

The Iran Crisis #3: Mouin Rabbani on West Asia-wide and global implications of recent U.S. moves

Transcript of the conversation Helena Cobban had with Mouin Rabbani on 4/17/2026. The audio is [here](#). Video, coming soon.

[Helena Cobban]

Hi, everybody. I'm Helena Cobban, President of Just World Educational, and I am delighted that today, which is actually the 13th episode of our Iran Crisis Project, my guest is Mouin Rabbani, who is the co-editor of Jadaliyya and a super smart analyst of all things Palestinian, West Asian and globally in general, I want to say. So, Mouin, great to have you back with us.

[Mouin Rabbani]

Thank you, Helena. And it's great to be with you again.

[Helena Cobban]

So, yeah, you have a book coming out. And anyway, I know we'll put the information about the book into the description of this video. And I'm really excited to see what you're going to write about. I mean, I know what you're going to write about, but I'm excited to see what you're going to say.

So it's a huge day. It's Friday, April 17. And yesterday, we had the ceasefire in Lebanon go into operation at the insistence of the Iranian government. And with the Iranian government also insisting that Washington needs to restrain Israel. So is this new, Mouin, or what?

[Mouin Rabbani]

I think it is. I mean, there's so much to be said about this. Let's rewind a bit to the US-Iranian negotiations in Islamabad, I believe a week or so ago.

And you'll recall that when Vice President Vance suddenly withdrew from the negotiations and left, he gave a statement saying that it was because Iran had refused to accept US demands with regard to its nuclear program and passage through the Strait of Hormuz. And he made absolutely no reference to Lebanon whatsoever. The Iranians later claimed that a key sticking point was in fact Lebanon that they were not prepared to accept an agreement with the United States unless it also encompassed and ensured a ceasefire in Lebanon and end to aggression not only against Iran, but also against Lebanon.

And what we've had, and of course, immediately thereafter, there was the horrific aerial massacre conducted by Israel in Beirut, which I believe over 350 people were slaughtered and over 1000 wounded in the space of some 10 minutes, in which Israeli bombs were dropped on almost every neighborhood of Beirut. And I think this was quite clearly an Israeli effort to goad the Iranians into a direct response and thereby produce a collapse of the US

Iranian ceasefire. What has happened since then is that the US and Iran have continued exchanging messages.

And the Iranians have repeatedly made clear that there will be no significant negotiations, or framework agreement or agreement of any sort unless the US was first able to impose its will on Israel and ensure a ceasefire in Lebanon. And I think for the Iranians, there were several considerations at play. First of all, of course, they wanted to show the regional influence, they wanted to clip the Israelis wings, they wanted to show solidarity with Hezbollah.

But the Iranian position also was that any agreement with the US would be worthless if the US could not demonstrate in practice that it was capable of exercising meaningful control over its Israeli proxy. Now, there are all kinds of reports around, so it's a bit difficult to separate fact from fiction. But there have been multiple reports that the Iranians also made clear to the Americans that if there was no ceasefire in Lebanon, that they were on the verge of resuming missile strikes directly at Israel.

And this appears to have that along with an Iranian willingness to allow the passage of commercial shipping through the Strait of Hormuz, and repeating its position on disavowing nuclear weapons, and perhaps also some arrangements concerning its stockpile of enriched uranium. All the indications are that there has been a breakthrough in US-Iran talks that they are heading towards a framework agreement that will extend the ceasefire and hopefully within the next month or two, result in an actual agreement. But the key development that made this all possible was the US making that phone call to the Israeli government and say, it stops now and it stops immediately and it doesn't restart the second you put down the phone.

And if I can just make one more point, you know, given the central role that the Israeli government played in persuading the United States to launch this war, there has been a lot of discussion about who are the actual decision makers in the White House. Is it the US government or the Israeli government? Well, I think this development shows quite clearly who was ultimately in charge.

It literally took a single phone call and a single tweet from Trump saying, further attacks on Lebanon are prohibited, all caps. And it was over. Of course, the Israelis will do everything within their power now to sabotage the ceasefire, to sabotage the negotiations, to seek a resumption of the war, not only in Lebanon, but also against Iran.

And that will depend on how the US sticks to its guns.

