

# Richard Wolff: TRUMP CAVES: The Era of American Dominance is OVER

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## #Nima

Hi everybody, today is Thursday, June 18, 2026, and our dear friend Professor Richard Wolff is here with us. We are waiting for Michael to join us. He's going to join us halfway through this podcast. But let's start, Richard, with what happened last night. All of a sudden, the two sides, Iran and the United States, have published this 14-point MOU, Memorandum of Understanding, and Donald Trump on the part of the United States and Iranian President Pezeshkian have signed it. It was digitally signed. It seems that on Friday they're going to have some sort of meeting. It's not all about the signature, because they have already signed the document, and it's going to be about the next step and how they're going to implement those points in that memorandum, that MOU. Looking at the memorandum, before coming up to this slide, you said you looked at the points briefly. What is your understanding of that?

## #Richard

Well, I believe it is a historic document. It is well worth reading, no matter what happens from now on. However, we should keep in mind it is just an MOU. It is a statement about mostly what they intend to do. It is not binding on what they will do. Many of the points are worded in a way that they're conditional. And in addition, Mr. Trump has added more conditions already in the hours since he signed it, talking about Iranian behavior. He likes to use the words, "Do they behave themselves?" clearly suggesting that elements of that memorandum will or will not be binding on the United States, depending on the United States' judgment about how Iran is behaving.

I'm going to presume—I haven't read statements by Iranian officials—but I'm going to presume that they are taking the same position. They will do whatever. And so, as you read through it, you begin to understand that there are two or three things that seem to be going to happen right away, pretty clearly, and then a great many things that may or may not be part of a final deal, may or may not look then the way they look now in the memorandum. So it is very important for people not to get carried away and imagine that this is a peace agreement. This is not that at all. Trump decided to do it in Versailles. For those who know some history, that's where the end of World War I was signed. This is not the end of a war.

This was not that kind of signing. This is not that kind of document. Having said that, it does appear to me, as I believe it does to a majority, not just of the world but of Americans across the political spectrum, that this is a loss for the United States and a gain for Iran. Even Mr. Trump's Republican supporters are, at the very least, badly split on that subject, with a significant number of people representing significant parts of his base looking at this and not quite believing it—which I need to say right off the bat for people to understand. Their opposition, which is now being mobilized, has in the past led Mr. Trump to go backwards and undo or try to undo what he has done.

Is that a possibility now? Absolutely. It would be naive of people not to see that process unfolding. And it goes to an old American tradition—much older, by the way, than Mr. Trump. He's using it, he's riding it, but it predates him. Here it is: in the United States, with its origins in a kind of Protestant, religious, theocratic way of thinking—which bumps up against the Islamic version of that in Iran—but put that aside for a minute. Here in the United States, we tend to demonize an adversary. If there's a Stalin in Russia, or today a Putin in Russia, if there's a Saddam Hussein, if there's a Muammar Gaddafi, if there's an Ayatollah in Iran, they are evil, monstrous.

You develop a kind of religious notion of God on one hand—the good and the beautiful—and the devil, literally the opposite. Okay, when you do that and you mobilize your people to see in an adversary not someone you have a difficulty with, not someone whose interests diverge from yours—no, no, no—you're seeing, I'm going to quote now from our highest officials, "Iran is a monstrous evil." That's a quote. "An evil monster." Well, you can't make a compromise with an evil monster. You don't make a deal. We have literature—Mephistopheles—the ironic disaster for a person who makes a deal with the devil. It's an old theme. You don't do that.

So Mr. Trump rides on the demonization of Iran, and now he makes a deal with Iran. And if you watched his press conference, because he's so self-unaware, he talks about how, well, you can't really deny the missiles because other people in the Gulf area have missiles. And you can't really deny—what is he doing? He's trying to convince people how to be reasonable with people you're trying to make a deal with. If you want a deal, you've got to give if you're going to get. But it's too late. He can't do that. He's been riding on it, so he splits his base. Half of them will see, "Oh yeah, it's reasonable," and they want to support him—and they will. The other half, or whatever the proportions are, will be horrified.

