

Richard Wolff & Michael Hudson: Iran's Real Strategy Just Broke America's Grip

Follow me: Substack: [https://substack.com/@dialogueworks?](https://substack.com/@dialogueworks?utm_campaign=profile&utm_medium=profile-page)

utm_campaign=profile&utm_medium=profile-page X (Twitter): https://x.com/Dialogue_NRA

Patreon: [https://patreon.com/Dialogueworks?](https://patreon.com/Dialogueworks?utm_medium=unknown&utm_source=join_link&utm_campaign=creatorshare_creator&utm_content=)

utm_medium=unknown&utm_source=join_link&utm_campaign=creatorshare_creator&utm_content=

#Nima

Hi, everybody. Today is Thursday, May 7, 2026, and our dear friends Richard Wolff and Michael Hudson are back with us. Welcome back, Richard and Michael.

#Richard

Glad to be here. Yep.

#Nima

Yeah, let me start with the blockade. We had Donald Trump trying again to open up this trade-off, foremost by announcing Project Freedom. And they said that two American ships passed through the Strait of Hormuz, which later on we learned was false. No ship, no tanker has passed through the Strait of Hormuz. The only tanker that was able to pass through the strait was the Iranian tanker getting out and going to, I assume, China. And the other point is with the case of the blockade. And we know that the Trump administration thought that this blockade would work perfectly for the administration. Here is what Scott Bassett said about it just two days ago.

#Speaker 03

Let's level set here. I think the Iranians are starting to believe their own propaganda. And just to be clear, the leadership is hunkered down in bunkers all over the country. And I don't think they know what's going on. But what is going on is that they're reduced. Their Navy is not a Navy anymore; it's a band of pirates. They are trying to cut off international freedom of navigation through the Strait of Hormuz, and the U.S. is opening that up. This is a humanitarian effort. I can tell you, two weeks ago was IMF-World Bank week in Washington, and I had numerous countries come up to me—some of the poorest, some of the most vulnerable—and ask us to do this, because it's not only energy that's in there, it's fertilizer, it's food transport, it's LPG for more than the billion-plus people in India who use it to cook.

So we are saying the Iranians do not have control of the strait. We have absolute control of the strait. We have blockaded the ships going into or out of Iranian ports. Their economy is in free fall. And everyone says they have a high tolerance for pain. Well, their soldiers will not have a high tolerance for not getting paid.

#Nima

Here he said "a band of pirates" about the Iranian Navy, and here is what Donald Trump said about it.

#Speaker 04

On top of everything else, we then land on top of it, and we took over the ship. We took over the cargo, took over the oil. It's a very profitable business. Who would have thought we were doing that? We're like pirates. We're sort of like pirates. But we're not playing games, because, you know, for 47 years, Iran has been pushing everybody around.

#Nima

Richard, what's going on? Do you see any sort of strategy behind this blockade?

#Richard

Well, I enjoyed his reference to the ideological problem of the Iranians believing their own propaganda. This is a man who just told us that for the last 47 years, the global bully has been Iran. Well, if you can believe that, maybe next week he'll tell us it was Paraguay, or maybe it was some corner of Germany that was running the world. What world does he live in? Nobody in their right mind would claim that Iran has, for the last 47 years, been a global bully. My goodness, you know, the United States has been active on every continent, bombing, strafing. It has 700 military bases around the world. We're not the bully.

They're the bully. And I think it reflects the fact that Michael and I and you, we try here in these conversations to figure out what's the logic, what's the sense, what's the strategy, where is this going? But we're trying to make sense of a four-year-old playing in the sandbox. And the four-year-old in the sandbox is learning how things move, and that's a very important learning. But we're working at a different level. We've done that. We had our four-year-old sandbox experiences years ago. We don't need them again. We're trying to figure something else out, and we're talking to a four-year-old. This is silly, what's going on here.

And you know, if you can't believe Mr. Trump—and most of the American media now, every time they quote Mr. Trump, they'll say, "Mr. Trump today said something," or, for that matter, Scott Besson, who they said said something—and then there'll be a paragraph often added by someone

identified as a fact-checker who explains to the reader that what the president just said isn't the case, it's actually something else. And then you go on and read some more. I mean, we live in a country which has now normalized the media explaining what liars our leaders are. And then we're supposed to listen to this junk and what, forget that they are liars? So Mr. Besson said, "We're stopping. We've opened it up." No, you haven't. No, you haven't.

