

# The Iran Crisis, #5: Rami G. Khouri on the regional and global impact of the U.S.-Israeli war

*Transcript of the conversation Helena Cobban had with Rami Khouri on 3/3/2026. The audio is [here](#).*

**[Helena Cobban]**

Hi, everybody. I'm Helena Cobban, the president of Just World Educational. This is now Tuesday, March 3rd.

We are in day four of the current US-Israeli attack against Iran that is having major consequences, obviously within Iran, but also in the Gulf, in the West Asian region, and globally. So we're going to just try and encompass or discuss the whole of this. Luckily, today we have with us Rami Khouri, who is very well known as a long time journalist, and he is a distinguished fellow at American University of Beirut.

He's also a very much valued member of our board at Just World Educational. So great to be with you, Rami, how are you doing?

**[Rami Khouri]**

Thanks, Helena. I'm good. I'm happy to be with you as well.

And thanks for the good work you and the foundation keep doing.

**[Helena Cobban]**

So give us quickly your roundup of what's important to know today.

**[Rami Khouri]**

Well, I've lived through the last 60 years as an adult, following the Middle East, living in the Middle East, writing journalistically, analyzing. So when I look on this whole period since the 1960s until today, I think several things stand out in this crisis. The first is the obvious nature of the joint US-Israeli rejuvenation and digitization and modernization of the old colonial enterprise, of how mainly white Western powers, they used to be Christian powers, but now you've got the Israeli-Jewish-Zionist angle, and the West, the UK and the US and others, trying to reconfigure a new way by which they manipulate and control the region.

That's pretty obvious. The second one is the fact that the Iranians have been resisting, not just for the last three, four days, but really for the last 75 years, you know, since the 1940s and early 50s, and the 53 overthrow of their elected leader by the UK and the US. The Iranians have been resisting Western hegemonic assaults for almost three quarters of a century, and they're still doing it.

And they're the only country in the region that has credibly resisted the non-stop onslaught of US sanctions, attacks, Israeli attacks, all kinds of things that have been done to them. So that's pretty significant. And how this plays out in the next couple of weeks, we'll find out.

But so far, they seem to be able to continue to resist using missiles and other things. The third important thing is that this has now spread to the region. And the Iranians said this, that if the US-Israel attack, they're going to make this a regional conflagration.

And they've done it. They've done it by attacking Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Jordan. They attack Israeli targets, they attack American targets, and they attack Arab targets in those countries, including some energy resources, which is quite controversial.

But the fact is that they have made this a painful process for the region and the world. Whether that's good or bad, history will tell us. But the fact that it's going on is historic.

We should recognize that. Other than possibly the Arab oil boycott in, whatever, '73, where that impacted the world briefly. So the impact regionally is fascinating, and the fact that the Iranians keep doing it.

And the fourth factor that I would throw in here, which is important to me, is that the Arab world individually and collectively has been totally unable or unwilling, or they don't know how, to respond credibly. They don't have a clear position. They're critical of the destruction going on.

They don't want to destroy Iran. Neither do they want to become American or Iranian puppets. But they just don't know how to do it.

So my conclusion is that what we're seeing is the cumulative lack or loss of sovereignty across the entire Arab world, without an exception. There isn't a single Arab country where the government leadership has the ability to take independent action in the interest of its own people without getting the approval of either the Israelis, or the Americans, or the Iranians, or the Turks, or the Russians, or the Chinese, or somebody has to approve whatever they do, if it's a trade agreement, an oil exploration contract, whatever it is. So the kind of disappearance of Arab agency and sovereignty is a striking phenomenon that we see right now, and it's troubling for the Arab region.

And then the last point, the fifth point, and all of these come together, that none of these are isolated. The fifth point is the Israeli-American assault not just on Iran, but on the whole global system of laws and UN agreements and treaties and conventions. That's all thrown out the windows, replaced by the militaristic colonial onslaught, to which only the Iranians and the Palestinians are seriously trying to resist.

And that's not an accident, because it's Iran and Palestine that have been prevented by the West and the Zionist Israeli forces, have been prevented since the late 1940s, prevented from practicing self-determination. So the coup in 1953, the partition of Palestine, the attacks, the sanctions, nonstop, Iran and Palestine have not been able to exercise self-determination. And it's no surprise, therefore, that they're the two parties that now keep trying to resist in any way they can.