He is making a deal with the devil, which we good people... And you get into a really crazy... And out of that, I don't know what comes, and I don't think anybody does. Predicting the future is dangerous always, and in this situation, twice as dangerous. But here is what will happen. As best we can tell—and all of this, I'll come to in a moment—is conditional on Israel and on the American relation to Israel, which is becoming more important, I think, with every passing hour. But before we get to that, quickly: number one, the Strait of Hormuz will open. Number two, oil tankers will now move through that thing. That will earn a good bit of money, as has been pointed out. Iran will immediately benefit by being able once again to ship and sell its oil.

So will the other Gulf countries. They will all be grateful that the money is beginning to move again in a way that it didn't before. That seems to be what's going to happen. The blockade, if I understand, is already being withdrawn so that shipping can go. And that will make the stock market happy because it was nervous before. It's not good for the people who bought into the oil business, but there again, be careful because this could unravel. What could make it unravel? Well, number one, Israel. It's crystal clear when you read the document—at least it was clear to me reading the document—that the two sides agreed that the territorial integrity of Lebanon is guaranteed by both sides.

You can't do that if there are Israeli troops in southern Lebanon, which there are. And you can't do it if they are shooting rockets at each other, which they are, as best I can tell, continuing to do. So that has to stop. And that means the Israelis have to pull their troops back across the border into Israel. At least that has to happen. And then hopefully no more rockets sent across the border. Who's going to make the Israelis do that? Nobody can except the United States. So the issue becomes, and I don't see any way out of it, either the United States does that or it doesn't. How could it do it? Very easy. You say to the Israelis, this has to stop or else no more weapons, no more money, no more support.

Israel cannot survive under those circumstances. So the withdrawal of America becomes an existential threat, more powerful and more immediate than any threat from Iran. That's the reality. You may not like that, but that's the reality. What might it mean if the United States doesn't do it? There are ten different ways that could be done. One way that Mr. Trump will no doubt try is to pretend in some manner that he hasn't got the power, or that he has said something, but Mr. Netanyahu, or if he's replaced, Mr. Bennett, his opposition in the internal Israeli elections, who is the same—who is another Netanyahu with a different name—that these people are not reacting properly. He puts it on them. It really won't matter. This is a game. It stretches it out.

It gives Israel another week, another month to keep doing what it's doing before it knows what it has to do. Or the United States does. Under Mr. Trump and under the pressure, I can't imagine, and I don't think any of your audience can imagine, the intensity with which Israel and its supporters inside the United States are working to make sure that pulling back from Lebanon is not required. Then there is a final possibility, which I don't know if anyone has raised, but it seems clear to me. You might involve Israel in a deal: withdraw from Lebanon because you've made a commitment you have to, and go invade somebody else. Let's see if Israel can find part of Jordan, part of Syria.

Who knows where you might recommence a Greater Israel project the way you have before. But you are observing, because the United States insists on it, this would make it possible for the United States to support Israel in an incursion into another country, insisting that it has nothing to do with the Iran withdrawal from Lebanon, when that's what it is, and it's a way of giving Israel something

to offset the cost. This is what people like Trump and the others do. How the Gulf states will react if that happens, how that part of the world will react, no one can tell you. But I don't want to lose, for the details, I don't want to lose the bigger picture.

The power Iran has shown to stick to its commitments, have a position, refuse to let the United States bully them to drop it—whether that's enriching uranium or controlling the Strait of Hormuz—it really doesn't matter. Doing things the United States, as a global empire, is opposed to. They did it. They did it for years. They outmaneuvered the United States, who did things inside Iran, as Israel did. That's how they knew who to assassinate and all of that kind of activity. And then they were bombed by these two countries, with missiles and everything. And they didn't collapse. And they ended up getting this deal. This is a demonstration of anti-empire power that really has no parallel. It's different in at least one important way that I want to put on the table so people think about it.