It's like the conversation of the last several weeks about negotiations. There are no negotiations. The Iranians point out, and the Pakistanis corroborate the Iranians. There are no negotiations. There is a go-between. Pakistan seems to be passing messages. That often happens in these situations. But everybody knows that's not a negotiation. That's the kind of thing you do that may get you to a negotiation, but it isn't. Gee whiz, we're back in the fourth grade, or four-year-olds in the sandbox playing these absurd games. And look at the stock market. Yesterday and today, the price of oil collapses—I mean, not collapsed, but goes sharply down. That's pure speculation. A news outlet—I know which one too, Axios—announces these things. It does so, even though it's critical of Trump, hopeful that maybe this time it's true.

So he writes it as if it's reasonable. And what are we going to see? Another oscillation of crazy—will tomorrow see something new emerge and the price of oil shoot up another ten dollars a barrel? I mean, this is a crazy arrangement. I do believe that it's not sustainable. So if you ask me, if that's what you're asking me to tell you about, Nima, yes, I do think they will have to work something out because the existing situation is too dangerous. And to give you an example, one of the largest purveyors of food—mass consumption food—in the United States is an enormous conglomerate, which is a combination of the Kraft Company, K-R-A-F-T, and Heinz, H-E-I-N-Z. Each of them is huge, and they came together. Their CEO this morning released a statement, and it really reinforces something Michael said to us a week or two ago.

He said they're lowering the prices of their food and their products. They have an immense number of products that they released. They're lowering their prices. And when he was asked in the interview, why are you lowering your prices since everybody is talking about inflation coming? His answer was what Michael said—not using Michael's words, but I want to give Michael credit because I didn't say it, he did. What the man said is, the American people, I quote now, are running out of money, and they can't afford our products, so we have to bring the prices down. In other words, emerging from all of this chaos, given the context of the larger American economy, is not an inflationary risk, but actually a deflationary risk. Or, to be more precise, both of those things are possible emerging from our situation.

#Nima

Michael?

#Michael

Well, the question that you asked and that Richard posed is, where are things going? They don't seem to be going anywhere in the sense that there's no deal that's going anywhere. There is no change in the situation that's existed since last week. But fantasies are going full speed ahead. Who does believe Mr. Trump? Well, the stock and the bond markets, as Richard just pointed out. And they have more money to back up their fantasy than Richard and I have to cope with their gullibility and with reality. They don't seem to realize that all of this frenetic speculation based on what Trump says has nothing to do with actual reality. He says we're negotiating and a deal is near with Iran.

I believe Iran when it says there's been no negotiation, because there cannot be any inherent negotiation under all of the terms that the United States has set. For one thing, suppose that there is a negotiation and the United States makes the promises that it's been holding out: we're going to release all the money that we've grabbed over the last 50 years from you, since 1979 when we froze your accounts; we're going to relax the sanctions that we've imposed upon you; you know, you'll be able to grow again. All you have to do is make an agreement, for what we're asking is quite simple: you have to promise not to build an atom bomb. When he talks about an atom bomb, he means, first of all, it takes three years to negotiate any kind of agreement such as Obama did.

Secondly, the agreement under Obama was that the Atomic Energy Group could come in, investigate all of the scientists, say where they live, tell the Israeli assassination teams who to kill, what universities to blow up, what professors to kill, so that Iran can have no training in physics or atomic energy or anything else. Secondly, anything that the United States agrees to, it can say, well, we can't control what Israel does, and so Israel will do all of the dirty work, or whatever mercenaries the United States chooses to use. Finally, suppose there were an agreement that somehow Iran could make up with the United States. For all of this to become official and not just a handshake agreement, like when America promised not to expand NATO eastward in 1991, Congress would have to approve.

