

Gaza & the World Episode 3: Vijay Prashad on Gaza, China, and the Limits of Global Action

Conversation conducted November 4, 2025, and available on YouTube [here](#).

[Helena Cobban]

Hello and welcome everyone. I'm Helena Cobban, the President of Just World Educational, and I want to welcome you back to our video podcast series Gaza and the World. Today I'm delighted that our guest is Vijay Prashad, the visionary global justice activist who's the Executive Director of Tri-Continental Institute for Social Research, the editor of Left Word Books, the chief correspondent of Globetrotter, and a senior non-resident fellow at Chongyang Institute for Financial Studies at Renmin University of China.

Vijay is with us today from Beijing. It's great to be back with you, Vijay.

[Vijay Prashad]

It's nice to see you again. Thanks a lot.

[Helena Cobban]

So with our Gaza and the World project, we aim to explore the many interactions between the ongoing genocidal crisis in Gaza and the world changing shifts that the global balance of power is currently seeing. And what better person to help us explore this than Vijay? And what better place for him to do it from than Beijing?

As with all the conversations in this series, the multimedia records of this episode, along with some key documentation on our issues, will be preserved and presented on a dedicated learning hub on our website, where all this material can serve as an educational resource of lasting value. If you visit our website, www.justworldeducational.org, you can learn all about this project and our other projects, including our weekly Palcast podcast, hosted by Yusuf al-Jamal and featuring his guests, generally from on the ground in Gaza. Do sign up on the website for our regular updates.

So Vijay Prashad, we have such a lot to discuss. What I want to do today is look at two or three different things. One is to try to assess the current state of the big shifts that are taking place in the global balance of power, primarily between the West and the rest.

Then I want to look at the role that the US-Israeli genocide in Gaza has played in helping to drive that shift, understanding that there have been other factors, obviously. And finally, I want to look at the role that you think China and other countries and the countries from ASEAN or from the BRICS grouping or from the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, the SCO, the role that any of those groupings might be able to play in bringing a real end to the genocide in Gaza and starting to roll back the Israeli occupation of Palestinian and other territories in West Asia. So first, can you give us a quick snapshot of what you've been doing on your current trip to East Asia?

You were previously in South Korea, which was where President Trump met China's President Xi Jinping. What were your impressions of that meeting?

[Vijay Prashad]

Yeah, well, you know, the changes are so fast and furious that it's really impossible to keep track of everything that's happening. And, you know, there are always, as you know, there are seismic shifts happening underneath the surface. And then there are things happening on top of the surface.

You know, there are things that one might consider pretty trivial. You know, somebody met somebody and they smiled in this way and there was a handshake and so on. But we need to look at the seismic shifts, the movement of the continental plates, as it were.

And that's much more difficult. It's much more difficult to assess that. What's pretty clear, and this was clarified at the APEC meeting, it's important for people to understand that APEC is the Association of Pacific Economic Cooperation.

It was set up in the 1990s as an instrument by the United States, largely initiated by other countries. But the US basically takes over the agenda as a kind of NAFTA of the Pacific, if you want to see it like that. You know, bringing free trade with the United States in dominance.

And associated with APEC was a military project called RIMPAC, the Rim of the Pacific Military Exercises anchored in Hawaii. And so you had the sort of a military aspect, RIMPAC, and then this economic trade diplomatic aspect, which was APEC. And the United States hoped that through APEC, there would be the creation of a free trade agreement across the Pacific.

This has been now scuttled. And the APEC meeting is basically small fry. You know, the main issue at the APEC meeting were the side meetings between, say, Mr. Trump and Xi Jinping. That was the main issue. The APEC declaration is not relevant, really, what happens at APEC itself. And the reason that has happened is because a few years ago, the Chinese initiated their own trade agreement called RCEP, which is the largest trade agreement in the world.

30% of the world's people and GDP basically is in RCEP.

[Helena Cobban]

Hang on, could you just tell me what that acronym stands for?

[Vijay Prashad]

Yes, it's basically the Regional Cooperative Economic Partnership. It's a very bureaucratic acronym. It doesn't have the word Asian in it.

It doesn't have the word Pacific in it. It's regional, could apply to anywhere.

[Helena Cobban]

Actually, I mean, in US discourse, anything that has to do with Asia Pacific is kind of a way for Washington to claim to be closely related to Asia, because it also includes the Pacific. I mean, I think it's a kind of a rhetorical trick that they use. Hey, we're part of Asia, really.

[Vijay Prashad]

Yeah, it's interesting. I mean, that's the reason for RIMPAC, Rim of the Pacific Military Exercises, or APEC, or in latter period, the Indo-Pacific, which allows the US to enter, in fact, the Indian Ocean, go even further and become Asia all across, not just Pacific Asia. But the RCEP, the Chinese-driven ASEAN, which is the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, ASEAN was the anchor of the RCEP trade agreement.

