what's going on. All right. Well, Ramsey, I wanted to ask your thoughts. You're the editor-in-chief of Palestine Chronicle, and I know that it's received a lot of attacks over the years, including recently. And I'm just curious about your thoughts on how the United States and Israel are propagandizing about this war in particular, but the region in general, and how that impacts your work. Because we've been in a state of war, especially since the Al-Aqsa Flood, with heightened conditions in the last, what, seven, eight months since February 28th. The world has been in a state of war in this region. So, your thoughts on this?

#ramzy baroud

Well, Israel and the U.S. have been in a state of crisis management since the very start. Now, let's remember the position Israel was in prior to the genocide and prior to the Al-Aqsa Flood. That was a relatively comfortable position. I mean, they dictated the agenda, they dictated the narrative, and we merely responded. We hardly initiated conversations. In fact, this goes back decades. I mean, even in the anti-war movement, in terms of media and academia and political discourse, we are always at the receiving end, and we are always responding. They want to go to war against Iraq. Then we talk about why that war is a bad idea, and so forth and so on. Rarely did we actually have control over the narrative.

And this is how Israel managed to sustain itself throughout all of these years, based on the lie, the idea that it is a great civilization and it's fighting for democracy, for the Western world, for Western values, and that Arabs and Muslims are backward and are the enemies of everything good that the West stands for. And sadly, that was bought by a lot of people. Since the genocide, things have dramatically changed. Not only is Israel failing to promote that idea anymore, not only is mainstream media's chokehold over the narrative—the New York Times, Washington Post, and others—faltering, but our side, the side of justice and truth and equality and human rights and so forth, is actually winning in terms of creating the agenda. We dictate the agenda now. We want to talk about the genocide in Gaza. We do end up talking about it. We enforce it as the subject that everybody has to engage with.

We want to talk about Hind Rajab, about the Shifa Hospital in Gaza. You know, it is something that we are now controlling. And this is why they are losing perspective. They are now attacking us the same way that Israel attacked and killed nearly, if not over, 300 journalists in Gaza, and, of course, hundreds of intellectuals, academics, historians, artists, bloggers, and social media influencers, to completely kill the narrative of Gaza altogether. And they also failed. They are now after journalists, newspapers, independent newspapers, activists, people who are basically challenging their narrative on social media, on independent media. This is unprecedented.

Yes, someone can say, well, it did happen in the past that an individual faced persecution over Gaza—for an article, a book, a statement, and so forth—but not on this scale. Currently in the U.S., you have hundreds of cases against journalists, against students, against academics for merely saying something, thinking in a certain way, expressing an opinion. I mean, I don't want to say that we are entering the age of fascism. That would be a lie. I think we are contending with fascism in all of its manifestations. Some people might not be feeling it right now because they don't feel that they are personally targeted, or they are still living in this euphoria that, well, we are better than this, and we will eventually find the path back to a reasonable way of doing things, the way that we did things before.

But I think they just need to really pay attention to what is happening. The fact that you could be persecuted and suffer and struggle for holding an opinion or creating a platform for people to express an opinion—I don't know where the American values are in that. But again, I think it's a sign of panic. You go after independent media because, with all your influence and control over numerous media platforms, over the narrative altogether, over mainstream newspapers and corporations, you are still failing. Failing against social media, failing against TikTok influencers, failing against tiny little newspapers and podcasts—it means that you have a very serious problem. And instead of dealing with that problem, you're just accusing others of being the problem.

#Danny

Yeah. Well, Dan, Netanyahu said at a recent United Nations—sorry, when I'm talking, Dan, it seems like there's a little bit of an echo coming through your speaker. Hold on one second. Let me just mute you for a second while I ask the question. Dan, can you hear me? All right, I can hear you. Great. Hold on. I think there might be something going on with your audio. Maybe you can comment on anything Ramsey just said. Hello? Can you hear me? I think we're having some connection issues, Dan. I don't know if there's a way to improve it or fix it.

#dan kovalik

Well, we're almost done. Maybe I'll just leave now and leave it to you and Ramsey if we can't fix that. Okay. Thank you. All right, Dan.