And there's probably zero chance for this because America has extended the concept of a free market to politics. And politicians are sort of, in order to get elected, you put yourself up for auction. Who is going to give us the largest campaign contributions to represent America, their economic and political interests? Well, the largest contributors are the oil industry, the IT industry, the monopolies, the Zionists. And just to sort of increase the pot, Congress, for instance, will give billions of dollars to Israel with the agreement that a lot of this money will be recycled back into Israeli lobbying in the United States to contribute to the political campaigns of the politicians that make this agreement with Israel.

So given the lack of enforceability, what is the point even of having a discussion about alleged agreements that everybody knows cannot be enforced? And you've mentioned, you know, just imagine... What is going to happen? Think of the next two weeks. Trump is planning to go to China, and he's not going to do anything at all because he wants anything to attack more than simply blocking Iranian ships bringing oil to China. That would lead President Xi to say, well, look, there's going to be nothing to discuss. We're canceling the trip.

So what are the American aircraft carriers and the destroyers and all the troops that have been pushed into the Near East going to do for the next two weeks? The press is full of reports saying that they're low on food, they're eating scraps for food, that the naval members seem to be in a mutinous condition. And after the two weeks are up, then comes all of the hot weather for the summer that is going to really affect the low-lying countries throughout the Persian Gulf area much more than Iran itself. Being mountainous, it has at least better natural air conditioning than you're going to have from the long, hot summer there. So nothing is really going to happen.

So all that we're dealing with is in a kind of fantasy world where the United States is continuing to block Iran. And I'm glad you brought up President Trump's correction of Besant's statement to say, well, yes, of course we're pirates. Well, piracy such as the United States is doing by seizing the Iranian tankers is legally an act of war, so of course the war is still on. Trump is trying to get around the small print of the War Powers Act that limits the length of time that a president can go to war. But if you're still committing acts of war by piracy, you're still at war. And that's going to continue. And at some point, if what Trump said is true and these sanctions are really hurting Iran, then Iran will respond to the act of war with a response against countries, probably beginning with the United Arab Emirates.

It's made a deal with Saudi Arabia and Kuwait: we're not going to let American aircraft take off, use our airspace to attack you. That's what Iran asked them to do. The UAE, the Emirates, have said, well, you can use us. And somehow I don't think the Emirates are long for this world. But at any rate, what we're seeing is a stalemate for the time being, and it looks like there is not going to be war there in the next few days or weekends. But there won't be any move toward a resolution either. Slowly, the U.S. economy and the world economy are going to be starved for oil, and the situation will get worse and worse and worse. And all of that is in Iran's favor, not the United States.

#Richard

Nima, if I could add a couple of things. Go ahead, Richard. Behind the headlines, things are going on that are equally, if not more, important. For example, to take Michael's last point, everybody is adjusting now to this situation, and by that I mean both short-term, medium-term, and long-term adjustments. For example, one of those adjustments is to become less dependent on shipping as a way to move oil and gas. So pipelines are being rerouted. Pipelines are being built. Pipelines are being enlarged. That's a project that requires a decision now to commit large amounts of money. Once you do that, it becomes irrational to go back to what you did before, because that will cost money, and then the money you spent on the pipeline will have been a waste. They're not going to do that. They understand that. These are long-term projects. You have to institute them now because you don't know what.

You don't know what the resolution here is going to be. How long can Iran hold out? Good question. How long can the United States hold out? Also a good question—politically, militarily, economically.

The strains on both sides here are obvious, but the outcome isn't. And I think that very uncertainty is going to shape a lot of direction. There's a new pipeline from China all the way into Eastern Europe. I think it's about completed. If it hasn't been, it will be in the next matter of weeks or months. That will change the whole equation. I want to remind people that over the last few weeks we've had the usual announcements this time of year: GDP growth in the United States over the last year, two percent. That's the official announcement from the United States government. And what is the rate of growth in China? Five percent. Okay, I don't have to go beyond.

That is itself a tremendous difference. China continues to grow two and a half times faster. And I could give you many examples of why that shapes this outcome. I'm going to only give you one in the interest of time. China is now, as we have noted and everybody else notes as well, the manufacturing center of the world. And their manufacturing capacity keeps growing. They can produce drones and missiles forever. They're in the best position to manufacture those items. And then they can send them across a very long border that nobody else controls to Russia. And Russia, using the Caspian Sea, can give whatever it is they get from China to Iran.