How this plays out, we'll find out.

**[Helena Cobban]**

Well, that's a fantastic round up. Thank you so much, Rami.

I mean, we could practically stop the conversation here, but I have a lot more I want to talk to you about. So stay around, stick around. I think, you know, there's obviously a lot to be said regarding the situation inside Iran.

But I think you quite adequately summed that up by noting the resilience of the Iranians. And one of the points that Elijah Magnier made yesterday, when we were talking, was that this time, in contrast to last June, I mean, last June, when the US-Israeli axis also attacked Iran in the middle of negotiations, as happened most recently, with a decapitation attack, not against the supreme leader, but against the leaders of the IRGC and the nuclear science institutions. And it took the Iranians almost a day to be able to regroup and send some missiles and drones out against their aggressors.

This time, it took them an hour. And they were much speedier, they were much better prepared, they have built in redundancy in their systems. And that's all lessons that they took from what happened last June.

So I think we can probably leave the situation in Iran. I'm going to have other people coming on talking about political outcomes in Iran, I think, for now, maybe. Is it okay, Rami, to assume that the Iranian state apparatus is not going to collapse within the next week?

**[Rami Khouri]**

I think that's probably correct. There's likely to be some kind of adjustment as Iran figures out how it wants to proceed with its governance system. And this will be determined by the political forces that have power, the military forces, the religious forces, the political leadership, the business people.

All of these people together will decide, not the people in the street. But there is a push against the system from the people in the street. There has been for years, not only to loosen the autocratic controls and the strict conservative Islamic traditions for some people, especially women, but these protests, I think, are mainly about good governance, less corruption, stable water and electricity supplies, available jobs, stable currency.

These are basic day-to-day issues which will reflect on all societies in the region. And in fact, you'll see them today in the in the primary elections in Texas and Carolina, wherever, in the US. These are natural human issues and they're universal.

And the Iranians are sending the message that they don't like to be mistreated by their own power elite, but they don't have the power to change it.

**[Helena Cobban]**

But they have also been strangled very intentionally at the economic level, not just by Trump, but by decades of sanctions. I mean, I think Trump increased the sanctions very tightly, roughly a year ago.

I'd like us to focus more on the regional and global dimensions of this crisis. At the regional level you mentioned that the Iranians have been attacking targets in the Arab world. And I think it's probably good to specify what kind of targets and the nature of these attacks and what they portend. And we know that they've closed the Straits of Hormuz.

I was just actually reflecting in a little thread on Twitter that Hormuz, which is a little island right there in the Straits, after which the Straits are named, was the location in 1507 of the Common Era-- that is more than 500 years ago-- of a very crucial Portuguese attack, a very brutal Portuguese attack against the then rulers of Iran. So it's like, what goes around comes around.

And it's definitely come around now for Western shipping, Western oil interests, but also for the Arab Gulf oil interests. So what do you know precisely about the kind of targets in the Arab world? What I've read is American bases in the Arab world, and American installations in the Arab world, and then some oil facilities.

So there's then a question about things like the hotel in Dubai, where I think the Iranians claim that American servicemen had been, service members, men and women, had been relocated there. But are there other indications as to what the Iranian attacks are targeting and why?

**[Rami Khouri]**

Well, they're mainly Israeli and American related targets, but I think they're also hitting oil facilities and things that are just indigenous parts of the Arab oil and energy industries. And the point here is that the Iranians want to spread the suffering around. Their point is, if they're going to suffer sanctions and attacks, and regime change attempts, and assassinations, other people have to feel the pain.

And they feel this is how the world will get involved, the region and the world will get involved to stop the Israeli-American assault, because they've made the point, the Iranians, that the pain is going to be shared this time. It's no longer contained just in Iran, or in Palestine, or in Lebanon, as has been the case before. This is controversial.

People will argue for or against it. I think that's a fascinating argument for the future. But I think the political message of this is really important and novel, which is that the Iranians are saying, there's a price to pay if you want to re-energize your colonial legacy in the region, you Americans, and you Zionists and Israelis.