[Helena Cobban]

So, actually, it also requires that there be good kind of hotline communications between Washington and Tehran, because we can imagine that the Israelis would attempt all kinds of false flag operations. The one against, allegedly against Diego Garcia, for example, if we think about a month ago, may well have been an Israeli false flag, or else it was just a flock of geese flying into the US radars, or whoever knows what it was. But yeah, a hotline, I think is really important.

So we'll just-- I'd like to scroll back to the day before Trump's inauguration. He actually did succeed in forcing the Israelis, persuading the Israelis to sign the ceasefire agreement regarding Gaza, that had been sitting waiting at that point for about eight or nine months without any impetus from the Biden White House to get it nailed down, done and dusted. And he, the day before he was inaugurated, he insisted on that.

And we know that this was like the three phase thing. And phase one was the only one that got completed at that point. But he did demonstrate that he has the power, as we know, Biden had had the power previously.

So this is a central question of who is like, pulling the levers of power in the White House. I think when you were talking about JD Vance, having left the negotiations, I think it was Saturday of last week. Yes.

And apparently that was after receiving a phone call or making a report to Netanyahu. I mean, you know, the Israelis at that point a week ago seemed to be in control of the American negotiating team. And then we had, you know, Trump doing his all caps, "This has got to stop!" So something happened along the way there. What do you think it was?

[Mouin Rabbani]

Well, I think what Israel has been very successful at, is using the, how should I put it, the vagueness, the opacity in the White House, to persuade the United States to shift the goalposts beyond the red lines of its adversaries. We saw that very clearly in February of last year in the Gaza Strip, where Israel succeeded in persuading the United States to put forward demands designed for rejection by Hamas, and thereby enabling it to not only resume, but intensify the genocide in the Gaza Strip. And, you know, you may recall that during the first Trump administration, there was this whole debate about when Trump speaks, should we take him literally or seriously and so on?

Well, there's a clear answer to that. You shouldn't take him literally or seriously, because he genuinely has absolutely no clue what he's doing. We're talking about a completely vacuous individual who was characterized by thorough ignorance over the Middle East, over diplomacy, over state policy.

[Helena Cobban]

Oh, darn, I thought he was Jesus Christ incarnate.

[Mouin Rabbani]

Well, that too. And so when you're dealing with a vacuum, you can implant ideas into it. And that's what's clearly happening.

I mean, Trita Parsi has written very persuasively about how, on multiple occasions, the US has approached negotiations with Iran during the past year, with one set of demands, and has then been persuaded by the Israelis to change those demands beyond what Iran would ever be prepared to accept, and thereby laying the basis for launching a war against Iran.

And I think now, you have a situation where it appears that there's going to be a framework agreement between the United States and Israel. There is a ceasefire in Lebanon, Article 3 of which gives Israel what's called the right to self-defense, which really means the right to unprovoked aggression.

And as these details are being hammered out, Israel will use any lack of clarity, any opportunity that it can grab to sabotage this.

[Helena Cobban]

Hang on, you're talking about the details in Iran?

[Mouin Rabbani]

Of both. I mean, it can launch a provocation in Lebanon that will leave Hezbollah with no possibility to continue showing restraint, and then claim it was acting in self-defense against a second Holocaust or something like that. It can use the negotiation, as the US and Iran are figuring out the details, translating an eventual framework agreement into a more detailed agreement.

It can persuade the Americans to put in all these poison pills. And bear in mind, I mean, we're not just talking about Israel. There is also a faction in the White House, some of whom are Israel firsters, but others of whom are not, who are absolutely dedicated, whether for political or strategic or religious reasons, to continue the war against Iran and see it through to the very end.

[Helena Cobban]

So that raises a number of interesting questions. One is, what would seeing the war through to the bitter end look like? And I mean, everybody that I've talked to that are strategic specialists, say this is not a winnable war.

So when you're talking about seeing it through to the bitter end, that means, you know, even more humiliation and losses for the American side. And I think that is what Trump is trying to avoid.

[Mouin Rabbani]

Yes. Otherwise, we wouldn't be discussing these issues. We need to, you know, obviously distinguish between objectives and reality.