So ending Iran's access to drones and missiles is not going to happen. That's not a problem. It's inconvenient. It takes some money. It's a pain. But it is easily doable under any one of dozens of circumstances. And likewise, it can go the other way. What Iran cannot get rid of by tanker out of the Persian Gulf and Oman and so on, it can get out through the Caspian Sea and Russia and China, and therefore the rest of the world. It is cumbersome, it costs them some money, but this is all eminently doable. Who is the United States thinking they're going to fool with this? China, Russia, and Iran built an alliance.

They did it over the last 47 years. They didn't bully the world. That was the job of the United States. What they did was get ready to handle that bullying. It took them 50 years, which is a critique of them. But they have it now, and boy, are they not going to give it up. Whatever else Xi Jinping and Mr. Putin understand is they too have been impressed at this phenomenon that a relatively small, relatively poor country has bested the United States. And the United States can't do anything about it, which is the frustration that I think drives the crazy nonsense coming out of the mouths of Trump and Biden.

You're looking at people who have no way forward, and so they are making up with verbiage what they can't do in terms of action. Last point. I know we have to discuss this business about enriched uranium, but do pardon me if I say that there is something unspeakably tasteless that the one country on earth that ever dropped a nuclear bomb on other people—namely the United States, Hiroshima and Nagasaki in Japan, I assume we all know—is telling other people how it is unsafe for them to develop nuclear weapons. The arrogance here is so over the top that you have to periodically say it again so we don't lose sight of this reality.

#Michael

I want to pick up on Richard's comment about the fact that there are going to be alternatives to Xi Jinping.

#Nima

Michael, I would love to hear your point about what Richard said about the pipelines. But the other point in the Middle East I think is so important right now, which was part of this Project Freedom—we've learned how the United Arab Emirates was hit by drones or missiles. That attack was reducing the capacity of the UAE to export oil from 5 million barrels a day through the ports of Fujairah and Khor Fakkan to 500,000 barrels a day. And this has happened just recently—yesterday. So I think what has happened with the case of the Strait of Hormuz is the new reality of the region, and all these countries that are using the Strait of Hormuz now have some sort of basis to make a new security architecture for the region. And anybody who's using the Strait of Hormuz is part of this security architecture. How do you see that?

#Michael

The whole key to that architecture is how do you keep, how do you prevent the region from being taken over by the United States and doing to the remaining parts of the Middle East what it did to Iraq, Syria, Libya, and other countries. And the problem is, as we've discussed in the last two shows, it's not simply the fact of oil exports largely to the West, to Europe, and to the United States. And it's not simply the fact that the Saudi fund of almost a trillion dollars for the sovereign wealth fund and the Emirates fund is invested in the United States. It's that the aim of these countries is to align their entire economies, apart from oil, with the United States, and that more than any other, this is the case with the Emirates. And today's Financial Times had a very good discussion, as I've mentioned, with the former OPEC Emirati oil diplomat, who said, you know, only one-third of our exports are now in oil. We've moved away from oil, and we want to become a center.

#Nima

You mean the exports of the UAE?

#Michael

Yes. Yeah, that's right. On the editorial page, yeah.

#Nima

Go ahead.

#Michael

Okay. So this is a commitment to sort of tie their economy to tourism, to money laundering. New York University has an offshore school in Abu Dhabi. They're tying all of their economic links to the United States, and that's why it's almost impossible to think that there can be a security architecture for the Middle East when the economic orientation and the financial orientation, as well as the military orientation with U.S. military bases there and arms, is all to the West instead of with the most rapidly growing areas that are the natural markets for oil—Asia primarily—and the Global South, with which not only is the U.S. at war, but the Emirates are at war.

They're on opposite sides from Saudi Arabia in the war in Sudan, for instance, and there's been so much increasing tension between Saudi Arabia and the Emirates that, you remember, a few days ago the Emirates said Iran has just bombed us and attacked us. Well, it turned out that this was a lie. They knew very well who attacked them—it was Saudi Arabia. That was in response to the Emirates' intention not only to withdraw from OPEC, but to fight against it and to fight against any attempt by Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and other countries to make an accommodation and say, all right, we've got to reorient our entire trade and investment away from the United States and Europe towards Asia and the Global South.