The price is going to be paid by everybody, the Arab countries, the oil industry, the tourism industry, the travel industry, the shipping trade industry. And this will then go into the global economy and increased prices. So this is fascinating.

And it's important because nobody in the Middle East, with a slight exception of the 1973 oil embargo I mentioned, nobody in the Middle East has ever been able to respond, in a way,

to Israeli-American aggressions or American and British aggressions with the Israelis. That has spread the suffering around. And the United States is known not to be able to take too much suffering.

We saw this in many conflicts around the world. If the price gets too high, they pull out. They don't care.

They're not out for territorial control of these areas. They want hegemonic political and economic control with the Israelis, but they don't physically need to be there. So we'll see.

But attacking these targets across the region, I think, is really dramatic and is significant politically and historically. And it's still going on. Let's see day by day.

I mean, if the Americans cannot defend their own bases and embassies, then people in the Arab world are going to say, are these the right strategic partners for us? Or should we look around? And this debate has been going on for a couple of years now.

**[Helena Cobban]**

I think also the American argument to the GCC countries has been that the presence of the American bases is essential for those countries' own defense. And the Iranians are now, through their attacks, saying no, those American troops in Al Udeid base or Al Harir base or wherever they are in the Arab countries are not there to defend you. They're actually defending Israel's interests in the region.

So I think that's a pretty powerful argument. Right.

**[Rami Khouri]**

Let me just add one little thing to that. Also, the people in the region remember when the UAE and Saudi Arabia were attacked a few years ago, Abqaiq oil facility and others. It doesn't matter who attacks it, whether it's Iranians or Houthis or whoever it is, Ansarullah, Israel, that the U.S. didn't step in, didn't do anything. And then people think twice the U.S. was said to be negotiating with Iran and at the same time attacked Iran, that the negotiations were not serious. They were a smokescreen. So the U.S. has proved to be unreliable and lacking credibility on the level of military defense, national security, and political credibility. And this is a pretty strong lineup of bad behavior for people who are looking, should we be closer to the U.S. or not closer to the U.S.? And this will play itself out in the years ahead. In parallel with the work of other people around the world, like the Chinese, the Russians, the Turks, we'll see how this develops.

**[Helena Cobban]**

So there were reports in the Washington Post that prior to the launching of the February 28th assault, that the powerful Saudi Arabian crown prince Mohammed bin Salman had sent either an envoy or himself in person had urged Trump to launch the assault. What kind of credence do you give to those reports? Because they've never been adequately sourced.

**[Rami Khouri]**

You know, I have a lot of doubts about those reports. The Saudi approach for the last couple of years has been clearly, steadily, slowly moving towards, I don't know what the right word is, rapprochement, engagement, trying to develop normal relations with Iran. They understand how fickle the Western colonial powers are, historically and today, that if you put all your eggs in the American basket or the Israeli basket, that's pretty irresponsible.

So they know that Iran is their powerful neighbor, it has legitimate rights, and they want to coexist with it as much as they can rather than see it as the great enemy. And they've been working steadily to do that. So it doesn't make sense to me for the Saudis suddenly to say, yeah, let's, let's destroy the Iranian leadership.

They don't necessarily like the nature of the political system or the leadership there. I mean, the autocracy of Saudi Arabia and the autocracy of Iran are pretty similar in terms of citizens being relatively powerless. But the nature--

**[Helena Cobban]**

Well, at least in Iran, you have elections. I mean, even if the elections are tightly circumscribed--

**[Rami Khouri]**

Well, you have a lot more dynamism in Iran and the culture, you know, culturally, you know, writing, poetry, filmmaking, amazing, which you have in some Arab countries, but not much. But anyway, I'm dubious about those reports. It's possible that the Saudis are telling the Americans, you know, lean on the Iranians a little bit to push them to negotiate, whether it's the nuclear or relations in the Gulf or whatever.

But to support an all-out attack strikes me as reckless. But then, you know, the Arab leaders do take suddenly reckless decisions that contradict what they did before. So we just have to wait for more evidence to come out.