#Danny

I appreciate you coming along. Sorry about that.

#dan kovalik

Thank you. Thank you. That's all right. Take care.

#Danny

Thank you. All right, Ramsey. So, yeah, to follow up on what you're saying, you know, there are big problems, as you mentioned. I don't know if you remember Netanyahu at the United Nations. He had this meeting with influencers where he said that Larry Ellison's purchase of TikTok was one of the most important weapons for Israel now because of exactly everything you stated: the fact that despite all the repression, despite all the attacks on journalists—literal attacks, sometimes murders and assassinations—all the way to censorship, global public opinion about Israel is in the tank.

And in the United States—forget Donald Trump, the elections, and all of that—the majority is absolutely against the Iran war. And that's not even to mention the rest of the world, which, in many cases, is far more important. So, your thoughts on this? That is a major defeat, and it seems it's only a matter of time. I think this sense of invincibility and exceptionalism—it's only a matter of time before that catches up with them materially, in terms of their influence and their power to determine what's going on in, let's say, West Asia. Your thoughts?

#ramzy baroud

Absolutely. I mean, there is a number that I think should be quite uplifting for a lot of people. Just a few weeks ago, a major public opinion poll conducted in many countries around the world found that 67% of the world's population sympathizes with the Palestinians. And what's even more uplifting about it is that similar numbers, and sometimes even higher percentages, are actually showing up in Western countries—in Europe, in Spain, Italy, among others. You know, for a long, long time, support for Palestine in the West was really somewhere between the margin of error and 10 or 12 percent, including in the United States.

Even the U.S. is changing. Forty-two percent of Americans support Palestine and sympathize with the Palestinians, compared to 36 percent. It's the first time this shift has ever happened in history. And it happened despite everything they have been saying, all the lies they have been communicating day and night. Their problem is not the platform. And I'm not here to give advice to Israelis on how to do things, but I think they are mixing things up. They are under the impression that the issue is the platform. You go and spend a few billion dollars, and you buy a new platform, and voilà, your problem is fixed. It's not that. It's never been that. The problem is access.

Access. Access to information, to knowledge, to ideas, to experiences. People are, for the first time, beginning to actually see the Palestinians in a different light. These are not just people who are marching in the streets, you know, shouting "Death to Israel, death to America" and burning flags anymore. They're human beings. They're children who are singing and dancing. They're mothers and fathers. They're bodies in the morgues, but also those standing around and praying for them, singing for them, holding hands, and so determined that they will carry on with the legacy of those who have died. They're seeing Palestinians in a different light, in a different way, in ways that really took even me by total surprise, as someone who has always championed people's history, as in centering representative Palestinian voices in the way we speak about Palestine.

And what is even more beautiful about it is that this is not Ramzi Baroud making the difference. It's not us in the West. It is the Palestinians themselves in Gaza. Many of them don't even speak English, yet somehow they are communicating the most powerful messages, and the rest of the world is answering and understanding and sympathizing. Yes, I know some people are feeling so despairing, like, "Well, yeah, all of this understanding and sympathy hasn't changed the material outcome on the ground." Well, it's not so simple. It takes time for the pendulum to turn. It takes time for the critical mass to actually acquire the political value it needs to achieve what it needs to achieve. So, you know, someone must have told him, "Well, TikTok is your big problem."

"Let's go and spend some money, and that's going to fix everything." Well, it's been a while. And yeah, indeed, a lot of people have been censored on TikTok. And today, for example, there's a big story in the Palestine Chronicle about censorship on TikTok and the censorship of some prominent Palestinians on Twitter, on X as well. So the censorship has continued, but the relationship between the audience and Palestine has not in any way changed. To the contrary, it continues to grow. I don't think there's a way you can come back from a genocide. I think once you carry out a genocide, you can go and put Israeli female soldiers on the cover, you know, scantily clad with Uzi guns and so forth. You know what I'm talking about. They have been doing that with thirst trapping.

#Danny

The kids call it thirst trapping. Yeah, yeah, yeah.