Yes, the United States lost the war in Vietnam. It lost the war in Afghanistan. It basically lost the war in Iraq. But in all of those three cases, huge amounts of American ground troops were used. They were shipped 10,000 miles away, landed in that country, moved across as a massive military army control. And it was decided in American military strategy that a land-based war in Asia is not a good idea. Well then, what in the end is your military option? Air power. Airplanes, bombs, rockets. So they didn't use ground troops in Iran. Never, not even one. They used airplanes, missiles, drones, all the rest of it. And they failed. They failed with a land army in Vietnam, Afghanistan, and Iraq, and now they failed without one. And you know what that adds up to? It adds up to an empire that is more a paper tiger than a real one.

And how ironic that just at the same time that we were figuring that out, the American War Secretary, Mr. Hegseth, gives a speech in Europe, whether G7 or meeting, in which he says to the British, you have a paper tiger. Your military is not adequate. And the British, or rather the Europeans, Mr. Rutte, who's quite a trip—watching a slavish mentality display itself that way is really ugly. But in any case, there he is, having nothing to say about this immense insult that he's just received. But he's being told that your European military is a paper tiger when the world is watching the United States fail over and over and over again with its military adventures, and nowhere more dramatically than here. These, for me, are the big initial takeaways from what we have seen.

## **#Nima**

Richard, you mentioned two important points. One of them is what Donald Trump is dealing with in the case of the Iran war. One of them is the economy. The global economy was under tremendous pressure. And Donald Trump himself yesterday said that the oil reserves of the United States were four weeks away from, you know, being destroyed, somehow critically depleted. And the other point is the stockpile of missiles, air defense systems, interceptors, and these things. These are two important factors.

On one side, putting pressure on Donald Trump to put an end to the war. On the other hand, we know that Benjamin Netanyahu wanted this war. He wants this war to continue because his survival is at risk in Israel. And how do you see the combination of these two vectors coming together? And do you see that that was the main reason for Donald Trump? And how far is he going to go with this sort of... You've said this is a memorandum of understanding. A document doesn't mean anything. There is no deal, nothing out there.

## **#Richard**

Well, you know, there's an old statement in diplomacy, in the theory of diplomacy, which is: treaties, documents, memoranda of understanding are not worth the paper they're printed on. Or another way of putting it is, they are out of date before the ink is dry on them. In other words, they are momentary arrangements. But the minute history changes, which it's always doing, they become out of date. And very quickly, the people who signed the treaty, any treaty, are beginning to feel the need to undo this particular part of it or to add that new idea because, given new circumstances, you know, this treaty is not good for us. It was last month, last year when we signed it. But now, we want to change. But the other side doesn't have that reaction. Changing history makes them happier.

So they don't want to change. So now, immediately, you have a conflict over what you agreed on. That should not be understood as a failure. That's the way these things work. And it would be foolish if people thought that these documents have some really powerful binding. I mean, here in the United States, we pretend. We actually have a Supreme Court that tells us, the conservatives on it, that they are strict interpreters, by which they mean they go with the letter of the Constitution. And they are... No, they're not. They're interpreting it in a particular way. The liberals in another way. The radicals in still another way. And that was true from the beginning. You know, this is a country that begins, "All men are created equal." And from the beginning, it has treated African-American men and women as unequal to this day.

So, be very careful what you attribute to all of this. I think you're right, Mr. — the Israelis have committed themselves on a scale, which again goes back to what I said before, because they're like Americans in that way. They have demonized their adversaries. They've wanted to make sure that their adversaries, whether they are Egyptian or Turkish or Iranian or Arabic in general, whatever you want, or the whole United Nations when they vote against them, are evil, are people who don't appreciate the Holocaust, who don't want Israel to exist. All of this hyperventilating hysteria, which is, by the way, sometimes fed by things that the other side says, but it's still a peculiar mentality that takes all that literally. And in Israel and the United States, you have that.