As you recall, when this war was launched, it was all about unconditional surrender, regime change, terminating Iran's nuclear program, terminating its ballistic missile program, terminating this, that, and the other, and essentially turning transforming Iran into a defenseless appendage of Israel's regional security order. Then things erupted in Lebanon as well. And we got an additional set of objectives, disarming Hezbollah, transforming southern Lebanon into an exclusive Israeli security zone that would be thoroughly depopulated, whether only of Lebanese Shia or all Lebanese is a little unclear.

And then reality struck, which is that the US and Israel threw everything they had at Iran. And yes, tactically, they scored some very impressive achievements. In the first phase of the war, they managed to kill Iran's supreme leader, a number of other senior military and civilian leaders.

But this was supposed to produce either capitulation or collapse, and it produced neither. The Iranian government remained intact and coherent. If you read that detailed report in the New York Times about how the decision to go to war was made, they, you know, they drank so much of their own Kool-Aid, that there was absolutely no contingency planning for anything going wrong.

It was all supposed to be over within 72 to 96 hours. The idea that Iran would launch significant retaliatory actions, let alone seize control of the Strait of Hormuz was never even taken into account. And there was no plan B.

And it's in that context that many have begun to refer to this as Washington-Suez moment. In other words, it was precisely as the US sought to reassert its unchallengeable global dominance, that it was confronted with the limits of its power, to an extent that future historians may well point to this war as the moment when US imperial decline became unmistakable and irreversible. And similarly, from Israel's perspective, this was supposed to be the final act in a regional campaign to establish Israel's regional hegemony, unchallengeable regional hegemony over the Middle East under US auspices.

And here again, this is actually the moment where this project met failure and came to an end. Again, you know, if I could just make one last point, we can't make any definitive statements because we're talking about an issue that is still ongoing, you know, it could all restart again as you know, the minute after we finish speaking, but judged on the current trajectory, I think those are legitimate conclusions.

[Helena Cobban]

I agree with just about everything you said. I have to tell you, I was just about four years-- it was my fourth birthday in Abingdon, UK, when the British paratroops were taking off from RAF Abingdon to go and launch the Suez, their part of the tripartite aggression against Egypt. We heard the great big, very loud Beverly's taking off all night and later learned what was happening. Well, I was four years old, I didn't learn that much, but it was pretty terrifying anyway.

My view is that this is actually worse than the Suez moment. Suez in essence was a pathetic last gasp of Anthony Eden-- we can definitely compare Anthony Eden to Donald Trump-- but you know, a desperate last gasp to show something of an empire that was already in advanced stage of collapse. I mean, you know, basically, World War Two was not affordable for the British. They won the war but lost the peace. Almost immediately afterwards, they lost India. They lost Palestine, as it were, or gave it away.

But you know, the empire was already on the ropes in 1956. Whereas this, I think, is more momentous. Because until now, the US Empire has appeared really unchallengeable in most parts of the world.

And now I think this is going to not just check the US Empire, but also start a process of imperial decline. We can discuss this.

[Mouin Rabbani]

Yeah. If you want to take the analogy further, Suez was actually seen from the perspective of London and Paris and Tel Aviv, a military success, but a political and therefore strategic failure.

[Helena Cobban]

Because Eisenhower pulled the plug on the British pound.

[Mouin Rabbani]

Yes. But militarily, I mean, the Israeli army reached the Suez Canal within, I think, three or four days. The difference here is that the wars against Iran and Lebanon have been not only political failure, but also a military failure, which-

[Helena Cobban]

And also against Hamas and the resistance in Gaza. I mean, none of them have been clear-cut military victories.

[Mouin Rabbani]

Yes. And if you look at the US agenda now, sure, they're still talking about highly enriched uranium and whatnot. But the primary focus of US negotiators is not dealing with those issues that were supposed to be resolved by the war against Iran, but weren't.

Their primary focus is on addressing the issues that exist only as a consequence of their decision to go to war. In other words, they're seeking to undo damage that didn't exist on the 27th of February, but now need to be addressed, meaning that the objectives or the targets laid out on the 28th of February, unconditional surrender, regime change, ballistic missiles, disarming Hezbollah and all the rest of it, isn't even on the agenda anymore.

[Helena Cobban]

Well, I think some of them are on the agenda. I mean, the nuclear one is always going to be on the agenda, but they didn't even mention Hormuz, of course. And then, you know, when you talk about the retaliatory strikes, which were not only against Israel, which have been, you know, non-trivial, but also against the American, the string of American bases along the south slash west coast of the Gulf.