When that was pushed through and signed in Vietnam a few years ago, it basically annulled the importance of this APEC meeting, this US project. So at this meeting, there really wasn't that much that was going to happen. The most important thing was that effectively, Mr. Trump went to Seoul, South Korea, and then to Guangzhou. And in the meeting with China's President Xi Jinping, he said, look, okay, let's just have a truce for a year. Now, you know that when, if you and I go into a conflict, and if I'm the one who initiates the conflict, and then if I'm the one who calls for a truce, it's me who's backing down, not you, you know, I'm the one backing down. So across Asia, in fact, this so-called deal between Mr. Trump and Mr. Xi is basically understood as the United States recognizing that it can't really defeat China in a big trade war, and saying, okay, let's back off. Let's just, you know, have a truce for a year. Let's see what happens by the end of next year. The thing is that as the United States knows very well, that as every month passes, the Chinese economy is increasingly becoming less and less reliant on the United States.

You know, there are new technologies being developed, new pathways of trade, and so on. So a truce for a year suits Beijing fine, but Washington is seeing the window of its power close, and I think that's very significant, and I think people need to understand that, that, you know, it's anachronistic to see the United States as the overwhelmingly most powerful country in the world. On the other hand, it is still accurate to see the United States as the most powerful military and communication actor in the world.

In other words, the United States is the only power in the world today, and in Gaza, operating through Israel. It's the only power in the world today that can destroy any part of the planet. No other country has that capacity, that sort of footprint.

The Chinese don't have the footprint to go and destroy a country, let's say, in Latin America. It's impossible.

[Helena Cobban]

I think the Chinese have one overseas base in Djibouti, military base, and the United States has 800 overseas military bases. I mean, that kind of underlines the point that you're making.

[Vijay Prashad]

That's exactly right, and in fact, even the Chinese base, quote-unquote, in Djibouti is a UN base. It's not really a base, it's part of the UN piracy, anti-piracy project, you know. So it's not even really a forward posture, and even if the Chinese had, as you quite rightly say, 10, 15 bases, let's say they did, they don't, but even if they did, compared to the 800 to 900, because there are forward operating projects and so on.

So the United States, by far, is the most powerful footprint military, but the second one is equally important. They are able to define, to a great extent, information. You know, the United States can crank up its information organs, the New York Times, the Washington Post, whatever, and papers like the Guardian follow suit, and others, you know, Le Monde and so on.

On the coverage of what was happening in Gaza, for instance, people said, well, you know, it's Israeli propaganda. It's not actually, it's US propaganda that the Israelis share. I mean, it's not, you know, I once had a conversation with Noam Chomsky about the, about the, who wags the dog's tail?

Which is the dog and which is the tail, yeah. Is Israel dominating the US or is US dominating Israel? And I remember having this conversation and thinking with Noam that it's irrelevant.

The dog and the tail are one. There is no dog and tail.

[Helena Cobban]

I mean, I've been calling this genocide, the US-Israeli genocide, from almost the beginning, because if you look at the US political system, the media system, the university system, all the rest of them, it's like this. I mean, they are like totally intertwined and have been for maybe 25, 30 years. All this period of so-called US global hegemony has actually been a period of US-Israeli global hegemony since the end of the Cold War, and maybe during the Cold War, but to a lesser extent, probably.

[Vijay Prashad]

Well, I think the timelines are important here. I mean, I think it's true what scholars have shown us, that in 1967, there was a change. The United States did become much more, you know, intertwined with the Israeli project, much more intertwined.

But I think there's something really significant that happens when Oslo starts to get negotiated, that they really fuse. You know, it's almost like the metal links, you know, somebody fires, you know, some heat, and it just sort of fuses. Oslo really fuses the situation.

And let's not underestimate the importance of Benjamin Netanyahu personally, who's been around since roughly Oslo. Mr. Netanyahu and before that Ariel Sharon, they play a key role in a kind of melding of US-Israeli power. And so when it comes to communication, you know, whether it's Frankfurt, Allgemeine, I mean, you name the newspaper in the collective West, and there is no difference between any of them.

You know, it is pretty stunning how the United States continues to have communication power. You know, the Chinese media, Russian media, the US can scream and shout about propaganda from China or propaganda from Russia. But the fact of the matter is, it's not effective.

I mean, you know, I wish Chinese propaganda was more effective. I wish, you know, it's sometimes like I wish that we could get different views of the, it's simply not the case that it's as effective or powerful as the US organ grinder, you know, the way in which the New York Times operates as a kind of media arm of the US State Department. I mean, they print something in the Times, and then everybody follows suit.

You know, the system is laid out perfectly. They'll say, you know, so many Palestinians died. And then they will say Hamas killed these Israelis.

I mean, just simple use of passive voice and active voice to create an impression in people's mind. It's so well done that you don't have to analyze it anymore. You just, you know, you just state the obvious and, and the journalists at places like the Times, sometimes I just want to cry for them, you know, some of them are pretty sincere people.

Sorry, guys, you don't have a chance. You know, you're up against a structure that's way greater than you, you know, and so the role that these, you know, institutions, the US military, US information, you know, or cultural sector, the role they play continues to be strong. And that's the reason why I say, despite the fact that, let's say, economically, or scientifically, and so on, there's a real shift in the center of gravity of the world.

When it comes to military power and information power, Helena, we might as well be living in the 2000, when Dick Cheney, who's just died, was still in his prime.