So you can't sit down with these people because they are evil monsters. When you hear leading politicians, and not only the most extreme conservatives, but many — not all, but many — of the leading Israeli politicians, they talk like that, like many leading American politicians. You can't sit down. You demonize. By the way, in Israel it takes another form — this word, this wonderful word

that cleans up murder and rechristens it as, if you allow me, decapitation — the need to assassinate other people's leadership. What are you doing? This ultimate act, "I kill you," it is ancient Old Testament Bible mentality and talking. And in Iran, you went and you killed somebody who's not just a political leader but is a religious leader. So you, the devil, you have killed the devil, as if there wouldn't be another one jumping up behind him.

The next one is childish somewhere, this way of thinking, but it produces its analog on the other side. You treat the Iranians that way, and pretty soon you're helping them to develop that mentality back toward you. So if you go to many Arab countries, their attitude toward Israel begins to look a little bit like it. But they did not always do that, at least not in my knowledge of Arabic history. And the Jews didn't do it that way either. Even the Zionists didn't always do that. But they have come to do it now, and for a long time, and it is hurting them the way it's hurting Trump.

Trump is having a hard time with his own base because he looks like he's dealing with the evil monster. You can't tell your people it's an evil monster and then ask them to believe that you're making a deal in which you're giving this. It does not, it really does not compute. One more thing on this. I suspect that we are now going to see a number of dramatic adjustments. The world has been shaken. I'm going to use a metaphor, but it's not that much of a stretch. Go back with me just a few years to the pandemic. Suddenly, across the world, every country is wrestling with COVID-19, this disease, and it's killing people and making sickness everywhere, interrupting every economy.

It's wow. And then the whole world has to adjust — adjust in its medical treatment, adjust in its economic, its political, everything. I think we're going to now see that. The world is going to adjust to the fact that relying on long supply chains is very risky business. Do you want to do that? It's not an either-or. It means that to all the other risks that businesses normally think about, they now have to add one that they either didn't see before or did not give as much importance to as now needs to be done. If you produce in one corner of the world and ship to another corner, you've got all kinds of problems you're going to have to deal with. And they can become what?

Like what we just saw. There are other straits. There are other ways. Just think a little bit. You can figure out politically it could happen, geographically it could happen, and so on. So every company that's involved in the global is rethinking its investments, its choice of location, its investment decisions, and every country has to do it as well. Do we want an American military base here? Look what happened to those bases in Kuwait or Bahrain or any of those others. This may not be a very good idea. And the assumption that the United States will protect us is silly. They couldn't protect— did they protect Kuwait and Bahrain?

**#Nima**

No.

**#Richard**

United Arab Republic? No. I don't know how they're going to adjust. There are going to be choices made. And now we come to the reserves of oil. What are you going to do? Are you going to refill your reserves? Well, if you do, that means that the predictions of a drop in the price of oil may be very premature. Because if oil didn't go up as far as it might have because you unloaded it—and by the way, the statistics for China dropped like a stone. They stopped importing oil big time in China, probably because they couldn't get it from the Middle East. But they were able to do that because they have the biggest reserve in the world. They used up their reserve. The United States used up its reserve, or at least a large portion. They're going to refill those? That's a decision. And if they do, it'll move the oil price differently from what would happen if they didn't.

Or will they go away from fossil fuels and really move into other forms of energy—solar power, wind power, and all of it? And if so, then the greatest beneficiary of all of this will be the People's Republic of China, because they dominate in those fields. They have focused on and invested in alternative energy sources, giving them independence from this crisis, giving them degrees of freedom in making economic decisions that the rest of the world doesn't have. And the very adjustments of the rest of the world—all of this is changing. You know, they're going to have to change their investment decisions in China just as much as everywhere else, as everybody copes with what? Decline of American power, decline of American influence, rise of Iran, its allies, and above all, Russia and China and the BRICS. Now, that was going on before. That has gotten, in my judgment, a tremendous boost.