#ramzy baroud

That's it. That's it. And you can do that and go back to the old tactic of just changing the subject, accusing people of being anti-Semitic. You know what? The anti-Semitism accusation doesn't work when everybody is anti-Semitic. When you say, "You know what? Carrying out massacres and putting hundreds of people in mass graves to hide them under a hospital, in a hospital courtyard, is wrong," and you say, "No, that's anti-Semitism"—no, it's not. And no rational person in the world is willing to engage in that kind of conversation. Israel has lost it. And I don't think anything Israel can do will allow it to win the propaganda war.

#Danny

Yeah, those are great points, Ramzi. You know, I guess what I'm wondering, too, is how the outcome of what happens now in this region—from the war in Iran to the struggle for Palestine's liberation and all the connections between them—will shape the world situation. Because I think that when we view this region, it's often siloed: it's the Palestine issue, it's Iran. But what goes on here will determine the outcome and development of the rest of the world, in my opinion. And I'm wondering what your thoughts are on how that will happen.

#ramzy baroud

Absolutely. You're spot on, Danny, because, I mean, just look again at what the American side has been saying about this. You know, the Project for the New American Century and how they've been desperately trying to ensure that the future is American and that China, India, and Russia are not going to occupy the various spaces, especially energy spaces in the Gulf and beyond the Gulf, that the Americans claim as theirs. Well, we know where that ended. I mean, if you look at Iraq right now, I think it's an interesting fact that Iraq's largest global trading partner is China. I think that's quite interesting. And also the fact that China is building literally hundreds of schools and academic and learning institutions in Iraq.

When the Iraqi people look at what the Americans have done, they came, dropped bombs, and at the end of the day, more or less, they left. And they didn't really leave behind any legacy of education, healthcare, hospitals, that sort of thing. So we know that the Project for the New American Century ended up being anything but. Actually, it exposed the fault lines in that so-called American century. Everything they have tried to achieve, Danny, since then—all of these discourses, you know, "The End of History and the Last Man"—who was that? Fukuyama, and his ideas that, you know, we're not just witnessing the end of the Cold War, he says, but reaching a point in history where there is no ideological evolution anymore. Well, we also know how that ended.

How about Huntington's clash of civilizations? What clash of civilizations? Are Iran and China part of the same civilization? No, they're not. But there is a clear alliance going on. The precision of Iranian weapons and missiles—that just did not happen overnight. I know that the Iranians are developing lots of their weapons, but there's a lot of help coming from China and Russia today, and elsewhere. That's not a clash of civilizations. So basically, everything that the Americans have been betting on has failed. Fast-forward to January 2026: the new National Defense Strategy document is revealed. And guess what, everybody? We are now going to just really maintain our control over the Western Hemisphere, control those European lackeys and, you know, South America.

And then they go and kidnap Maduro as a way to show that we are really serious about the shift in American foreign policy. America not only no longer acts with a forward-thinking plan, it's retreating. It's very obvious that there's a retreat. And as a result, the Iranians—I mean, you know the Persians. You know the history of Persia. And I've watched many wonderful people on your podcast

talking about that history, about how Persian civilizations and cultures have always had this power to read events and to behave geopolitically accordingly. They saw that there's a major gap, and they used it. Ansarullah saw a major gap, and they are using it.

And the Americans and the Israelis are not able to fill these gaps, and they are not able to reverse outcomes. So there will be a new Middle East. There will be a new Middle East. By the way, this is not the Middle East that Netanyahu has been talking about. Netanyahu, my gosh, one time I did a study to see how many times Netanyahu had been saying "the new Middle East"—of course, an Israel-controlled Middle East. And it's been going on for decades. And of course, Condoleezza Rice used it, "the new Middle East," in the 2006 war against Hezbollah. But at the end of the day, the Middle East is emerging because of the regional players in the Middle East itself, not because of some American or Israeli strategy superimposed on the Middle East.

And this is what I think is going to happen. Anything they do is not going to change the outcome. There will be a new Middle East. Iran is going to be a powerful player in the Middle East. I think Gulf countries are going to realize that Israel and the US are incapable of protecting them. Trump himself said, "We cannot protect you anymore." So I feel like there is a possibility of something positive emerging here. The question is, how far will Israel go to block it? How nasty and crazy will Netanyahu be in trying to block this renewed hope and faith that a new Middle East could actually emerge, with some kind of unity between the various cultures, civilizations, and nations?