**[Helena Cobban]**

So moving on from the Gulf to the broader, what you call the Middle East, what I call West Asia, but we're both talking about essentially the same area. We could even talk about it from the Nile to the Euphrates. But I think, you know, what the Israelis seem to be hoping for is at two levels.

One is the collapse of Iranian power, that it would no longer be a power in the region. And the extension of Israel's both power and influence across that whole region from, as it happens, the Nile to the Euphrates. And it strikes me that this kind of a vision, this kind of a goal that I think Prime Minister Netanyahu shares with Ambassador Mike Huckabee, we could describe it not just as Greater Israel, but Very Much Greater Israel.

And it would be in essence, like the kind of sphere of influence that Donald Trump asserts and has been implementing across the Americas, that he does that across the Americas, and that the Israelis get to do it across West Asia.

Is that a feasible goal for Netanyahu? And if it's not, what is going to stymie it?

**[Rami Khouri]**

It's not a feasible goal. It is a goal that the Israeli government today is more concerned about implementing because of the October 7 attack, because of the resistance that developed all around the region to Israel, whether in Lebanon or in Yemen or in Syria or Iraq or everywhere. But it's not something that's realistic.

It's just way too aggressive. But the Israelis have consistently followed policies that essentially try to achieve a condition in most of the countries surrounding them across the West Asia, including Iran. They would like to not necessarily control those countries directly, but they would like to fragment them into smaller units.

The Israelis have done this for years in Lebanon and Syria and Palestine. They try to break up the country so that it disintegrates, and you have Alawites, Kurds, Druze, Christians, Shiites, etc., little units. And then it tries to make deals with them, like it did with the Christian radicals in South Lebanon years ago, tried to make deals with some of the small groups in the West Bank years ago, and it doesn't work.

Now they're dealing with some of the gangs in Gaza, and this just doesn't work because the Israelis don't understand that the people of the region, Iranians and Arabs and Turks, I should mention, have the same intense love of the right of self-determination in their national home, in their countries, that the Israelis do. The Israelis claim that their ancestral rights to land in Palestine comes from the Bible. Those kind of mythological explanations are fascinating, but in real life terms, Israel has a right to exist in the UN system, even though Israel never implemented the pledges it made when it was given independence and then joined the UN as a member of state.

So the Israelis are arguing at one point, they just want to be safe, which is a perfectly reasonable argument for any country, and for all countries. All countries have the right to be safe. The Israelis, though, assume that that safety can come by their expansion of the land they control physically, which is now all of Palestine, South Lebanon, parts of Syria, and they might grab little pieces here and there, or their ability to dictate to other countries further away what they can and cannot do.

And if people resist Israel's demands, Israel will wipe them out. So Gaza was an important phase for Israel because it provided an example of what will happen to anybody who defies the Israeli Zionist hegemonic ambitions in the region. And I would not be surprised if we see, if the war drags out in Iran, I would not be surprised if the Israelis choose an area, maybe a suburb of Tehran, maybe a village somewhere, maybe a province in Iran, and totally wipe it out like they did in Gaza.

Destroy the ability of any living creature, human, animal, or plant to exist in a small piece of land, saying, look, this is what's going to happen to the whole country. They have the military power with the U.S. to do that. Both the U.S. and the Israelis have no qualms about destroying life capabilities. The Americans did it in Vietnam. They did it in the nuclear bomb in Japan. And the Israelis have done it all over.

They're doing it today as we speak in South Lebanon, bombing. So this is the real dilemma that the Arab world has, which is Israel is aggressive and militaristic and has the support of the U.S., and it wants to be the hegemon in the region, and it's not able to do it. It's been fighting in Lebanon since the 1970s, or even late 60s, and they're still unable to subdue the Lebanese resistance, which is mostly Hezbollah, but there's other Lebanese.

So I think this is the dynamic that we have to keep our eye on. And the hard part is to separate what is legitimate. What legitimate rights does the state of Israel have to live in peace?