## **#Nima**

Richard, how did you find \*The Art of the Deal\* by Donald Trump? Because he's the guy. But

## **#Richard**

You know, he is becoming visible as the clown he always was. You know, I think there's something my grandmother once said to me as she was getting very old, that she was being embarrassed by her age. And I reassured her, Grandma, because I lived with her for a while, you know, we love you, you're valuable to us—which was true and all of that. And then she looked at me and she said, yes, but in my old age, I'm becoming stupid. I remember making these kinds of mistakes when I was young, but then I had the good feeling I've learned from this mistake. But unfortunately, as I get very much older, I'm making them again. And now I can't look forward to outgrowing my mistakes.

They're not available. Well, I think Mr. Trump, getting old, falling asleep as often as he does—and he is now caught in the media all the time sleeping in the middle of a meeting, in the middle of a press conference—it's a little bit like what we had with Mr. Biden at the end of his time. And so his mistakes are bigger, his stupidities are grander. You know, he couldn't get a serious artist to come to his event there, his birthday party, his 80th birthday party. Meanwhile, tomorrow, I think, or the next day, ex-President Obama is opening a building. Every president has a building built for him when he's finished with his presidency. Obama's is now finished.

They're going to have a grand opening. And literally, every major actor from Hollywood, every great athlete, they're all coming. It's difficult for him. They're all celebrating a president who isn't, and none of them will go and celebrate a president who is. I mean, at a certain point, he can't keep pretending that this doesn't matter, because to the mass of people, it does. We just had the championship, you may know, of our basketball team, our professional basketball. And the winner this year was the city of New York. They're called the Knicks, the Knickerbocker name of the team. And so they played their championship with a team from California.

And the way that works, it's the best out of seven. So the first team to get four wins is the champion for the whole country. All right. So the New York team got the first two in California. It won them. And they came back to New York for the third game. And the third game, President Trump announced he was going to go. And I tell you the story because you have to understand the politics here, too. And the team, I believe unanimously, requested him not to come because they said it would jinx—which is American slang—it would damage their chances of winning the third game. He ignored their request. He came.

There was a tremendous traffic jam because he's surrounded by security and police and army and blah, blah, blah. So people couldn't get to the game here in Manhattan. It's a 20-minute walk from where I'm speaking to you. So people waited for hours. They couldn't get in. The game was delayed. Awful. And they lost. So then they went on the next day to win. And then they won the championship. And who is the lead champion? Zohran Mamdani. He's the mayor of New York. So here comes the mayor celebrating his team, being celebrated by the team. And again, Zohran Mamdani is a Muslim socialist mayor, cheering on, being cheered, and the president excluded. It is very metaphorically powerful inside the United States.

## **#Nima**

Richard, when people are arguing that—let's assume the MOU, the document—people are talking about that Iran is a huge winner of this document. But when I see the document, you see all they're asking for, these are normal things. They're asking to lift the sanctions, the frozen Iranian assets, you know, to respect their sovereignty. These are normal things to ask because it seems as though we're still living in some sort of slavery. You know, the slave comes out and says, that's... I'm done with what you've done so far. It's so strange because people are seeing Iran as winning and the United States as... I think Iran is getting... Iran asked the United States to treat them as a normal country, not attack, not invade, not put sanctions on them. These are not abnormal sorts of requests on the part of Iran.

## **#Richard**

No, but... let me push back a little bit, Nima, on this. You're right, of course. But the United States doesn't work that way. A hegemon doesn't. That's not what an empire is. An empire, if it is going to

succeed... the empire has to enslave everybody, but if it's going to survive, it has to make that slavery appear normal. People have to accept it because you can't impose the slavery. You can't get enough force to force people to be slaves. It's too costly. The cost of your enforcer outweighs what you get from the slave's surplus, what the slaves produce for you. So, in the end, you have to work on the brains of the slaves. They have to believe that what they have, their slavery, is normal.