Because if we continue to rely on the United States, they are going to have the power to insist that we serve their foreign policy. And we're going to have to buy the weapons. Well, the weapons that we bought from the United States—we, Saudi Arabians and Kuwaitis and the Emirates too—turned out not to work at all. They weren't effective against the Iranian attack. And instead of the United States protecting these countries, there was no protection at all against the Iranian attacks at will against them. So I can imagine Saudi Arabia publicly coming out to the United States and saying, well, you know, these arms you sent us didn't work.

We have to protect ourselves to have peace in the region. We want to—will you please refund the money that we've spent on the missiles and the airplanes and the bombers that we've bought? We'll give them all back to you. They make a public announcement to the world: they don't work. We want to disinvest and reorient our trade. That's part of it, the whole reorientation. And the Emirates are really against all of this, and it's no coincidence that they were all created, you know, a few decades ago by the British, all picking out the emirs and the leaders of a particular clan that ran this whole region.

Well, Iran and even Saudi Arabia and the other countries can say, we want to cure the Near East from the damage done by the West in carving it up after World War I and especially after World War II. And we want to undo the effect of European colonialism. And that means undoing the national borders and the ruling client dictators and client oligarchies that the United States put in. They have to elevate the reorganization of Middle Eastern security to this overall level of the fight against European colonialism and America's military power—colonialism to control the oil trade by controlling all of the governments throughout the Near East, mainly by using its client armies in Israel and Al-Qaeda in Syria, and all of the destructive head-chopping and assassinations that you see coming out of this. They want to clear away this whole awful history.

#Nima

Wow. Richard, how do you see the case of the security architecture of the Middle East? And I think the Strait of Hormuz could be the basis. Michael just gave us his point of view. What is your understanding of that?

#Richard

I come at this from a different angle. And I don't know if this will be helpful or not, but at least it will enrich the conversation, I think. As you know, I believe that we are in the declining phase of the American empire, and I believe that this war with Iran is a very important milestone or historic shift. And I'm noticing a wide variety of commentators in many different parts of the world are saying similar or parallel things, including people you've had on your show and others like that. So let me put it from that perspective.

I think the United States, with great difficulty, is about to embark on the recognition, long delayed, long denied, that we are in a state of a declining empire, and that the euphoria that happened after 1991 with the collapse and disintegration of the Soviet Union and the end of the Eastern European allies of the Soviet Union, that the United States would enjoy a quote-unquote "unipolar moment." I'm borrowing from John Mearsheimer's language, and that in America, it was believed by the Bush family, by those people around them, that this would last forever.

It was the same mistake that they made after World War II, that the dominance of the United States relative to Germany, Japan, China, Russia would forever be the United States in full bloom, having used the war to come out of a depression versus the rest of the world, which had destroyed itself by two world wars in a 25-year period. Okay. It is now, I think, with this war, a possibility that they will recognize we are in a decline. And why is that important? Because the most likely concept with which that will be articulated is the notion of empire overreach. It is a kind of classic of the literature of empires — the Greek, the Roman, the Persian, all of them, Ottoman — that they collapse when they try to do more than their big empire can tolerate, can afford.

And the United States will have a big debate. It will say, we have tried to be the policemen of the world. We can't do that. We have to retreat. And then the question will become, where do we retreat first? And here's my suggestion: it won't be Latin America. They're going to try to hold on to that for as long as they can. That's the Monroe Doctrine. That's what they hold on to. And it is the only sense I can make of the absolutely bizarre practice of the last six months, recently renewed, of killing small groups of men in boats floating around the Caribbean or the Pacific. No judge, no trial, no jury — just kill them. Summary, extrajudicial murder by the American government, openly. Okay, that's a message to Latin America — what it is we are prepared to do.

