

# Richard Wolff & Michael Hudson: Abandoned by the West The Reality of Israel's Conflict

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## #Nima

The clip of Donald Trump talking about what's going on with the case of Iran. But before going there, before playing the clip, just to update you on what has happened in the recent 48 or 72 hours. There was a meeting between Iran and the United States in Switzerland. It had two mediators, the Pakistani government together with the Qatari government. They were there to facilitate the negotiations. During the negotiation, there was a huge explosion in Qatar, at oil facilities in Qatar, which it seems that in the initial hours they said no one was killed, but it seems somehow the casualties were something like 13 people who were somehow affected or hurt by the explosion. Then we had a meeting parallel to what was going on in Switzerland.

The foreign minister of Saudi Arabia said Turkey, Pakistan, and Egypt. In Cairo, they met, talking about what's going on between Iran and the United States and what's going on in Lebanon with the case of the Palestinian people. These are the two major meetings in the last 72 hours, in the last three days. And then we have the case of Palestine, the case of Lebanon, which it seems that Iran is somehow putting pressure on the Trump administration using the Strait of Hormuz to force Israel out of Lebanon. You see that in the Israeli media. The Israeli media are talking about Benjamin Netanyahu receiving a lot of pressure from the Trump administration. They're talking about a partial withdrawal from Lebanon.

But it seems that the first clause of the 14-point plan between Iran and the United States pointed out it's about the total withdrawal of Israelis from the southern part of Lebanon. By the way, the argument on the part of J.D. Vance came out and said, oh, we want self-defense for everybody in that region. It means if they remove their forces from southern Lebanon, then the Israeli people can get back to the northern part of Israel. This is the understanding on the part of the Trump administration, as J.D. Vance pointed out. And here is what Donald Trump said about the ongoing situation. You may have—there are a lot of things to talk about, as I mentioned—but here is what Donald Trump said about Iran.

## **#Trump**

I saw a peace agreement with Iran to end the conflict in the Strait of Hormuz. And by the way, yesterday, 19 million barrels of oil flowed out of the Strait of Hormuz, a very beautiful place. That's the most— that's the most oil in the history of the Strait. You've never seen anything like it. It's called an oil gush. And most importantly, we are ensuring one thing, very importantly, because this is why I did it. I did it for this reason—99% for this. Iran will never have a nuclear weapon. And they've agreed to that. But remember, this wasn't easy. We had 47 years' worth of presidents and other people, other countries too. We're not the only ones that never did anything. They were the bully of the Middle East. And now we're leaving Iran with no navy, no air force, no anti-aircraft, no missile capability, no nuclear program. We're leaving them without any nuclear capacity. And they've agreed to that. And we're getting along quite well.

## **#Nima**

Richard, go ahead. In your understanding, what do you make of the current situation?

## **#Speaker 03**

Well, Donald Trump has been nicknamed TACO — Trump Always Caves Out. Sorry, that's what it stands for, TACO. I thought of a new one: Trump's Airbnb — Always Bluster and Blather. He just talks. And for me, and I don't think I'm alone in this, to say the least, I think most of the world is now accustomed to hearing him announce something whose relationship to what's actually going on is purely coincidental. He says what is useful in his mind at that moment to be saying. Whether it's the truth or not, whether it's consistent with what he said yesterday or the day before, does not bother him or doesn't even figure. You know, that's why it's even becoming laughable. He says something, and his own secretary of state or the vice president or the representatives of Iran trot out.

No, we didn't say that. No, this is not agreed to. No. And when we listen to all of that, and by that time he's on to the next version of this sort of game, I find it kind of empty. The factual freedom he has is wonderful. There is oil flowing out of the Strait of Hormuz, no question, and a bit more than there was when it was fully closed. But to say that it's the most amount of oil in the history of the Strait is ridiculous, because we haven't gotten back to the way things were before, where we're talking about many, many more tankers going through than are now going across it. So it's wrong. He's made it up. It's not correct. And most of the rest of what he said is, at best, his view, not an agreement at all.

And I think that's what I want to focus on. I don't think we're done here. Not at all. I don't think we have seen how far the Israelis and their friends inside the United States can go in preventing this, in blocking this, in reversing this, in undoing this MOU. And so they're working very hard — Lindsey Graham, the financial supporters, AIPAC. This is a project for them, an urgent project. I should

mention for an audience that you have that we just had elections here in New York City, and during the elections that happened yesterday, the vote went remarkably in the direction of people who are not in favor of the war in Iran and who are not pro-Israel.

They are much more the other way. A number of upsets. The candidates supported by our Muslim socialist mayor, Zohran Mamdani, won, and they didn't win by a little. Like Mamdani himself, they won by big margins. So that we're beginning to see what can be referred to as, and this is the first time in many, many years in America, there's becoming a significant self-defined socialist presence in our political life. And because it is coming at the time of the Iran war, and because it is coming at the time of heightened focus on Israel-Palestine, it's very important to understand that there's a shift going on.

Not everywhere, not everywhere in the same way, but in a number of districts where that was the issue, the vote of the people has been clearly in the direction of criticism of Trump, criticism of the war in Iran, criticism of Israel and of its role there. So I think what is beginning to happen, what we should have never lost sight of, is that international affairs, struggles of the great powers, have their logic, have their own rules, but they are not independent of the underlying economic and political struggles inside the countries. And those can at times move up and become very important, even more important, in shaping that. You know, we used to say, as an example, that it was the developments inside the United States that forced the end of the Vietnam War.

Something like that is underway and bringing, I think, tremendous pressure to end the Iran War. But I don't think it's resolved yet. I don't want us to be premature. Let's look at the complexity, but it is not yet clear whether Mr. Trump will prevail. And people should also be aware that there's really only a few months left for Mr. Trump. Once those elections happen in November, if indeed they happen, but once those elections happen, he will then be a lame-duck president. And given how badly his situation has developed over the first part of this year, we are looking at a man who is facing political pressures that include losing support and moving ever closer to a date after which his relevance will be sharply reduced.

## **#Speaker 04**

Well, I think the New York elections yesterday are showing a trend that already has been reflected in all of the public opinion polls. Most Americans opposed the Iran war from the very beginning. And now most of the recent opinion polls show the majority of Americans are very strongly against the Iran war because, despite all the happy talk from Trump, they realize that the war is creating such a crisis in the energy trade, in the fertilizer trade, that it's going to be pushing up oil prices here and pushing up fertilizer prices, trucking costs, airline costs, and interrupting things. So the public's against it. So to get back to your first comment, how do you explain what Trump says? He says what he thinks voters want to hear.

And that's why he has his people following. What do the opinion polls say? Now, it's not that we're living in a democratic country where the president looks at public opinion polls and says, I'm going to do what the voters want. He's going to say that he's doing what the voters want while actually doing whatever he wants to do. And of course, what's the number one thing that Trump wants to do? Well, he has pretty tunnel vision. He wants to make money for himself. He wants to get even richer for himself and his family and to get loyalty among his cabinet by making them richer. So what he says is to influence the stock market. This happy talk is to say, don't worry about all this talk from people like on Nima Alkhorshid's show that say there's going to be a world depression following.

In one month, the oil reserves are going to run out. In one month, oil prices are going to double. Diesel fuel will double. The cost of transporting food and other goods to market is going to go way up. There are going to be shortages. Don't think about that. Think about the fact that we've won, everything is going to be okay, and we're going back to normal. And the public likes to think of normal. And even though I think most of the large institutional investors in the market realize exactly what we've been talking about, yes, the crisis is going to occur soon — no later than one month, when the United States has exhausted its national petroleum reserves and the ability to keep prices down artificially.