[Helena Cobban]

Yes, you say that, Vijay, I mean, I exist mainly in the Anglosphere. And I think you do too. But of course, there you are in Beijing.

So you've escaped the Anglosphere to a certain extent. And I'm sure you, you know, you know, a lot of other languages, me, I know Arabic and French, a little bit of Russian, but the West collectively is only about 12% of humanity. So how about, you know, the rest of humanity, the other 88%, that you really have your finger on the pulse of the global majority?

Do they still believe the kind of things that are, you know, touted by the New York Times, or the liberal Western media, or have they like have the scales dropped from their eyes, if you see what I mean?

[Vijay Prashad]

Yeah, I mean, look, I won't claim to be having, you know, what the 88% is seeing. But I can tell you quite clearly, that if we take the case of, say, Sudan, what is happening in Sudan now, or if you take the case of Palestine, when it's not at a high tempo genocide, most newspapers and news channels and websites around the world effectively take their

marching orders from the collective West, effectively. I mean, and you saw that very recently on the coverage regarding the so called genocide in Xinjiang.

You know, the United States says there's a genocide and everybody repeats that. Or in recent period, the Western media has really ignored what's been happening in Sudan, where the military and the rapid security forces have been in a kind of, you know, war of attrition against each other. And then suddenly there's this terrible situation at Al-Fashr, you know, which hadn't been covered by anybody.

Why is that? Well, firstly, if you are a newspaper website or TV channel in India, you don't have reporters sitting in the UAE, you don't have reporters in Sudan, or even in, well, certainly not in Somalia, but not even in Addis Ababa, which is the headquarters of the African Union. You just don't.

So that when you do cover what's happening in Sudan, you cover it through Reuters, Associated Press. I mean, you've been around this long enough to know, when we slip into the wires, it's the Western imperialist wires. And I use the word imperialist, not in a kind of political way.

But for God's sake, the history of Reuters and the Associated Press, these were actually created by British imperialism, you know, as a way to get news across the world. And that's in some sense what they remain. So I don't think there's a big change, you know, a young reporter sitting in, let's say, in Nairobi, in Kenya, is going to go on a website and read the BBC story, and then write their own version.

They're not going to look at what CGTN in China is saying, or, you know, they may check the RT site, the Russia Today, formerly Russia Today site. But it's very unlikely, it's more likely they look at the BBC or the AP or something like that. Yeah, because it's so easy.

It's much easier. It's much easier. And also, it has that strange patina of credibility, you use the phrase of the scales dropped, you know, it's very arcane phrase.

Okay, it refers to the idea of credibility, you know, has, have you ceased to, to look at the world through these spectacles that are basically hallucinations? Well, actually, no. Because, you know, I mean, I don't want to embarrass you.

But I can tell you, frankly, I look at the Financial Times in the morning, you know, I know, actually, I know what it is, but but it has that patina of credibility.

[Helena Cobban]

I read it too, I'm sorry to say that, you know. But also, if you if you are like, an investor or a capitalist, you need to have facts. Which is why I think the Financial Times, in many respects is much more valuable than the New York Times, because the New York Times is much more ideological.

[Vijay Prashad]

Yeah, exactly. And in fact, the Wall Street Journal used to be a slightly better paper on the news side, not opinion, but it has deteriorated quite dramatically. So in that sense, I think, when the heat is not up, it's basically, you see, in this case, over the past two years, when the heat of genocide against the Palestinian was so high, I think in this instance, a lot of people around the world just set aside the Western press and said, you know, they are, they are not telling the truth.

I mean, we are seeing videos of children being killed and so on. And they are writing and saying Palestinians dead, or they are writing stories contesting the, you know, Ministry of Health in Palestine's numbers and so on. These are not credible people.

So when it came to the white hot heat of the genocide, I think a lot of people around the world just said, you know, I'm not going to look at the AP or at the New York Times, I need something different. And I think people have struggled, to be honest with you, to find that something different, they have basically taken refuge in what is largely a context less, you know, atmosphere of Instagram and TikTok and so on, watching videos of carnage. But again, it's context less.

Why are the Israelis doing this? You know, you don't necessarily get that from seeing a bomb land on a building, you know, you don't get the sense of the history and so on. But I think that's where people have gone.

They've gone from the New York Times to Instagram. And, and I think I'm glad you are doing, you know, a number of these kinds of programs, because people do come to programs like this to fill the blanks in to seek the context.

[Helena Cobban]

Yeah, I think when people, first of all, thanks for saying that, because we, you know, we believe in what we do. And it's great to hear that you do too. I think when, you know, people, my friends, you know, in the Global South, see the cruelty, just, you know, the inhumanity of the US-Israeli attack on Gaza, there is a, like a historical reference point from their own past.

Because, you know, most of the members of the 88% actually have, you know, grandparents, or, you know, other ancestors who had a very vivid memory of, you know, like, the British Air Force dropping bombs on Iraq in the 1920s, where they, you know, developed the procedures of mass bombing that were later perfected during the Second World War. But, you know, all of those things were tested in the Global South first. So how do you assess the contribution that the struggle of the people in Gaza has made to building anti-colonial movements, or rebuilding anti-colonial movements in the Global South all around the world over the past two years?