#Danny

Ramzi, it was great to be with you. I think that was a great way to close out this portion of the show. There's plenty more to come as we bring on Mark Rice in a minute. But Ramzi, I want to make sure everybody knows that the video description below has links to the Palestine Chronicle as well as your own website, because you've published some incredible books that people need to check out, including your recent memoir. Any final thoughts before you head out of here?

#ramzy baroud

Absolutely. Thank you very much, Danny, for the opportunity to speak to you. Always a big, big fan of your show. I think your show, like so much of what we do, does not represent an ideology, a faction, a government, or anything. We're independent journalists who are trying to do what is right. So we call on listeners, viewers, and readers to understand that we cannot exist without them. We cannot survive without them. And this is not a call for money, of course, but a call for solidarity and support. So do please go to my website, RamzyBaroud.net, engage with my books, and check out the latest two books: Before the Flood, and the second book, with Ilan Pappé and Romana Rubeo, Gaza Rising. I would appreciate any engagement with these latest projects.

#Danny

Amazing. Ramzy, I'll have to have you back on soon. It's been too long. Take care, and I look forward to the next one.

#ramzy baroud

Thank you, Danny. Bye-bye.

#Danny

All right, everybody. With that, we have a first-time guest on the show, economist and co-director of the Center for Economic and Policy Research, Mark Weisbrot. Mark, good to meet you and great to have you on.

#Mark Weisbrot

Thanks, Danny. Thanks for inviting me.

#Danny

Of course. Well, we go from West Asia and Iran to what's going on in Latin America, where the Trump administration has placed a lot of focus as well. I would say there's been a dual focus. And now we have the runoff election in Brazil tomorrow between Lula and Flávio Bolsonaro, Bolsonaro 2.0. You've written about this. I'll pull up your article. Maybe you can talk about the significance of this election in the context of U.S. foreign policy right now. The U.S. is about to head back into kinetic war with Iran, but also has pretty big plans for Latin America, particularly Brazil. What's your analysis?

#Mark Weisbrot

Well, yeah, this is a big thing. I don't know. Do you think I should explain a little bit about who the candidates are and give some background first? Sure.

#Danny

However you'd like to approach it.

#Mark Weisbrot

Okay. So you have a really stark choice, obviously. You have a right-wing candidate, Flávio Bolsonaro, and he got his start through his father, who was president from the beginning of 2019 to the beginning of 2022.

#Mark Weisbrot

And these are really right-wing people. And they're even kind of worse than that, in the sense that, you know, Jair Bolsonaro, the father, has said publicly, "I approve of torture. And the people do too." And he brags about the dictatorship in Brazil from 1964 to 1985. And he said that they didn't kill enough people. Okay, so these are really extreme people. And I don't even know, to tell you the truth, how they can even get elected. Okay, I think it might be that social media is so powerful there, and they have such an advantage that that doesn't come up there, right? Maybe most of the people who voted for him don't even know those things. But I mean, in 2016, for example, when he was casting his vote in Congress to impeach Dilma Rousseff, he dedicated his vote to the military official who was in charge of her torture while she was in prison under the dictatorship.

So that's interesting. That's what we're talking about. And Flávio is with him. Flávio declared that he was taking over the mission from his father. It's on his X feed, and he branded himself as Bolsonaro 2.0. So they're a team. And he also supported the dictatorship on numerous occasions and even supported what his father said in Congress. So these are the people. Now, the thing is, they also have big policy differences. Oh, yeah, I didn't get to Lula yet. Lula is, of course, different. You know, he comes from a labor background. He worked in a factory, became a union leader, and helped found the Workers' Party. Just a whole different set of values and principles and goals. And he was also president for two terms, from 2003 through 2010. So, those two terms, and then the current term.