And those have been extremely damaging, and forced the Americans to withdraw very deep into Jordan, and maybe northern Saudi Arabia, although the Saudis have been distancing themselves from the American Israeli war project very significantly since February 28th.

[Mouin Rabbani]

Yes.

[Helena Cobban]

So those are huge, huge retreats, in a sense.

[Mouin Rabbani]

And very much so.

[Helena Cobban]

Probably, you know, won't even be discussed in the negotiation. It's not like they're going to suddenly, you know, ramp up al Udeid base or any of these bases to the kind of military offensive capability that they had on February 27th.

[Mouin Rabbani]

Yeah, I think it's highly unlikely that the Americans are going to rebuild those bases and staff them anywhere near the way they were before. It would probably be too humiliating for them to just abandon these locations. But the idea that we're going to see their reconstruction, anything along the lines of what existed before this war is, I think, out of the question, you know, you mentioned the Gulf States, and there, I think we may well see a very significant development.

Bear in mind, these were Donald Trump's closest international allies. The only people really, who were ecstatically applauding in January of last year, when Trump took his oath of office, were the Israelis and the Arab states, while the rest of the world was kind of, you know, looking on in shock and horror. And what has happened?

Well, first of all, of course, after the first Trump administration, many of these states, the Emirates, the Saudis, and so on, had significantly improved their relations with the Iranians. This time around, they saw Israel as probably a more significant threat to regional stability and security than Iran, particularly after the Israeli air raid on the Qatari capital, Doha, last September.

When this march towards war began, I remain absolutely convinced that all the Gulf States, not just the Omanis, but all of them, including the Saudis, and including even the Emiratis, sought to use their influence with Washington to avoid a war, because they understood perfectly well that Iran was going to make good on its threats to retaliate, that they would be attacking them, at least American facilities on their soil, if not their own infrastructure, that the US would ultimately be powerless to defend them, that the war would be a failure, and that if it was, and if it would be a success, it could lead to even greater instability in Iran. But once they understood that this war was going to happen, whether they liked it or not, I think then they began, you know, as the client regimes that they are, felt they had no choice

but to allow the US the use of their facilities and so on. Okay, now the war appears to be over.

They've incurred massive damage, not only to the American bases on their soil, but also to their infrastructure. And they were actually at risk, in some cases of becoming uninhabitable, if Trump had sought to wipe out Iranian infrastructure, and Iran had retaliated against their not only their oil and industries, but power infrastructure and desalination plants.

[Helena Cobban]

I mean, I think desalinization is really one of the crucial factors, because there was one attack on an Iranian desal plant. And the Iranians clearly, you know, threatened to retaliate in kind, I think.

[Mouin Rabbani]

And I think they did in Bahrain.

[Helena Cobban]

Yeah, I think something like 2% of Iranian drinking water is a result-- is generated from desal, whereas down the Arab coast of the Gulf.

[Mouin Rabbani]

It's much higher.

[Helena Cobban]

It's like 80-90%.

[Mouin Rabbani]

Yeah, certainly in places like Kuwait and so on. And so now they're basically left holding the bill, you know, their infrastructure is in need of massive reconstruction. And, you know, maybe for Saudi Arabia, this isn't the end of the world, because at the end, Saudi Arabia can survive just by pumping oil once it repairs its infrastructure.

[Helena Cobban]

Once it can get it out.

[Mouin Rabbani]

Yes. Well, that too. But for a country or for a city-state, if you will, like Dubai, its reputation as a safe investment haven, a tourist destination, a mecca for influencers, a shopping destination, you know, these are- And a really crucial hub that they've been trying to

develop in high tech and, you know, data centers and- Yes, and transportation and all the rest of it.

It's going to be very difficult for them to repair that. They can't just disavow the United States and ask it to leave the region. I don't think that's going to happen.