What legitimate rights does the Iranian people or the Lebanese people have to not be attacked and occupied by Israel or the U.S.? Separating those and then addressing them diplomatically through a negotiation of some sort. This has never been seriously done. It was attempted once or twice in Palestine, but again, it proved to be like the U.S. negotiations with Iran. It was a hoax. It wasn't serious. It was a deceptive sideshow, and the Israelis kept building settlements, etc., etc. So this is, I think, how people approach this. And it causes people to be much more cautious, and also people are becoming radicalized around the region. More and more people are saying Israel doesn't have a right to exist.

It shouldn't exist as an independent state. It should be part of one big country where it has Christians, Muslims, and Jews living as equal citizens. So the consequence of decades and decades of militaristic predatory aggression by Israel, the U.S., and the U.K. is a hardening of the resistance and the response and the attitudes of indigenous people in Arab countries or Iran or other places.

### **[Helena Cobban]**

You raised so many important issues there, Rami. One is, you didn't name it, but there is this thing in Israeli doctrine called the Dahiyya Doctrine, named after the suburbs of South Beirut that they did destroy intentionally and across three whole neighborhoods of South Beirut in 2006. And then they invoke that as a doctrine: "This is what we will do if you dare to resist us." And obviously, that's what they've been applying in Gaza.

The story of Gaza and its resilience and resistance is not finished.

We shouldn't assume that that's the end of it. I mean, it's true that physically Gaza City and Khan Yunis and the other historic places inside the Gaza Strip have been not totally leveled to the ground, but substantially leveled to the ground and their infrastructure destroyed. So there has been a huge destruction in Gaza, but there are still two million Gaza Palestinians living there and resisting and just trying to make it through this winter.

You can have a Dahiyya Doctrine, but it doesn't mean that you've eliminated the people and their spirit and their resistance. I mean, the whole thing about settler colonialism, as all the experts on this topic say that it has the logic of elimination of the indigenous people, which the Israelis have not been able to enforce either in Gaza or in the West Bank or in Lebanon or in southern Syria. They're trying and trying and trying.

So now we see the Dahiyya Doctrine being applied somewhat in Tehran. If you look at the pictures of these American massive bombs, I think they're called massive ordnance penetrators, that they're dropping on heavily populated urban areas. But still, Tehran and the many other big cities in Iran are ways bigger than Gaza or the three southern suburbs of Beirut.

You can't actually wipe them out, especially because they're doing it from a distance. The Israelis are doing it from a distance and the American fighter bombers are doing it from a distance. So that limits the number of sorties, the number of bombs, and they're also kind of running out of ordnance.

But I think it's worth underlining the Dahiyya Doctrine as something that's in the minds of the Israelis, and perhaps to some extent, also in the minds of the Americans as they wage this war.

So I want to come on to some of the global dimensions of this. First of all, obviously, we've got the global economic dimension, and the fact that the oil prices are already going up, and they will continue to go up, I think, until this thing gets resolved.

My understanding is that this causes the most grief to the Europeans, to people in the Global South, and to some extent, to people in China, although China has a huge renewable sector, and they have some reliance on hydrocarbons, and the pricing of hydrocarbons. But I think the Europeans are the ones who are hardest hit, and the people in the Global South. What kind of repercussions do you see from this oil price hike, spike?

**[Rami Khouri]**

Well, it's more than just the oil price. The energy facilities may be damaged if they're attacked some more, and the stopping of trade, physically moving container ships around, both of these things are going to have big impacts on the world if they persist. If this goes on for a week or 10 days, it's manageable.

But if it goes on for more than that, then it's much more serious. But that's the whole point of what the Iranians are doing, is they want it to be a serious, painful process that sends a message to the world, and they don't care if it's the Americans, the Europeans, the Chinese, the whole world saying, if we suffer, you suffer. And therefore, the process, I think, will continue.

The Americans and the Israelis don't have a clear answer to it. I remember years ago, in one of the earlier wars with Iraq, the Kuwaitis re-flagged their fleet with American flags to prevent them being attacked.

**[Helena Cobban]**

Oh, to give them protection, because back in those days, having an American flag on your boat would give it protection. Now, I don't think so.

**[Rami Khouri]**

That was the target. So again, this is an important lesson in both capability and will, determination. The Iranians have shown that they have the capability and they have the will to use their capability to make the world suffer, starting with their immediate environment, but then possibly going, I mean, the furthest afield they've gone is Cyprus to attack the British base, which is Europe.