#Mark Weisbrot

Which began after Bolsonaro, who refused to step down at first and did a similar kind of Trump thing, which was January 8th instead of January 6th. But he was convicted of, first of all, an attempted military coup, which he did try. And he had the violent demonstrators in the streets as well. And then he was also convicted of trying to destroy the rule of law in Brazil. So then comes Lula. And I can tell you about some of the differences between the two of them on policy, for example. Lula really, you know, he really did have transformational first two terms. And this one turned out pretty good as well, in terms of what people got from it. And I'm not exaggerating anything. I'm just using the numbers that all economists accept here. When you hear a number, that's where it comes from: a source that nobody is disputing.

#Danny

Yeah, maybe you can talk about Brazil and how it's changed under Lula, because Lula has gotten a lot of criticism, I think, of course, from the right. And, you know, you talked about the Bolsonaros. They're nostalgic for the dictatorship. And many people don't know that that dictatorship drew a lot of inspiration from European fascism, actually. So maybe you could talk about the difference in what's happened under Lula. Why is it that all we hear is, you know, that Lula is the corrupt one? And yet, you know, you just said that, and you put that in your article.

#Mark Weisbrot

Concrete data on how things have gotten better for Brazilians. What's happening, actually? Well, it did get better. I think that, first of all, you know, his first two terms were transformational. Together, they reduced poverty by more than 40 percent. Actually, it was 50—I think it was 57 percent. Yeah. And more than 60 percent for extreme poverty. And, of course, the economy grew four times as fast as it did during the previous eight years of the Cardoso presidency. It was a really new thing because, you know, you were ending at that time.

And this is, you know, if we have time, I'll tell you what was happening in the hemisphere. But it was very big. You know, from 1980 to 2000, you had the worst economic growth failure in over 100 years. There was hardly any growth at all, maybe five percentage points for Latin America and the Caribbean from 1980 to 2000. Then he comes in and starts to do things. And it wasn't just him. He was the second of what were actually 15 left-of-center presidents elected in the 21st century. And some people call it the "pink tide" because their policies were mostly social democratic. But in any case, that's what happened.

And it really was a change. And that's what he was part of in those first two terms. I have to say, you know, if you have time, I think it really is not flattering to the intelligentsia of the United States and, by extension, Europe, as Jeff Sachs was talking about the other day, that here was something that was really, for me at least, unprecedented in history. You had hundreds of millions of people whose lives were changed through progressive governments that came from really different backgrounds than the traditional ruling classes. And poverty, for example, fell from 46% to 28%.

#Mark Weisbrot

From 2002 to 2013. It was because of these governments. They changed policy, is what they did. And macroeconomic policy was the most important. We can talk about that if you want. But that was a huge change because, in the prior 20 years, poverty hadn't gone down at all. No poverty reduction. And then you get this big change. And so here you had these changes, you know, that took place peacefully through elections. Okay? I mean, you had big changes just like this after World War II, but 60 million people had to die before it happened. Okay? I mean, they didn't have to, but that is how it happened, right?

And you have revolutions in history, but those tend to be violent as well. This was peaceful democracy. And you would think that everybody here who's a liberal or anything would say, "Wow, that's great." And what did they do? You can read everything that was written about these leaders, and it's almost all bad. It's really striking. And I hope I don't offend too many people by saying that, but there's really not much of an excuse for it. And we can talk about how Latin America is treated here in our political culture, and also by the so-called security state. But anyway, that's what happened. And so that was his first two terms.

And there was a lot more that he did, you know, in terms of creating and expanding these cash transfer programs and everything. So then he comes back after Bolsonaro finally steps down, despite enormous support from Trump to stay in office. And that's coming back right now. Okay, that's very important because on September 24th, 31 members of Congress sent a letter to Rubio, and it listed a whole bunch of things. There's a lot to list. And then it said, "Is your administration going to respect the result of this election if Flavio Bolsonaro loses and the election result is confirmed?"

It's confirmed and everything. And they would not answer. It took a long time to get back. They really had no answer. What does that do? That is telling Bolsonaro right now, "You want to just subvert this election result? We got your back." And by the way, it's too close to call right now in the polls. That's what that letter said when they sent it, because they know what it means. They know why these people are asking, you know, and the whole world knows. And here they are saying it in front of the whole world: "We're not going to answer whether we're going to support the result of the election if our candidate loses."