[Vijay Prashad]

Yeah, I mean, firstly, I think it's important to recognize that the form of cruelty, as you say, against the Palestinians in Gaza has been extreme. I mean, I covered the situation in Iraq, covered the situation in Afghanistan is brutal. I mean, Afghanistan, entire villages were obliterated and so on.

And I think on balance, what was done in Afghanistan is a parallel to what is happening to Gaza. It's a parallel. But in fact, in Afghanistan, the people simply did not have the kind of coverage at that time.

Maybe it also has to do with Afghanistan, you know. There is a kind of peculiarity of the Palestinian struggle in that there were, as a consequence of the Israeli, not occupation after 67, but as a consequence of the Nakba, the seizure, the betrayal of the even very bad partition plan. You know, it is incredible that there was a partition plan and Israel betrayed it.

In fact, not Israel, the Jewish armies betrayed it. It becomes Israel. You know, in the early part, it was the Jewish paramilitary forces and so on that started ejecting the Palestinians.

You know, this didn't happen in, let's say, other partitions, even the partition of India and Pakistan. The Indian army doesn't cross the line immediately and try to take Lahore and take, you know, Islamabad. Well, no Islamabad, but Karachi and so on.

You just don't see that. They, in a way, said, okay, this is what's happening. And, you know, my family comes from Lahore into India.

Well, that was that. You know, that becomes Pakistan, this is India. But the borderline was relatively maintained.

In the case of Palestine, you know, the new state of Israel violates every plan, every map and seizures. And so then it ejects this population around the world. Now, so then you have Palestinians in the United States, Palestinians in South America, Palestinians in Britain, Palestinians in Germany, Palestinians in almost all these countries who have a voice of one way or the other to speak for their kin or their, you know, people who were part of the community and so on.

Afghans did not have that. I mean, even though there has been an Afghan diaspora, you know, when the Taliban first comes to power and so on, most of the Afghans went to Pakistan. They didn't develop the kind of savvy skills of the Palestinians in Kuwait.

And, you know, when Yasser Arafat in Kuwait in '64 creates the PLO, they have already become, you know, very savvy with the understanding of politics, whereas the Afghan refugees in Pakistan, their understanding was framed between Saudi Arabia, Pakistan and Afghanistan. That's the basic access of the cultural competence of, you know, they were not fluent in English and so on. You don't have that advantage.

I mean, the brutalities in Afghanistan are incredible. What the US and its allies did in Afghanistan, you know, completely destroying villages and so on. Why I'm saying that is that there is something about the fact that, you know, the destruction of Palestine happens so punctually, you know, and with such ferocity, but also pushes out Palestinians who go to countries where they develop a confidence and competence to speak for Palestine.

You know, they are in all Western countries and so on. I mean, I typically live in Santiago, in Chile, 500,000 Palestinians in Chile. You know, there's no way that even a right-wing government can not stand with the Palestinians.

You know, it is almost impossible. It's an enormous, enormous population. It's the largest Palestinian population outside the Middle East.

So this phenomena is interesting. There's no other, you know, the Afghans don't have this phenomena. Even the Iraqis don't have this phenomena, you know, this mass expulsion of the people and so on.

So there's something specific about the Palestinians that I think bears reflection. But where there is a great unity, as you said, grandparents remembering things and so on, even if they don't remember, they are reminded. And I'll give you an example of that.

When the South Africans took the Israeli government to the International Court of Justice, bizarrely, the German government came to the ICJ, the International Court of Justice, with a counter suit saying that they don't think there's a genocide happening in Gaza. This was a pretty stunning legal maneuver by the German government at the time of Mr. Olaf Schultz. Very strange move.

Well, suddenly, here comes a tweet from the then president of Zambia, who subsequently died. The president of Namibia, who subsequently died, sends out a tweet saying, listen, you shouldn't really be talking about what is and isn't a genocide. What he referred to wasn't the Holocaust.

[Helena Cobban]

No, it was the Herero in Namibia.

[Vijay Prashad]

Yes, the Nama and Herero people, he said, you committed a genocide, and never apologized for it. Now, this is interesting, because it's a reminder of something that in Namibia isn't on the front part of the brain of the people. They don't think about this often.

You know, it's not a big thing in Namibia, but the president brought it back. So, in fact, rather than people having memories, which then give them sympathy, their sympathy for the Palestinians evoked memories of their own past. But the reason he could send that tweet out was that Namibia is no longer, and this is a very important thing for people to understand, Namibia is no longer dependent on the International Monetary Fund, which is controlled by the U.S. Treasury Department. You see, now, if the Namibian president sends out a tweet, United States government is angry, U.S. Treasury Secretary calls the IMF and says, you've got to punish them. You can't go ahead with their loan and so on. Well, then the Namibians will go to China.

And I think that role that China plays of providing an insurance for countries that are speaking out against the West is something that is really not being considered much. People say, why doesn't China do more? But, and I tend to understand what people are frustrated, you know, and I wonder sometimes, what do you mean by more?