When it comes to a clash, when it becomes unbearable, the idea begins to break through in the slave's mind: wait a minute. And then they say what you just said. What am I asking for? I want to be able to get up in the morning, have breakfast with my husband or my wife or my children, and do work in the community and be respected, and come home and have time. I'm not asking for the moon. Iranians wanted all of that. They become aware. Here's the irony—and you really need Hegel's philosophy to help you here—it's always the way. The way the empire controls provokes in the people it controls the germ of the idea: wait a minute, this isn't necessary, this isn't normal. But therein lies the revolution.

Somewhere in Iran, somewhere, and because you are part of that culture and come from that, you're much better at understanding it than I am. I need you to help me. But somehow, somewhere, in the history of Iran over the last, say, century, at least, this happened. You know, the easy example would be Mossadegh in 1953. Somehow, the Iranian people got themselves together, put into office this man with a commitment to nationalize their oil. They understood. And then to watch him be destroyed by the Americans and the British, that, at least in the young people, somewhere, it got—wait a minute. How is it, you know, the British didn't put the oil under our territory. Allah did that, or however, but not them. Who are they? What?

How did—whoa. Look at Mr. Trump. He said, with his finger waving, "We will be watching the Strait of Hormuz. The Iranians must behave. No toll, no fees, no nothing." Mr. Trump hasn't left the imperial mentality. He still thinks he is in control. He is so unable to break out. The Iranians see we now have what we should have had all along. It's our coastline. We are in charge here by geography, if nothing else. They're recognizing their place. Mr. Trump is having enormous difficulty understanding, even as he signs this agreement, what it means. He would not agree with anything I've just said to you. He would not agree that the empire is declining.

He has never said a word about a declining empire. The closest he gets is the indirection of MAGA. "Make America Great Again" implies it's not quite as great as it was, but even that he can't say. He cannot say that. It's just onward and upward. And that's a clue. No one should imagine that the United States is not capable of ignoring this memorandum, evading it, avoiding it, negating it, interpreting it out of existence. The Iranians have—and I don't mean to be crude about this—they have now the power. They can close that strait, and they can make it clear that the whole world has to come to terms. And they can say, we're not strong enough.

We can't fight the United States. But we can do this. And the alternative to doing this is going back into abject slavery. We won't do that. The rest of the world won't like it. You can see already in the

UN voting against Iran, because it's much easier to blame Iran for closing the strait than to blame the United States for bombing Iran. But the Iranians held, and they're not alone. They have the Russians, they have the Chinese, they have half the support of the BRICS, and that's a change in the global situation, which is costing the United States. But that cost is the decline of the empire that we have been discussing on your program for months now.

## **#Nima**

Yeah. You mentioned how the whole situation is going to be perceived by the Iranian people. In my understanding, Richard, what you mentioned about Mossadegh in 1953, that they removed him from power, and it was a coup by the CIA and Mossad altogether against him. What was the reason? Because Mossadegh nationalized Iranian oil. So there was no place for the British or the Americans to be there anymore. So they wanted to remove him. And after that, I think we had the revolution in 1979, which was a huge, huge sort of movement to remove the United States' influence from Iran. I think what has happened during this war is the second revolution, because they physically removed the United States in 1979 from Iran.

And right now, because the empire was out physically, but look at how the empire tried to put sanctions, to put pressure on the Iranian people, to crush the economy, to crush it from outside and from within. You know, we despise everything. The economy is not working. You have to do some sort of protest, riots. So, what has happened with the case of the Strait of Hormuz is a second revolution. They found out how they can protect themselves by controlling the Strait of Hormuz and putting pressure on the global economy. I think this is the second. In my opinion, this is the way that the Iranian people are perceiving the whole case of this war, because they don't believe that the United States is going to lift the sanctions, because it's all related to the Congress.