But they do need to start looking at an alternative security framework. And, you know, one prospect that I certainly wouldn't dismiss is that on the one hand, they will seek to make arrangements with Iran, despite the increase in bad blood between them during the past two months, to ensure this doesn't happen again. And at the same time, perhaps reach out more to regional partners, you know, the Egyptians, the Turks, the Pakistanis, whoever, to provide a security umbrella, because from their perspective, they were the main victims in a war that not only had nothing to do with their national security, but that the party that launched it, which was supposed to be the ultimate guarantor of their security ended up being the source of the most important threat to their national security that they've ever faced.

And in addition to that, as far as they're concerned, this wasn't a war fought on behalf of US national security, but on behalf of Israel and its drive for regional hegemony.

[Helena Cobban]

Yeah, I think there are some differences among the GCC states that have been quite evident. And, I mean, the way that I've been looking at them, Oman is the most pacific, if you like, and then the least pacific are the Bahrain, have been Bahrain and the Emirates.

[Mouin Rabbani]

Yes. If I can just interrupt you with one brief point, I think you're right. And it's certainly true that there's never been a uniformity of views among the GCC states.

But I do think these differences were exacerbated as a result of the war. In other words, there's more distance between them now than there was in January, for example.

[Helena Cobban]

True. So I've actually written quite a lot about this, and we should discuss this more. You mentioned the possibility of Pakistan playing a role. Pakistan already is playing a role, not only as the as the key mediator and host and facilitator of all of this diplomacy around Iran.

[Mouin Rabbani]

As a defense pact with the Saudis.

[Helena Cobban]

But it's actually *performing* on its defense pact with the Saudis. And then one thing that I always underline is that a large proportion of the people in the fighting forces of the

Emirates are actually Pakistani nationals. So, you know, they are integrated, if you like, with both the Saudi and the Pakistani security structures already in very serious ways.

[Mouin Rabbani]

And I don't think the the Pakistanis would have played this mediator role, unless it had been well coordinated and authorised by the Saudis.

[Helena Cobban]

True. And we know that prior to the Pakistani-- was it the foreign minister or the chief minister?-- going to Beijing and issuing their five point Pakistani-Chinese peace plan, which happened, I want to say about three weeks ago. Prior to that, the the Pakistanis had actually hosted a meeting with the foreign ministers of Saudi Arabia, Egypt and Turkey.

So that is the kind of the core of that, that axis. And the Emiratis were very much outside of that and opposed to it. So I mean, this past week, the Emirati crown prince went to Beijing. And there were all kinds of reports that I saw that there was a tiff there. And, you know, he had tried to get the his Beijing hosts to agree not to support the Iranians. And the Chinese said, we do what is in our national interest. So just like essentially piss off on that. But I thought that was the end of the story.

And then yesterday, I was reading that there's somebody that I follow on Twitter called TP Huang, who's a really good Chinese tech expert. And he said that when that crown prince was in Beijing earlier this week, they actually concluded 24 memoranda of understanding on tech and investment and payment and financial matters. So you know, that's a real role that China can play in, as I describe it, kind of weaning some of these GCC countries away from their long standing reliance on on the United States.

[Mouin Rabbani]

Sure. And there was also this report that the Emiratis were apparently upset at the role the Pakistanis were playing in mediation and called in three and a half billion dollars of loans that they had extended to Pakistan, some of which date from the 1990s. And this put the Pakistanis in a real bind, because if they had repaid these loans, with the speed with which Abu Dhabi demanded them, their foreign reserves would have fallen below the level required by their separate agreement with the International Monetary Fund.

And you know, speaking of differences between the GCC states, apparently it was the Saudis and the Qataris who stepped in and said that they would make up any shortfall and underwrote those Pakistani treasury.

[Helena Cobban]

So you know, there's a lot of different dimensions of this.

[Mouin Rabbani]

Sure.

[Helena Cobban]

We're talking about GCC countries, people here in the States, and I don't know about there in Canada, but they tend to just think of them as kind of sheikhs on camels pumping oil. And that's their only function. But actually, in the present world economy, they play a number of different and very intriguing roles at the financial level, at the level of high tech development.

[Mouin Rabbani]

Logistics, you name it.

[Helena Cobban]

Yeah. And one of the things that I noted was that, you know, US CENTCOM used to be, well, it still is, I guess, headquartered in Tampa, Florida. And Israel was not part of CENTCOM.