And they've been intervening, you know. I mean, I could go through all the 15 Pink Tide countries, okay? And they intervened in 13 of them. And I could tell you a story about every one. But the two that are most relevant here are the last two: in November in Honduras and April in Colombia. Trump threatened those electorates and basically said that they would be punished if they didn't vote for his candidate. And so they did. But those elections were decided by less than one percentage point. So that's why I'm saying that, you know, these people are really doing damage. And the worst, the most dangerous part of it—and we can get into this, too—is if it becomes, you know, semi-permanent. Right.

Because that's what Trump is doing here in the U.S. The biggest threat he poses is not just that he's a horrible person, a monster in so many ways. It's also that—and the Republicans have been doing this for 50 years, but they've really accelerated it—they've got the Supreme Court, the judiciary, the gerrymandering, the voter suppression. It's all being expanded. Like, every month they try something to rig the system a little more in their favor, sometimes a lot more. And so that is what happens. And again, you know, it really is an unusual and really unprecedented thing we're watching right now. You know, with Trump, you can't really say what he cares about besides his own fortune.

#Danny

Rubio is all in. He's got skin in the game here.

#Mark Weisbrot

Yeah, and so that's it. Brazil is the jewel in the crown. But it's more than that. He's going to have Flavio. He wants Flavio to join him in his political, military, and economic violence in the hemisphere. And I can talk about all three of those. You know, the economic violence is...

#Danny

Probably the most important. The sanctions are so frightening to people. And, you know, if you want me to explain that, I can. It's up to you how much you want. Yeah, no, well, how about this? You know, you mentioned how so much of this is now out in the open in terms of U.S. policy to destroy the Pink Tide countries' progressive governments in the region. And just last night, I was thinking about our talk because the CIA posted on X—this is for Cuba—literally putting out a call in Spanish on X saying, "Those seeking to create positive change."

Oh, yeah, I saw that. "The disappointment of failed promises, the corruption, the privileged lives of the few. Seize the opportunity to create the change you desire through a discreet partnership with the CIA." A discreet partnership. You know, these guys are giving a new meaning to the saying "the quiet part out loud." Yeah, literally advertising. Yeah, it's amazing. Which Marco Rubio did repost, by the way. Marco Rubio did republish that in full, and, you know, just copy-paste.

#Mark Weisbrot

Yeah, because it was in Spanish originally, wasn't it? It was from the CIA. Yeah.

#Danny

Yeah.

#Mark Weisbrot

And I think this is going to backfire on them. Like I said, I don't know how they got the first round, but it really does depend on controlling the messaging that people are getting, because most people don't like this shit, you know? And when we get to the economics, you can see that most of those voters who voted for Flavio were really voting against their own interests. And I don't say that to condescend to anybody or to tell them what their interests are. I'm just talking about, you know, do you like being less poor than you are? Or maybe being able to send your kids to college if you're further up, or, you know, your medical care. I mean, Lula did a whole bunch of reforms, actually, too, that were extremely popular.

And, you know, there were things like Farmácia Popular. Eighty-nine percent were in favor of this, and this covers medicines and supplies from pharmacies. There was an income tax exemption up to 5,000 reais a month. That's about $1,000. And that was mostly helping those with lower incomes. You had Desenrola, the household debt renegotiation program. And we can get to that, too. That's one of the main problems that Lula is facing because, you know, I named all these good things he did, but there's one thing that happened that he couldn't control. And this is where the economics comes in. The central bank decided to keep interest rates at over 14%. It's 13.75% now, and inflation is down at about 4.2%. So this is one of the highest real interest rates.

These are the short-term rates that the central bank controls. They meet every six weeks, just like the Fed in the U.S., you know, and they decide what the short-term policy rate is going to be. And so that's a terrible thing because in Brazil—I mean, here you would get a recession immediately. But the reason it's so bad electorally and for people is because they have household debt. And that debt is very much tied to what's called the SELIC rate here. It's the federal funds rate in the U.S., and it's tied to the short-term rate. And it's extremely volatile for those at the lower end. So groups that are earning, like, two times the minimum wage have debt now with interest of about 100%. And they're paying about 35% of their income.