It's not related to the president of the United States. Everything, even with those \$300 billion that they're talking about, we're going to have some sort of aid to reconstruction in Iran and all of that nonsense, in my opinion. Nothing of that sort is going to happen, and people know that. But what is in their hand is the Strait of Hormuz, and they can control their future. That's why last night at midnight, the United States lifted the sanctions on the oil and energy sector of Iran, petrochemical products, all of these things. So this is something new for the Iranian people. You know, the slaves, you know, the house slave and the field slave, the house slave feels that it's, you know, that concept. But they're coming out. I think that's why I'm calling it the second revolution.

## **#Richard**

Yeah, no, I'm not surprised. But for me, this is the end of empire. When you have... you know, you live under it, you make do, you accommodate. When that's no longer tolerable, you make one kind of revolution. You go as far as you can, okay? You can throw them out, you can close their embassy, you can refuse, you know. But then you discover that the empire also has many weapons, and the empire has many indirections. So now you have to come up with a way to fight on... But you know,

that's what Iran did. Iran figured it out. Now, it took them a long time. Think about it. You're under the gun of the West before Mossadegh. Then Mossadegh is a breakthrough. Doesn't last very long.

He's gone. And then you have the Shah. And that lasts you until the end of the 1970s. And then you begin to get... And now you discover, 50 years later, what the intolerable cost is, because the United States, even after all of the sanctions and the isolation and everything else, decides that you're fighting back. Look, part of the fighting back is supporting the Houthis, Hezbollah, and Hamas, which Iran does. And I understand that's a way to push back. And then you get attacked for that. This is the struggle. And now you've found yet another way. But again, I think you're right to point to this, because do not imagine that the United States will now give up.

It won't. All the forces that made it happen over the last century that we're talking about, they're not gone. They have been defeated. They lost this war. They did really badly. And many of them know it. So they're now going to have to go back, whether they admit it publicly or not. And they're going to have seminars in Washington where my colleagues are going to be sitting. They're going to have seminars on what happened here, why did we lose, what do we do differently, how do we handle Iran, but also Iraq, also fill in the blank, all the other countries. You're going to see all kinds of adjustments.

Meanwhile, Russia and China are going to have to think through very carefully what happened here. What are the lessons to be learned? What is it you need to do in all the other places? Russia immediately has a decision now to make, right? It's being bombarded by Western Europe's drones and missiles coming out of Ukraine. Okay, you're going to permit that? What are you going to do? How are you going? You know, the West wanting to weaken Russia and China. We don't discuss it in this country because we're afraid. But I'm assuming that in Iran, this is not a fearful topic. It's an attractive topic. We have an alliance with Russia and China.

They helped us in these ways, ways that we know of, people like you and me, observers, and ways that I'm sure we do not know of, that they have kept hidden for reasons I understand. They're going to have to think about all that. How do you make use of the border between Russia and China, which you can move? What can you move? You can move Chinese drones. They're the greatest producer of drones in the world. Iran will have as many drones as it could ever want, endlessly, whether or not they produce them in Iran. And they do, I know, but even if they didn't, China can deliver them to Russia. Russia puts them on a boat.

They go down the Caspian Sea, and boom, they're in Iran. What's the problem? Nobody can stop them. There's no other player on these boundaries that I just described. So Iran is in a position to be... And of course, I'm not claiming I know anything that isn't public, but if China can supply Iran, then China can supply the Houthis, Hezbollah, and Hamas forever. What are you going to do about that? The West can't do anything, really, about that. And it has to face that. So it's trying all these sanction regimes. And one of the questions that you can be sure is going to be asked all across the West, already is, these sanctions, by and large, did not work.