And they can't withdraw from Asia because that's China. China is — that's its backyard. Asia is the Latin America for China in the logic of this way of thinking. And Europe, well, that's its own thing. So where are we gonna — what, Africa? Doesn't matter yet. It will, but not yet. So the area of withdrawal, ironically, West Asia, the Middle East. The irony will be that the United States will discover that, given the horrible mess it has made in the last hundred years of dominating that part of the world, the best thing they can do now, the best thing, is to withdraw gracefully and to endorse a new, quote, architecture of security for that region, which they will support as if it were something other than the retreat it actually has to be.

#Michael

The United States is not the United Nations, of course. And while I think you're right, the United States is certainly turning to Latin America because that was where it achieved its great success in Venezuela — simply taking over all of Venezuela's oil, whose export proceeds are now deposited in a Florida bank to be disposed of locally by President Trump personally and his appointees. Not any of the money will go to Venezuela. He can now sell Venezuela's oil resources and investment agreements to the oil companies that contribute most to his campaign. But while the U.S. is doing this, Richard, it's still going to try to do whatever it can to do mischief in Asia — to block, to essentially, what can we do to hurt China, and what can we do to hurt the rest of Asia and Russia so that it can't help China?

Well, the focus of American foreign policy in Asia now is to prevent China's Belt and Road Initiative. You're absolutely right. When you say they're moving away from shipping, they're moving to pipelines and to railroads. We're seeing the rejection of the Mackinder idea that the way to control the Asian continent is by the ports, by the sea. China said, no, we're going to integrate it from within with pipelines and with railroads. The United States is trying to do this with the meddling that it's been doing in Azerbaijan. And Azerbaijan, along with Armenia, are between Russia and Iran. And there was a whole fight about that in the early 19th century, leading to Russia wanting to build a railroad from itself to Iran — the whole fight over the Russian recapture of Azerbaijan and these areas that had been part of the Persian Empire before.

All of that is what the United States is trying to do by working, by trying to create an alternative set of countries that can interrupt the continuity of a pipeline, the continuity of the railroad, and all of this, and try to make sure that the trade between China and Western Europe and the West Coast of Africa is all under the United States' ability to sabotage or to destroy, or to do to it what the U.S. and Europe are doing to Russia via Ukraine right now — attacking Russian assets and oil and refineries day after day after day. So the United States is still going to be in a position to do as much mischief as it can. And it's not going to go quietly and reasonably, because you and I are never going to be elected again to be in charge of its policy. And even if we were president, we couldn't convince Congress to go along with all of its political loyalties and corruption.

#Richard

Yeah, I agree. My point was only that we are in a shifting moment, and things that otherwise wouldn't have been possible because of the opposition of the United States — it cannot do everything. If it is going to try to turn this Azerbaijan-Armenia foothold that they seem to have, especially with the recent elections in Armenia and all that that has meant, that's going to take time and energy and money and resources of all kinds. They can't do it. They can't control even the explosions that I expect in Latin America and elsewhere that will be opposed to them. Colombia in Latin America is an example right now. Other examples are coming. It's not at all clear that they can do in Cuba what they keep threatening to do, and on and on and on.

I can't predict, and I don't think they can, where they will do what, but they can't do it all. That is what is sinking in. You know, if Indonesia were to do in the Strait of Malacca what Iran did in the Strait of Hormuz, you know, ask yourself. Or even if not that, just the Houthis in the Red Sea. And there are others. What happens if people along the way, going around Africa, begin to have oppositional interests that make it necessary for the ships to make yet another detour? The American—let me put it this way—international trade for the last hundred years has been very convenient for the development and operation of the American empire.

Now it's necessary, as that empire encounters one difficulty after another, to get rid of international law and trade. That's what they're doing. They flout the law in Iran, in the boat killing, all of that. Okay, but the irony is this is now going to come home to hurt them because everybody is thinking of what they can do that flouts the law. Iran interrupted, you know, global shipping. It did where it could, but that's taking a leaf from the United States, which did the things it did because it could and dismissed international law. Well, you are opening a very big Pandora's box here, and it's going to come out, and everybody else is going to start doing it. When? Just when your empire is less able to prevent that than it used to be.

#Nima

Yeah. Michael, when it comes to Donald Trump's visit to China, we know that he's going to go on May 14. He's going to go to China. How do you see his position, his sort of cards, because he loves these cards? What are the cards he possesses going to China?