But people don't appreciate what it has already done, which is really oxygenate the space for the Colombian government, for the Namibian government and others to speak out against the West boldly, because for the first time in many, many, many, maybe centuries, these countries are not dependent on a colonial power, which has its fist around its throat. I mean, Namibia cannot be asphyxiated by a denial of credit, because there are other options for them. This is a very important thing for people to understand.

That is what has changed the discourse on the genocide, not just what people are seeing and so on.

[Helena Cobban]

That's a fascinating way to look at it, actually, because this question of when is China going to do something to support the Palestinians? It's a big question that's out there, not just China, but also the BRICS. I mean, several people, including Vanessa Beeley and others, are saying, you know, the BRICS may have all these declarations, but they're still, you know, selling oil to Israel.

And so, you know, there is a large question out there about when some of these governments are really going to confront U.S. Israeli power. So one of the big questions, of course, is this matter of the post-genocide governance of Gaza. And it has both intra-Palestinian and global dimensions.

I think they're fairly separate, but they're linked, of course. And we've seen, over the past week or so, important meetings in Cairo between all the Palestinian factions, trying to come up with a unified plan. Always, of course, being stymied by the U.S.-Israeli colonial beast. It's worth everybody remembering that, actually, as part of the so-called ceasefire of October 10th, the U.S. military CENTCOM deployed 200 of its officers to go and sit in a base in southern Israel. So the U.S. military and government now own this genocide in a way that they didn't prior. And that's worth, you know, understanding.

And, of course, the U.S. and Israel both have very strong relations with the government of Egypt. So the Egyptians are trying to cobble together some kind of a Palestinian thing. But at the level of international, what is described as an international stabilization force for Gaza, it seems that there are two competing plans.

One is the U.S.-Israeli plan, which looks like a kind of a version of President Trump's Gaza Riviera. And then the government of Turkey recently hosted, well, yesterday, actually, November 3rd, a meeting of seven Muslim foreign ministers in Istanbul, where they were coming up with ideas for an international stabilization force composed mainly of these Muslim countries. Egypt, interestingly, was not there.

But Jordan, UAE, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Indonesia, Pakistan were all there. These are all actually fairly pro-Washington Muslim governments. But they were adamant that if they're going to be sending troops to a stabilization force in Gaza, this has to be part of a plan that is based on Palestinian self-governance.

So they would be supporting a Palestinian something in Gaza. But also it has to be authorized by the United Nations. And for their part, the reports that I've seen about the

U.S.-Israeli plan say that they want to take that to the United Nations, which actually, when I read that, it boggled my mind. This Trump administration wants to take the plan to the United Nations. How do we understand all this? And what do you think the prospects might be for some kind of stabilization?

I'll say stabilization with a small s, not like the international stabilization force. Some kind of stabilization for the living conditions of the people of Gaza before winter really sets in. I know that's a big question, but you can take whatever.

[Vijay Prashad]

This is a really important area of discussion. Firstly, I'm not taking much of what's happening seriously. And I'll explain why in a minute.

It is not rocket science to get goods into Gaza. The UN Palestinian agency is prepared to get back to work. They're ready.

If Qatar is so interested in a stabilization force, put money into UNRWA. Put money into the Norwegian Refugee Council. Let them get to work.

They know how to do these things. You and I don't know how to do these things. These people are professionals.

They've done it before. I was there in 2014. Watch them do it.

Watch them do it. They can bring 80 trucks, 100 trucks in a day. What are six trucks, five trucks?

This is an Israeli joke. One, if it comes to the question of the immediate needs of the people, there are people already prepared. They know how to do it.

You just need to open the door. Israel is not preparing to open the door at all. I don't think a stabilization force is actually necessary for aid to come in and so on.

I don't think so. I think there's a problem underlying everything. I did follow the Turkish meeting.

I did follow that. I do feel that there is a kind of duplicitous in the language of, well, it has to have Palestinian buy-in and so on. It's duplicitous.

There is no Palestinian politics today. Let's be quite frank. You can't have Marwan Barghouti locked up for 23 and a half years.

You can't have Ahmad al-Sa'adat locked up for 23 and a half years. You can't have every single Palestinian faction, virtually every single one, called a terrorist organization. You can't have Hamas disarmament on the table and then say, well, let's get Palestinian buy-in.

What you mean is, let's have Mahmoud Abbas rubber stamp this thing. That's ridiculous. Mr. Abbas has no legitimacy. His term has ended by the Israelis continuing to imprison and to hold Palestinians in their dungeons, political prisoners. By the way, they are not even

prisoners because this administrative detention is basically an illegal form of captivity. They have been kidnapped.

You can't have a politics like this. It's ludicrous. I don't know.

I feel like when you have a conversation with a bunch of states and they are saying, oh, we need the Palestinian buy-in, they should be demanding the release of the hijacked Palestinians, the kidnapped Palestinian political leaders. Palestinian hostages. They should be demanding their release.

The first thing on the agenda is we need to fight for the revitalization of Palestinian politics. In Beijing last year, 14 factions came here, representatives and some pretty senior people that we know pretty well. They came here.

They spent a lot of time with each other, first time in decades that they met, and they released a declaration. Underlying the conversation was that, look, let's face it, the principal leaders of Palestine, the people with some legitimacy are in jail. I don't just mean Marwan Barghouti and so on.