Israel was part of EUCOM, because, you know, just as they go to the Eurovision Song Contest, they consider themselves part of Europe, or whatever. But it was after the Abraham Accords, that the military relationship with Israel got transferred from EUCOM to CENTCOM, which totally allowed the integration of the Israeli and Arab military partners of the United States. And I think that is a really central thing that anybody seeking to disengage the Emiratis or the Qataris or the Kuwaitis or the Saudis or any of the Bahrainis from the United States needs to really underline that they need to leave the Abraham Accords as well.

[Mouin Rabbani]

Yeah, I don't see that happening. I do think the idea that the Saudis are going to join at any time within the foreseeable future-- I already thought that was out of the question. But now it's completely out of the question.

For the Emiratis, this is their ticket to fame, you know, and I don't see them relinquishing it anytime soon. And the same for the Bahrainis. But you know, the idea that the idea that the Abraham Accords was going to enhance their security has been proven to be, you know, an absolute delusion.

But will lessons be learned? I wouldn't hold my breath.

[Helena Cobban]

Yeah, I guess that is a good point. So I think we should try to bring this conversation back to the Palestinians as well, because obviously what happened with Operation Al-Aqsa Flood, in a sense, initiated this whole 30 month saga that we now see today. Back on October 6 of 2023, the Israelis were very hard at work planning the operations against Hezbollah and against Iran that they hoped would, you know, happen very, very soon.

You know, it's unquestionable that they were already deep in their planning for the pager attack against Hezbollah and other aspects of the attack on Hezbollah. So they got, from one perspective, in Israel, they got diverted into, you know, gee, we've just got to go down and carry out this genocide in Gaza, and then we'll get back to Hezbollah and the Iranians, which is kind of what's happened. But we've seen the Iranians successfully putting both Lebanon and Yemen with Ansar Allah onto the agenda, you know, that if there's going to be meaningful negotiations between Iran and the United States, then there also has to be a ceasefire in Lebanon, and there will be a ceasefire regarding Yemen.

We have not seen anything analogous regarding Gaza. So what do you make of that? And what do you make of the prospects for the people of Gaza, whose resilience through these 30 months has been stunning?

[Mouin Rabbani]

Yeah, it's a very good point. And of course, there's now this whole debate, you know, where the Americans and the Lebanese government are trying to pretend that the reason there's a ceasefire in Lebanon is because the United States has taken charge of the Lebanese-Israeli negotiation file, and the ceasefire is part of this negotiation process, whereas it's transparently obvious that what really happened is that the Iranians basically told the Americans, you either have a ceasefire in Lebanon, or you have no off-ramp in the war against Iran, and the Americans called an Israeli ceasefire. Now, if you look at the Pakistani announcement of the US-Iran ceasefire from a few weeks ago, it says that the ceasefire will apply across all theaters, but it only specifically mentioned Lebanon, and didn't mention the Gaza Strip.

And I think there should be now, first of all, there never has been a ceasefire in the Gaza Strip. We have a ceasefire agreement that was signed on October 8th of last year, but Israel has not only violated each and every single one of the terms of that agreement, but it has also violated the article that calls for a cessation of hostilities on literally a daily basis, and has since killed more than 700 Palestinians, the majority of them civilians, and has reimposed the obstructed humanitarian aid and all the rest of it.

Was Gaza, and the West Bank for that matter, included in this ceasefire agreement? Well, if you look at the way negotiations have always happened with the Israelis, if something is not explicitly named, it's meaningless and irrelevant. In other words, you can say that the ceasefire applies to the entire Middle East, but as long as it doesn't specifically mention the Gaza Strip, as long as it doesn't specifically mention the West Bank, Israel will act as if it doesn't, and no one is going to complain about it.

Not in Washington, not in Brussels, not anywhere else. As you mentioned, this conflict, for lack of a better term, is of course a century old. This crisis erupted in October of 2023 from the Gaza Strip, and with Israel having been forced to end its wars against Iran and Lebanon, there's a very real risk that it will now redirect its aggression to the Gaza Strip and to the West Bank.

War has become a state of being for that state. Perpetual war has become a state of being. We have this charade of a disarmament process being undertaken under the rubric of

Trump's Board of Peace, and that will likely be used as a pretext for Israel to launch a renewed offensive against the Gaza Strip.