So that, you know, Europe is involved. But you're right, Europe will suffer the most because they've reduced their reliance on Russian gas, and therefore they're particularly vulnerable. But the Iranians don't care.

It's not their job to keep people happy in fast food restaurants in Omaha, Nebraska, or Manchester, England. Their job is to keep their people living in dignity and decency somehow. So this is really part of the new and significantly unappreciated dimension.

This is the first example of the message from the Middle East, that colonialism that assaults us will generate counter responses that assault you and your economies around the world. The aim of it, I believe, is to create so much pain and fear that the powers in the world, Chinese, Europeans, and Arabs and Turks and others, will quickly mobilize diplomatically to try to stop this. The Europeans have pretty much gone on permanent vacation.

The Europeans haven't done anything, leaving Ukraine outside, but they haven't done anything related to the colonial aggressions and mass human suffering in the Middle East in the last 30, 40 years, other than issue a barrage of press releases. They're going to keep doing that, statements. They're concerned about this.

But the Europeans, like the Americans, have completely lost the credibility that they used to have. And the Europeans were the first people, and I think it was, I don't know, '83 or something, or '78, way back, they were the first people to talk about self-determination as a Palestinian right, way back when the EU had six people, six countries or seven countries. So the Europeans have traveled a pretty sad road in terms of their political credibility, and it's up to them to figure out if they want to fix that or not.

It's really the Chinese, I think, the Turks, and the Russians, possibly, and others. The Hague Group is an intriguing little collection of, not little, but I don't know, 12 countries or something, or 18. They keep expanding.

They've called for an emergency meeting this week, I believe. So if the Hague Group can get together and assert some kind of collective pressure, that would be fascinating to watch. The BRICS groups has never, BRICS never came together as an organized political force.

They're mostly economic, I think. But there has to be a response from the world, and in some form, that reigns in American-British-Zionist-Israeli aggression, and reasserts the rule of international law, which means that all people have the same right to liberty, dignity, and security. And this is what the Israelis and the Americans are trying to destroy in the region.

The British have been doing it for 100 years with their colonial work. And it's come to a head, finally. And it's exploded all around the region, and it's going to impact the whole world.

So the sooner we can get this resolved, the better for everybody.

**[Helena Cobban]**

Yeah, I mean, you do, you're, you're quite right to identify the assaults that, I mean, the attacks that the US and Israel have been launching against the United Nations, nonstop, both of them since the inauguration of Donald Trump, but also seriously, prior to that, under President Biden, and I have to say, a whole string of earlier American presidents, including George W. Bush going to invading Iraq on completely trumped up, for completely trumped up reasons, back in 2003. And Bill Clinton, going into Kosovo in 1999. Again, you know, interrupting an ongoing negotiating process there that was overseen by the OSCE.

So there's a long history of US attempts to act unilaterally, free from the constrictions of the United Nations. But it's become much more intense, both with Biden's support for Israel during the genocide in Gaza, when many people in his own administration were saying, you know, the support you're giving Israel is quite illegal under international and US domestic law.

And obviously, Trump is openly defying the United Nations and has created this other body. I mean, it's called the Board of Peace, and it's inaugurated just before he and the Israelis launch a quite gratuitous and aggressive war of choice. And I think people around the world understand that it's the US and Israel that launched this war.

And that's really important to underscore. I think here in the United States, there is quite a lot of understanding that this was a completely voluntary act by President Trump. He's made no attempt to try to justify it in terms of US law, or international law.

It's all kind of, "I saw that the negotiations were going nowhere, so therefore I decided--" Or else, you know, as Marco Rubio said, that we knew the Israelis were going to do this anyway. So we had to join in, which is the weirdest explanation and makes it seem as though associating yourself with Israeli decision making is a positive thing in American domestic politics.

I don't think it is anymore. You know, it used to be until, let's say October 7th of 2023, that for any American leader to associate him or herself with the interest of Israel was a net benefit. And now things are changing, have changed very deeply in this country, in both the major political parties.

So, you know, for Rubio to come out and say, well, we're doing this because of Israel, it kind of undercuts his argument.