And so those people are angry. And of course, they blame Lula because they don't know it was Jair Bolsonaro who made the central bank completely independent, they call it. I call it unaccountable to the government, okay? And Lula doesn't have the power in Congress to change the law. So that's how he's being punished. And that is a part of it. But I mean, the majority of people still have a big stake in this government getting reelected. I'll give you one example that's really current, okay? This was just in the last couple of weeks.

Congress passed a constitutional amendment that changed the standard workweek from 44 hours over six days to 40 hours over five days. And it's going to change over the next 14 months. And the great part about the law is that they can't lower pay in response to this. This is going to be part of everybody's contract. Many millions of people are affected by it, okay? And so that's really big. And Lula has been fighting for this for at least a few years—and, of course, his whole life. But, you know, in the last few months, Flavio and his allies have been blocking it. And then he finally changed his vote.

He's a senator, and he changed his vote so it could pass because of the enormous pressure he was under. He probably would have lost the election if he had voted against it, because only one senator voted against it. And so that's what happened. But there again, you can see this is a really important thing for working people in Brazil. And these people fought against it and blocked it for as long as they could. And that's telling them what kind of gains they're going to get. And he's also said he's going to cut spending by 1.5 percent of GDP. He can't do that without cutting the most important anti-poverty programs. So it's going to be bad for them. And then, of course, the other part of it is the Trump part, which I can go into as much as you want.

#Danny

I mean, these are all great points, Mark. Now, you know, we have about 10 minutes left, so I wanted to ask you—and you can take this wherever you want—but why does the United States attack Brazil and, of course, attack the rest of the region the way that it does? You know, you mentioned sanctions. You mentioned the lawfare, the propaganda, all of this, and, you know, their literal attacks at times, like what happened to Venezuela. So why Brazil now, and why is there such a coordinated, concerted effort by the United States to take down these governments?

#Mark Weisbrot

Well, that's Trump, partly. I mean, that's not to say previous governments didn't intervene. I wrote about their intervention. Lula got thrown in jail for 580 days. That's how he didn't get to run for president in 2018. He would have smashed Bolsonaro in that election. He was 20 points ahead in the polls, even while he was trying to run from jail. And the U.S. intervened, you know, even before Trump. They intervened against the Workers' Party. And again, I could go through 13 of those 15 countries and show what they did. So I think the general explanation is a little different from what a lot of people think—that it's all about corporate interests. If you look at all the regime changes that I would go through, corporate interests didn't play much of a role at all. I mean, the two biggest corporations in the United States, Chevron and ExxonMobil, for years were fine with Chávez.

They wanted to leave him alone. They didn't have a voice. And Chevron's still there now because they were making money. They didn't care. And so, you know, it's really about power. They see this from the viewpoint of power, and they go for the low-hanging fruit. Anytime they see even a country that doesn't have anything that they can take, like Haiti, they go for it. They have changed the Haitian government four times since the CIA-sponsored coup of 1991, when they knocked out Haiti's first democratically elected president. And then, actually, he came back because the Congressional Black Caucus told Clinton, "We won't support your health care reform if you don't put him back." And so that's a really important thing that we won't have time for, probably. But Congress here can play a really important role, and it has, in trying to resist these regime changes.

Especially lately, you have a progressive caucus that is led by people who think like we do about these things. And so I think that they want to control the hemisphere. But, you know, they're like that in most of the world. It's just that this is a place that they feel they can control, and they feel it belongs to them in some ways. And they want to have it so that they can be more powerful in the rest of the world, which is, you know, growing a lot faster and passing them up. You know, China's already 30 percent bigger in terms of its real GDP, as measured by purchasing power parity—you know, the economists' comparisons. And that is going to grow. I mean, I would say in a little more than a decade, they're going to be twice the size of the U.S. So you have this whole thing where the international order is changing, and you've talked about it on your show too, I think.