The second, third-level leaders are sitting in prison. The Israelis routinely go into the West Bank, and who do they pick up? They pick up people with political influence, and they toss them, they kidnap them and toss them into these prison houses and keep them there for decades.

If these governments aren't going to demand an immediate release of every one of these people, if they're not going to demand the allowance, in fact, it's an interesting situation because everybody seems to say, let's have political backing for the day-after plan in Gaza. But what political backing? At the present time, you don't have the space for Palestinian political life that has been largely shut down by the Israelis.

This entire campaign by Israel of the disarmament of Hamas is basically the defanging of Hamas. They even tried to kill Hamas's political leadership in Qatar. You know, they don't take seriously Palestinian political buy-in.

They have a colonial mentality. This idea, go to the UN. I mean, what UN?

What UN are they going for political backing to get? I mean, who? In the UN, the Palestinians are represented by only one side of the entire Palestinian political project.

So I feel like if the Muslim countries, if other countries, you know, the non-aligned movement and so on, is to have any role in this or legitimacy in this, they should start calling for the release of the Palestinian politicians from prison and the space given them, afforded them, to create a Palestinian political dialogue so that then there can be some clarity, some genuine clarity about what should happen not only in Gaza, but why is it that Israel has violated the Oslo Accords, whether good or bad?

They have not allowed freedom of movement between the West Bank, East Jerusalem and Gaza. That was a cornerstone of I mean, Israel violated the entirety of Oslo and then, you know, used its violations to basically shut down Palestinian politics. So I would say to the NAM, to the G77 and so on, demand the release of the Palestinian politicians.

[Helena Cobban]

Yeah, I had a really interesting conversation recently with Mouin Rabbani, and he's done another conversation with a podcaster here from the podcast Uncharted Territory. And Mouin is quite clear that there can be no intra-Palestinian entente so long as Mahmoud Abbas remains alive, because for whatever reason, he is the person that hangs on to the both the memory of Fatah, as it was, and the international community, whereas nobody who replaces him will have those two key kind of threads of legitimacy. I'm not entirely sure that we have to wait for Mahmoud Abbas to die.

But the prospects for intra-Palestinian unity, of course, are difficult. They were, you know, they are difficult in all liberation movements. I mean, you know, think of South Africa, think of, you know, the Inkatha freedom movement and its challenge to the ANC and the fact that in the fighting between Inkatha and the ANC, tens of thousands of black South Africans were killed.

You know, so the situation between the Palestinian factions is not that bad. I mean, it's bad, but it's not as bad as it was in South Africa. And yet, the South Africans managed to get their independence.

[Vijay Prashad]

Yeah, I mean, I don't take such a bleak view, you know, I mean, I think, yes, Mr. Abbas is, you know, his sell-by date is passed a long time back. On the other hand, there are people in Fatah, in Beijing. Mahmoud Alul was here, you know, he is the one from the Palestinian Legislative Council who negotiated with Hamas and with the Popular Front and the Democratic Front.

And Mr. Mahmoud Alul also has a great deal of legitimacy. He's slightly younger than Mahmoud Abbas. You know, he's been on the Central Committee of Fatah for 20 years.

I mean, there are lots of people there. It's not, it's not a desert. The issue is that the principal, you know, popular leadership has been kidnapped by the Israelis.

So this is not really a Mahmoud Abbas problem. I understand the necessity of saying, you know, Mr. Abbas is a block. But I don't think this is an Abbas problem.

I think if Marwan Barghouti had not been in jail for 23 years, the situation even in Fatah would be different. You'd have this younger generation there able to make a move on power. You'd have very popular people in the camps.

Mr. Marwan Barghouti is extremely popular in the camps in the West Bank, remains popular. You know, Ahmad al-Sadat is very popular in the camps. He's been in jail also 23 years.

So, I mean, I really don't think this is a Mahmoud, Mahmoud Abbas didn't send them to prison. You know, the Israelis need to be compelled to release them all. And I think that's, without that, Helena, there is no possibility of Palestinian buy-in.

[Helena Cobban]

Yeah. So we've got the Palestinian level of, like, post-genocide governance, and we're still not in a post-genocide period. We're still in a kind of low-level genocide, but it's continuing.

You know, tens, scores of Palestinians are getting killed in Gaza by the U.S.-Israeli military machine, even though we're supposed to have a ceasefire. But it's good to be able to plan and think who the allies might be, who the allies should be. How about, like, we've talked a bit about the shift in the global balance at the economic level.

When do you think some of these, let's call them, rising powers of the global majority will be prepared to use their economic heft to actually confront the U.S.-Israeli military monster in West Asia?

[Vijay Prashad]

Let's be a little practical about these matters. You know, the United States, you had earlier said, has between 800 and I would take it to 900 foreign military bases. If we made a map of Gaza, it's pretty surprising.