#Michael

Yeah. Well, not very many. He'd hoped that he would be in control of Iran's oil and be able to say, well, we're going to permit you to get oil from OPEC and maybe even from Iran, but you're going to have to give us what we want. You're going to have to drop your export controls on rare earths, and tungsten, and aluminum, and gallium, and the other things that you're not selling us. And China will

say, well, you've made it very clear that the reason you want these products is they all have a military use. And you and the leading congressmen have said week after week after week, we are going to go to military war with China in two or three years.

So you're asking us to do two—to paraphrase Lenin, to sell you the rope with which you're going to hang us. And we only want trade for peaceful reasons. So we're not going to respond to your threat any more than Iran has done. We have certain conditions that we want. And one condition, as President Xi has made clear before, is that international law has to be followed in all of this. You Americans, Mr. Trump, you've tried to block us from the port of the Panama Canal that we've invested in. You're saying that you want to control all the ports in Latin America as part of your Western Hemisphere mineral doctrine.

And we've invested a lot of money in the port of Brazil, especially because now we're going to be buying all of its soybeans from it, because we don't think Brazil is going to try to cut us off and starve us like you Americans tried to do back in the 1950s to us. So, of course, we're developing port developments. That's what we do. And it's not what you've done very much in. And you, Donald Trump, have told Europe you can't have any company exist on your continent that China has 51% or more control of. Well, you're trying to impose this double standard on us, and we're not going to go with a double standard. We want world peace.

We want an agreement. And the question is, suppose we do make an agreement between us. Let's talk about how on earth we're ever going to enforce this agreement. There isn't any enforcement power there by the United Nations. It doesn't have any troops to enforce it. Before there can be any agreement with us to begin importing or exporting to you the raw materials that you need, we're going to have to establish the rules that are going to govern this trade. And these rules really, I think, should be those of the United Nations Charter. That's the only international law we have. But you, Donald Trump, say you're not subject to international law because, just as Israel follows the law of God, you're following the law of God as America's chosen country, so that you're above the law.

How can we make an agreement with you? And I know that you'd like us to begin to give you right away these raw materials that you need for your military bombers and for your computer industry, to create monopoly power over artificial intelligence, to gain control of the world internet and computer industry and block us out. But again, there have to be negotiated rules and rules of enforcement. And it may be that we really can't make any basic trade agreement, any basic investment agreement. Probably we should realize that without being able to make an agreement, all we can do is not fight immediately, not have any war. And the big conflict right now is you're blocking our oil from Iran. You have to stop doing that.

If you don't, we will bomb. And if your ships try to pirate another Iranian oil tanker, we're going to blow up that ship. We're going to enforce the free trade that, under international law, you pledged to support when you benefited from free trade after 1945. We're going to have to act as the

enforcer to prevent you from breaking the law. So let's talk about, while we're meeting here, Mr. Trump, how we can save you from breaking the law and thereby plunging the whole Western world into economic depression along with your own economy, while we're rescuing at least Asia and as much of the Global South as we can from what you're doing. I think that would be a nice discussion for President Xi to have with Mr. Trump.

#Richard

You know, Nima, if I could interject, since our last meeting a week ago, the Chinese government issued a very important statement document. And the document was an instruction, a law within the Chinese system—an instruction to oil refiners that they must not abide by the sanctions of the United States. In other words, and they haven't done this before, they have tiptoed around it, they have looked the other way. The Americans have applied the sanctions in a haphazard, lackadaisical—you know, they say a big game, and then they're afraid to provoke. And then, you know, two or three weeks ago, Trump or Bolton or another one of the clowns said, no, we're really going to enforce now, you know, in this little bit of...

You know, the way they bomb an oil refinery somewhere deep in Russia and give credit to Ukraine, as if anybody was fooled about who's doing this and with what mechanisms. So the Chinese were provoked, and they did something they haven't done before. And it's exactly what Michael is talking about, because it kind of throws down the gauntlet. The United States is saying to the oil refiner, if you refine oil from Iran, then we will sanction you in this way and that way. And the Chinese government says, if you stop refining oil from Iran, we will go after you. So now the problem is in the hands of the oil refiner. That is an escalation of the situation.