**[Rami Khouri]**

Well, they don't have an argument. They don't have a clear process by which they analyze the realities and come up with a strategy that is legitimate and serves their purposes and is acceptable globally. They don't do that anymore.

We're in the era now of cartoon diplomacy in the United States. This is like Popeye cartoons where you flex your muscles, take your spinach, which is, you know, spinach is Hegseth doing a press conference, tough guy. And then you go and attack and you show.

It's extraordinary in the United States, where I live now near Boston, to watch the television coverage. If you put on the TV news, any mainstream news, turn off the sound, just look at the images. About a third of them are these extraordinary pictures of troops and air force things and attacks from the air and aircraft carriers.

It's all military hardware to show how strong we are. And Trump keeps saying this all the time. You know, we're the strongest country in the world.

Militarily, they are. But politically, they're not the strongest country in the world. And they're not the smartest country in the world either.

They're making huge mistakes and they keep making them over and over and over again. I mean, the road from Vietnam to Afghanistan, to Iraq, to Somalia, and now to Iran, and Lebanon on the way, is a path of incompetence and criminality in many cases, by American diplomacy and American foreign policy, which heavily, not everywhere in the world, but in the Middle East, is heavily dictated by what Israel wants. And I think you're starting to see, as you said, that being pro-Israeli is no longer as effective for American politicians as it used to be.

And it's really in the last three, four days, we've seen people in the mainstream media openly now saying that, you know, the Israelis made me do it. And this is going to reflect badly on American politicians, and we'll have to see in the midterm elections this year. But all of this is in the context of the colonial legacy.

This is how colonialism works. People with power, white people, mainly white men with power, use that power around the world any way they want, and nobody can constrain them. And they do it mainly for material gain for their economies and their people.

Hela, you started writing a couple years ago about the beginnings of the colonial period in the 15th century in Portugal and the Dutch and all that. You should really continue that, because I think what we're seeing now is the culmination of what started in the 15th century with the Dutch and the East Indies, and then the Portuguese and the Spanish, and everybody in Europe got into the colonial game, even the little Belgians. And this is the consequence of it.

And of course, Israel was a consequence of that as well. And allowing this Israeli-Zionist militaristic spree across the region to go on and to actively support it has brought us to this point where the Iranians are saying, we're not going to play this game. We have a different game we want to play, which is make the colonial people suffer, and make everybody suffer for sitting around and just watching it on TV.

And you can argue if this is legal, moral, acceptable. Well, the Israelis and the Americans have told us there's no such thing as legal anymore. Legality is no longer a criterion for assessing anybody's actions.

Laws don't matter, or they don't matter to us, the colonial powers. Whether it works or not is another issue. And in most of these colonial adventures in the last 40, 50 years, it hasn't worked very well.

And now the Iranians are putting this to the test. So we were passing through a fascinating, important moment, and there's a huge amount of suffering, mostly by people in this region. But we'll see how much it impacts people around the world, mainly through economic means.

And if it impacts political leaders in the West electorally, and forces them to change their policies, well, that would truly be historic as well.

**[Helena Cobban]**

Well, that's something that we can do here in the United States, obviously, since you and I are both located here.

Rami, I really want to thank you so much, both for the insights you've shared here and for your service to the Just World Ed board, which has been really tremendous. You and I were, of course, the co-authors of the book, *Understanding Hamas and Why It Matters*. So that was a great and important intervention that we made.

This conversation has been the fifth in the current series that we're holding on the Iran crisis. I want people to go to our YouTube channel, Just World Educational, or our channels on Apple Podcasts and Spotify, go to our website, [www.justworldeducational.org](http://www.justworldeducational.org), where you'll find all the previous conversations that we've had.

Tomorrow, we're going to have Ambassador Chas Freeman, same time, same place. And on Thursday, we're going to have the well-known Iran specialist, Barbara Slavin, also here in Washington, D.C. So I really urge people to check back to see these really important and informative conversations that we're having.

So Rami Khouri, thanks so much and talk to you again soon, I hope.

**[Rami Khouri]**

You bet. Keep up your good work.

**[Helena Cobban]**

Bye. Bye.