You know, most people circulate maps of U.S. military bases in the Gulf region, you know, whether it's the base in Qatar or, you know, the bases in Diego Garcia and that sector. What's often forgotten is the U.S. Sixth Fleet sits in Naples. I mean, Italy, like Germany, continued to be occupied terrain by the U.S. military. You know, the Italian government has minimal ability to say to the U.S., look, you should leave these bases. It's a little bit like Japan in that sense. You know, U.S. continues to have bases in Italy, and the base in Naples is enormous. It's where the Sixth Fleet sits. And during this entire genocide, the U.S. Sixth Fleet has run exercises between Cyprus and along the coast of Gaza. If there is any attempt by any other country to enter into the Mediterranean and say, we are going to break the blockade, you know, if the Chinese, for instance, sent a vessel in, they would not, that vessel would not be met by Israeli coast guard.

It would be met by the Sixth Fleet. You'd have a very serious confrontation in the Mediterranean. You know, the Russian warm water fleet sits in Sevastopol, in Crimea.

And for it to come into the Atlantic, it has to go through the Straits of Bosphorus, go, you know, you sometimes sitting in, you know, you've probably seen this sitting in Istanbul at, you know, Topkapi or at the art museum cafe, you know, sitting on the Bosphorus and you see a Russian naval vessel go down because that's the route they take to enter the Mediterranean and then into the Atlantic. There's no other way. The Russians have to keep making deals with the Sixth Fleet to allow their ships passage.

At any point, the U.S. can block the Russian fleet from leaving the Mediterranean or even entering the Mediterranean. So, you know, when one says some use the economic heft, we really need to remember that the United States has the infrastructure of its military everywhere. And that is compelling.

I mean, you can't get to the shores of Gaza. You know, yes, the U.S. government did not want to have their naval vessels confront the flotilla. You know, they left that to the Israelis, to a coast guard.

Why? Because these are tiny boats. You don't want to have a giant destroyer going out there and having the boats overturn in the swell.

You know, that's the last thing. You don't want pictures of that.

[Helena Cobban]

Greta Thunberg, you know, desperately trying to survive in the swell of some Sixth Fleet destroyer.

[Vijay Prashad]

Yeah, you really don't want that video, you know, so they let the Israelis deal with it. But I'm just saying that if you're sitting in Beijing or if you're sitting in Indonesia and you're wondering what more can we do, even if you're a Colombian, you know, if you're Gustavo Petro, who's incensed about the situation, they can't send a ship with aid. You know, they will get immediately smashed.

Look, they can barely send aid to Cuba. You know, it's Mexico that has been doing most of the aid runs into Cuba. No other country is able to do it.

The U.S. has naval vessels sitting in the Caribbean. You see them there terrifyingly attacking boats off the coast of Venezuela. You know, there is a gangster quality to the U.S. Navy and the U.S. military establishment. And I don't think we should underestimate that danger. And I know, okay, maybe people should confront the United States over the question of a genocide. They have, in as signatories of the Convention Against Genocide.

But people are crazy as well. You know, they don't want to escalate to a point where you have two navies or a navy of the world in a firefight with the United States. You just don't want to see that happen.

[Helena Cobban]

Yeah, I mean, I could make another couple of points there. One is that it's not just the U.S. Navy in the Mediterranean. It's also the U.S. Air Force, you know, headquartered in Ramstein and with major assets in Turkey, because Turkey is part of NATO. So the Incirlik base there, I mean, to me, Turkey's position is very strange. They want to be part of, you know, supporting the Palestinians-- up to a point. And that point is where it would force a real confrontation with their NATO allies in the United States. So that also needs to be part of it.

Just looking at all the things that you have said about, you know, the immense capacity of this American or American-Israeli military machine worldwide, I did grow up in Britain in the 1950s at a time when the British, like when I was born, they still had bases all across the

Indian Ocean. And then, you know, finally in, well, 1956 was the big confrontation over Suez.

And then they had to withdraw from all the bases east of Suez. And that was done through economic power, through President Eisenhower's economic power, because he wanted to take over those positions in the Indo-Pacific. But, you know, in order to confront a big military machine, you can do that with economic power if you have a smart plan and if you have a very strong economic position.

So are we saying that maybe the global majority may want to do more, but doesn't have that economic heft yet, but it might do at some point? What do you think?

[Vijay Prashad]

It's hard to predict this because, you know, it's not the case any longer with the kind of amplification of technology that the parallels with the past are so clear. You know, the capacity of British imperialism in its decline was much less than the capacity of U.S. imperialism today, you know, just militarily. What it is capable of doing, its footprint and so on, is much greater by magnitudes than the British.

And in a sense, you know, we are not seeing any other country in the world building up a military capacity to confront the U.S. They are mainly defensive. I mean, Russia and China are defensive military powers. They don't have the offensive capacity of the United States and will not for a very long time.

So this means that the balance of power has to change in the U.S. You know, those of us who are outside looking in are saying, well, you know, when is there going to be a genuine, you know, qualitative transformation of politics in the United States where a peace bloc is able to develop? And you're going to start seeing first, you know, a political will that says we're not going to use military force to bully people outside the U.S. And secondly, perhaps a slight dismantling of U.S. military power. You know, people write books about degrowth.

They're talking about the broad economy. I just think about degrowth of the U.S. military. Let's start there.