It now says that the Chinese government, and there's no reason to think other than what I'm about to say, is not going to permit the United States to dictate in the world who does business with China. They're not going to do it. And the reality is, I go back to what I said earlier, if China is an economy almost as big as ours, and it is, and it is growing two to three times faster each year over the last 30 years, which it did and which it continues to do, then we're talking about a very few years before this struggle between the United States saying, we'll punish you if you do, and the Chinese saying, we'll punish you if you don't, everybody will have to tilt towards the Chinese because they're the bigger game in the game. If you have to choose, at that point, the strategy becomes self-destructive for the United States.

#Michael

It looks like Mr. Trump will have a hissy fit.

#Richard

Yes, he'll have his hissy fit. And it'll be yet another milestone, like the war in Iran, that the empire isn't able to be one anymore. It has to come to terms with its decline, just in the way Britain ended up having, over the course of the 19th and 20th centuries, to give up its great empire. The sun never set on the British Empire. Well, it did. And this is what the Americans have to figure out. And I think the Middle East will be the number one place. And you know what that means? It means that the country in the greatest difficulty of all right now, and there's a certain historic irony, is Israel. Because the attempt of the Europeans through Israel to try, in the 21st century, to create a viable settler colonialism in that part of the world is an impossible project.

And the impossibility of it will suddenly become clear, even to Mr. Netanyahu and the others. What are they going to do if any of what we're pointing at emerges? And if recent changes inside the United States are any sign, let me remind everyone, the Gallup poll and others have shown that a majority of Americans now tilt more to the Palestinians than they do to the Israelis. I believe recently a large group of congresspersons, much larger than in the past—still a small group, but much larger than before—wants to stop military shipments to Israel. Wow. The handwriting is on the proverbial wall, and if we're right about where this is going, the problems for Israel are going to get much, much more difficult.

And that's before knowing—just a footnote—I have been trying for three weeks, just personally, to get a handle on how much damage inside Israel missiles and drones from Iran have actually done. I cannot get it. There is a limit on information. You know, in a way, I take my hat off. The Israelis have figured out how to hide. I can't tell whether it's enormous. Even now, it's leaking out that the damage to American military bases is much larger than was admitted as little as a week or two ago. But nothing comparable, at least that I'm aware of, is out yet about what the damage inside Israel was. And we know that whatever it was, large or small, has to have an impact on the strategic thinking that's going on there, assuming that there is some.

#Nima

Richard, I'm sure that you know Professor Ted Postol.

#Richard

Yes.

#Nima

I talked with him. He has people, he knows people, his friends in Israel. They said to him that the damage is just tremendous, that tremendous damage has happened in Israel. But they're censoring everything. They're controlling the media and everything. They don't want anything to get out of Israel.

#Richard

Yeah, I mean, I have heard these stories, but unfortunately, I've heard stories that the damage is very small. I've heard stories that the damage is very large. I don't know what to do. I would like to resolve that. That's all I have.

#Nima

Yeah. Michael, do you want to add something before I go?

#Michael

Yeah, I have no faith that the United States is going to accept a reasonable recognition that the age of U.S. empire is over. I think there's still an America First flag-waving contingent here that's going to just plow ahead and pursue a policy that we've described as being self-defeating and will simply accelerate the end of American empire by isolating it from the rest of the world, by putting its interests against the rest of the world, even against Europe. Same thing in Israel. I don't think Netanyahu is going to be realistic.

I expect Israel to try to break whatever agreement there is by attacking Iran again. And Iran will now really seriously do much more, finishing the job, damaging Israel more than it did the first time around, to try to finally settle the issue. So I think before there is a dose of reality that actually becomes American policy, you're going to have a last desperate, suicidal, end-of-the-Third-Reich attempt to attack. And I don't see reasonability anywhere appearing on the congressional spectrum in either party.

#Nima

Yeah. Thank you so much, Richard and Michael, for being with us today. Great pleasure, as always, and see you next week.

#Richard

All right, have a good week.

#Nima

You too.