It's a little bit like drawing a conclusion to go back to something we talked about earlier, that if you lose the land war with your army in Vietnam, and you lose the land war with your army in Afghanistan, and if you lose it in Iraq, and you're smart enough not to use it in Iran, but now it turns out your drones and missiles can't do it either, what do you do? Well, you could focus on sanctions, but they didn't work so well. Did we do something wrong? Is there a different kind of sanction we should impose? Did we fail at making the sanction? Did we fail at enforcing the sanction? Where exactly did we... That's what's being... The empire is not being given up on. That may come in this country.

That may yet come. But we're not there yet. Look, even in Britain, they haven't yet given up. They still imagine that they are something other than a small, cold, wet island off the shore of Europe, which is what they were, and which they are returning to now. They still think that the coronation of their king is an important global event. And, you know, whoa, that should be a lesson to you. How long after the empire is gone can it live on in the minds of the people who accommodated it? It'll make you more compassionate with Iranians who accommodated a slavery position. My fellow Americans who are black and brown are having that problem all the time. They too, like you, want to say, all I want is a normal life.

And they will not be given that here because that normal they want frightens the people who have accommodated to the abnormality in a different way. For them, what is normal is the freedom to do damage to their fellow citizens on the grounds that they have a different color of skin. I mean, it's crazy. It is a craziness, but it is the world we live in. But again, I don't want to take anything away, Nima, from the enormity of what the Iranian people deserve. And it's something you and I talked about at the very beginning, early in March, right after the... And I said to you, if you remember, for me, the question is, will the Iranian people—will they hang together under these bombardments, these bombs, these whatever they were, missiles and drones—or will they capitulate?

And to your credit, you told me you didn't think they would capitulate. That seemed very important for me to hear. I don't have direct contact with many Iranian people. I wish I did, but I don't. So it was very important for me to hear that you, at least as one person who has family there and contacts and people you talk to, were able to say to me you thought that. All the more impressive given the struggle of women inside Iran and progressive people that had been so difficult not that many months before, so divisive, so, you know—and I know from my Iranian students, particularly the women, what the hijab police do and do not require. I know what they have suffered a little bit. And yet they came together to withstand this greater danger. Very impressive.

## **#Nima**

One other outcome, Richard, since you mentioned this issue — that issue is gone. As an outcome of this war, that issue is gone. Nobody's, you know, the movement of women, all of this, you know, that's not there anymore. There is no police. There is nothing there. And people are coming

together, unified. The war unified all of the Iranian people. Right now, that issue is gone. I can confirm that.

## **#Richard**

Do you think the opposition to having to wear the hijab will come back?

## **#Nima**

No. No. You know, what is happening right now is we had this part of the society, this part of the society that is more conservative. They wanted to put, they want this hijab. It's part of their culture because of the religious sort of mindset and all of that. But the government, you know, this war has pushed Iran and has put tremendous pressure economically, you know, from within, from outside. So the society is coming together as an outcome of this war. So, look, I suggest you just put on Iran Today on YouTube, and you'll see all these women coming out without having that mandatory hijab. The society has changed tremendously, Richard, because I got back.

You remember I went to Iran in December 2025. I stayed there for two months, and I was watching how the society has changed everything in each and every aspect and is more open. People are talking about the worst critics of the Iranian government. They're living in Iran. They're not outside of Iran. And they're living their lives, and I was surprised. I think those issues are gone, and the society is finding the solution within the society, not from outside. The solution is not coming from outside. It's there. It's in Iran, and they're getting along with each other. And that was, I would say, one of the most important outcomes of this war.

## **#Richard**

Yeah, that's something I think we should return to in a future show. I'm sorry that Michael didn't like it. Yeah, exactly. Thank you so much, Richard, for being with us today. A good conversation, thank you very much. And I'm sure we'll have more to say about this as these 60 days that they're supposed to negotiate unfold, and everybody who has a stake here comes in and tries to fight for what they want to come out of this.

## **#Nima**

Yeah, exactly. Thank you, Richard.

## **#Richard**

My pleasure. Thank you.