It's the largest military force in the planet, more than half the U.S., the world military spending is in the United States. You know, the Pentagon is the largest institutional polluter of carbon in the world. Let's start degrowth in the U.S. military. Let's create a more balanced political environment in the world where the U.S. military doesn't tip the scales on behalf of the United States, just one country in the world. You know, but it has incredible power because of the military power. You know, I'm not one of those who says, well, it's the economic power that runs things.

Must never underestimate the role of military power and of intimidation. It continues to play a role, a very serious role. And countries in the global south worry about this.

As you said earlier in our conversation, they've already experienced what this means, and not just in the 20s. You know, Iraq was bombed in the 20s, it was bombed again in the 1990s, in the 2000s. Libya was bombed in 1911, then again in 2011.

Looks like that, you know, there's a habit of, in a way, celebrating anniversaries with more bombardments. And these countries know what it means. They know that what was done to Yugoslavia opened the door for extreme violence against parts of the world, you know.

And I don't think they want that. The Chinese do not want, you know, bombing of Beijing. And people will say, well, that'll never happen.

Well, the U.S. just bombed Tehran, another major city. You know, what was the compelling reason to bomb Tehran? Nothing.

So this fear of the use of this immense military is not an abstraction. It's not a hallucination. It's genuine.

And, you know, we're going to have to wait till people get elected in the United States and decide, listen, let's spend some more money on healthcare for U.S. citizens and less to build another warship, another bomber. You know, let's build the civilian capacity rather than, you know, build a military capacity and intimidate the world.

[Helena Cobban]

Yeah, you make so many excellent points there. And of course, we're actually talking while my family in New York City and people, you know, throughout New York City are going to the polls to vote for a new mayor who may be a transformational mayor. And who knows what President Trump's response to that will be.

But of course, the economic cost of this massive U.S. military is also analogous to what the British were suffering, you know, in the late 40s and early 1950s, a time when they realized they have to retract their imperial desires. So the economics may force the U.S. to retract. But at the same time, we have President Trump cutting the aid for health insurance, cutting the emergency food supplies to American citizens.

So it's a very, I won't say pre-revolutionary situation here. But it's a very-- it's a situation that could lead in any one of a number of different ways. I'm not even sure that the United States as a federal entity is still going to be around in 10 years.

But, you know, that's another topic. Of course, we need to have a lot more dedicated anti-war movement here inside the United States, much more education and agitation, pointing out that every dollar that is spent on a new destroyer, on a new killer drone, on whatever, is a dollar that is not spent on enriching the lives of Americans. But we need international help to get these arguments put across and to put some kind of an alternative view of the world in place.

Give us a couple of ideas that you have for having all this happen, Vijay, and then I'll let you go because I know it's late there in Beijing.

[Vijay Prashad]

Yeah, I mean, I don't want to really put too much on the table because this is a matter for people, I think, within the United States to consider and to think through seriously about,

you know, what it means to be a citizen of the world, what it means to live in the world and not try to be on top of the world, and so on. What it means to just be another person, you know. Trump in South Korea talked of a G2.

The United States and China, there is no G2, there is no G1, there's a G193. It's all the countries in the United Nations, you know, let's start respecting all the member states that have adopted the UN Charter as their principal treaty and so on. You know, the United States needs to change its attitude towards the world.

That's a very clear-cut thing, and that's going to take time. There's a great arrogance about the US being the best country in the world. I mean, forget Trump.

You hear this even now from Barack Obama in the little videos he makes, you know, best country in the world, this, that, and the other. Is it really the best country? Does that concept even make sense, you know, in the world we live in, which is complicated and dynamic and interesting?

And, you know, where is your curiosity, greatest country in the world? Not sure that's actually true. So, you know, I don't want to say much more than that, which is that, you know, if people are sincere about ending the genocide against the Palestinians, they're sincere about no more war here and there, well, reconsider the internal pact that is there in the United States, which is that nothing for the population, everything for the military.

You know, why can't people celebrate basically human life rather than war? You know, that's a question. It's an existential question.

You know, you have a football game, and it's basically an advertisement for the military. Is that really the existence that people want? You know, where their children go to war, or they go to join the military, and they are congratulated.

And those who become engineers and want to build bridges don't have the same congratulations. I mean, again, Helena, that's an existential question for others to think about.

[Helena Cobban]

It definitely is. And actually, we should have more of this conversation later at a time that we can both be on the screen, but thank you so much, Vijay, for giving us your time and your wisdom. I'd love to have another follow-up conversation with you in a few weeks' time, but thank you for this.

Really great.

[Vijay Prashad]

It's a pleasure. Thanks.

[Helena Cobban]

Well, that wraps up a great discussion with Vijay Prashad, episode three of our project Gaza and the World. Thank you so much, Vijay. We're going to be releasing new episodes in this project with new guests weekly, every Wednesday.

So please visit our website if you can, www.justworldeducational.org. There you can find out a lot more about all our projects. And please, if you support what we're trying to do and want to help us to build the more just and peaceful world that all of our children and grandchildren, all our friends and colleagues all around the world so desperately need, then you might consider donating, which you can do at the donate button at the top of our website.

Thank you so much, and see you again next week.