And so they're clinging more, but not that much more. I mean, I think if you compare most of what you're seeing now to the past—the whole 21st century, for example, and then before—it's a drastic change in the sense that these people are more violent and more willing to use violence, and more stubborn, because they've got Rubio to mollify the security state. And Trump—you know, Nixon had this madman theory about how, if you could convince people that you were crazy, you could really scare them. And that's Trump. And so that's really the big difference right now. And I think, yeah, they want Brazil. And again, they've gotten 18 countries in their MAGA alliance.

#Danny

Well, in the final minute or so, Mark—or a couple of minutes, however you'd like to address this—I know you've done a lot of research, particularly on sanctions, whether it's Venezuela, Cuba, or sanctions around the world on 20-plus countries, I believe it is. What are your thoughts on the role that sanctions are going to play from here on out, you know, as the United States attempts to assert this new Monroe Doctrine that Trump touts?

#Mark Weisbrot

Well, I think the sanctions are powerful. As I said, the Treasury calls them a tool of first resort because they're not seen. It's not like when they bomb a tent or a wedding party, as they did in Afghanistan, for example, or even bomb these boats and blow them up with people in them. It's not seen, and it is really deadly. You know, in the article I wrote with my co-authors at CEPR for The Lancet Global Health last year, we estimated that these unilateral sanctions, which are overwhelmingly U.S. sanctions, kill 564,000 people a year. And that's roughly in the same range as the number of people who die in armed conflict.

So they really do hold on to this for that reason. I think that's the main reason why the security state doesn't want to let up on that at all. And of course, Congress is pushing back, and they have been for a few years now. And I think, you know, when this regime goes in the U.S., there's a good chance that it will change here. But it is a tough fight because it's such a powerful weapon. And you can talk to governments in Latin America, and they'll tell you: people look at what happened in Venezuela. They lost three-quarters of their GDP in the worst depression that's ever happened without a war, from 2012 to 2020. And that's three times what we lost in our own Great Depression here. And most of that was after the…

#Mark Weisbrot

The sanctions started in 2015, and with the Trump sanctions themselves, you know, mortality went up by 40,000 that year. I think at least 100,000 people, if you look at World Bank data, have died as a result of these sanctions in Venezuela. So that's their deadliest weapon right now, and I think it's going to take a fight. But again, we have a lot of people here who are fighting against that.

#Danny

Mark, it was great having you. I definitely want to encourage people to go to the video description after the program and check out your latest article from the Center for Economic and Policy Research. That is in the video description below. And yeah, it was a great program. Any final thoughts before I let you go?

#Mark Weisbrot

Well, this election is not over yet. And so I really think it could depend on turnout. I'll just say that for anybody who has a chance to do anything about that. You know, there was 20 percent abstention, and it would probably take less than 10 percent of that group to come out and vote to swing it easily.

#Danny

All right, Mark. Well, I'll have to have you back on again to evaluate the situation after all is settled. Right now, I'm not loving the prediction markets. And we all know that they're tied deeply to the deep state. They're predicting a victory for Flavio Bolsonaro, Bolsonaro 2.0, despite all of the indications that Lula has been doing much better in the polls. So we'll have to see what happens. But I appreciate you coming on, and I hope to talk to you again very soon.

#Mark Weisbrot

Thanks. Likewise.

#Danny

All right. Take care.

#Mark Weisbrot

You too.

#Danny

All right, everybody. That's the end of today's program. I want to encourage everyone to hit the like button before you go. That helps boost the show in YouTube's algorithm. Also, go to the video description below to check out Ramsey's work, Dan Kowalik's X profile, and, of course, Mark Weisbrot's new article on the elections in Brazil. Tomorrow, October 25th, I'll be back at 1 p.m. Eastern Time with Professor Mohamed Morandi as we dive deeply into the war preparations that are being made and their implications. So I'll see you then. Hit the like button, everyone. I want to thank everybody who watched. I want to thank all of the moderators. I saw all of you there today. I appreciate you and all the members. Hit the like button before you go. The video description has all the places where you can support this show. And I'll see you October 25th at 1 p.m. Eastern Time. Take care. Bye-bye.