Then the ball, in a sense, will be in Iran's court. How is it going to respond? I suspect it won't respond to this, but it will again drive the message home.

What starts in Gaza does not stay in Gaza, and you can sign all the Abraham Accords you want, and you can pretend that the Palestinians are marginalized and irrelevant. But if you do that for long enough, you're going to end up with a regional war on your hands that puts the entire global economy at risk. We had that in 1973.

We've had that again in 2026.

[Helena Cobban]

I think the global economy is probably much, much more fragile right now than we who are here in the United States are capable of understanding. If you speak to anybody who's living in the Global South, it's horrendous for them. For some reason, I know why, the hedge funds and the financialization and the oil shale drilling and everything that's going on here in the United States has enabled a lot of people to really not notice anything from this war. Although it's very clear from the budgetary point of view that all these hundreds of billions of dollars that are going into the military are being taken almost directly from the social welfare programs in this country. Increasingly, people will understand that. I think the DSA or other leftist pro-Palestinian voices that are much more prolific in this country than they were three years ago, will be able to make that connection if we're coming up to the upcoming elections, if we have elections.

You're there in Canada and you have a lot of experience-- I think you grew up in Netherlands and you've worked with international organizations. How do you characterize the difference in the image and influence that Israel has in the international community?

The difference between that three years ago before Al-Aqsa Flood and today, when we've had not only the genocide in Ghazi, but also the two unprovoked wars against Iran. The second one seems to have aroused a lot of concern in Europe and elsewhere. Most recently, Black Wednesday in Lebanon and the ongoing, totally gratuitous destruction and devastation in Lebanon.

What concrete effects has this had on different sectors of world opinion and what can we expect?

[Mouin Rabbani]

Well, I would first of all distinguish between the international community and the West. I think in the international community, broadly speaking, Israel has always been damaged goods. There was a period during the 90s in the aftermath of the Oslo Accords when many people thought this would genuinely lead to Israeli-Palestinian peace, that Israel's image was improved for a while internationally.

But now the difference is that people have not only reverted to their traditional assessment of Israel as a colonial state, but have become much more mobilized on the basis of that assessment. The best example, of course, being South Africa launching its genocide case against Israel before the International Court of Justice. The West is, I think, different, where Israel did not really have a significant image problem in the West until, I would say, probably this century, and it had been gradually getting worse.

But from Israel's perspective, was still a very manageable problem. And then you have development since late 2023, where it has just, you know, taken off exponentially, to the extent that I think it's now fair to say that not only has Israel lost the public square, but that Western public opinion's attitudes towards Israel has been thoroughly transformed, irreversibly, irretrievably, definitively, including even among important sectors of the Jewish community, and even among the one constituency that Israel has been able to rely upon even more than Jewish communities, namely, the evangelical communities, particularly in countries, in a country like the United States.

Now, there's, of course, always a time lag between changes in public opinion, and political changes, and particularly in a plutocracy, like the United States, it will take longer than it has in the past, but you're already beginning to see it. I mean, you know, you have candidates for office, who are going out of their way to publicly distance themselves from AIPAC, whereas previously, if you were even running for municipal dog catcher, you would do everything you could to get AIPAC's endorsement, if not their funding, because that was seen as a certificate of good conduct, and a seal of approval. Now, you're considered damaged goods, if you haven't disavowed AIPAC, and that includes not only people who are taking this position out of principle, but crucially, it also includes political opportunists of people who are doing this not out of any conviction, but because they know, this is how you succeed in politics.

And what will be very interesting is, so you have these transformations in public opinion. And now you have a situation where there is a widespread belief, even among sectors of US elites, put reality aside for a second, I'm talking about perception, that the US was led into another Middle East war by Israel. And to add insult to injury, the war failed.

And so what kind of impact will this have on the strategic relationship between Israel and the US? Ironically, at a time when Israel seems to be campaigning for a US withdrawal from NATO, so it only has one ally left on the planet. But that will be very interesting to see, especially with a leader in the White House, like Donald Trump, you know, he's bought and paid for by the Zionist lobby because of the money he gets from Miriam Adelson.

And I mean, look at this guy's business record. Is there anyone in his entire life he hasn't betrayed? Do you really think he's going to do Israel's bidding because he gets money from Miriam Adelson?

He wouldn't hesitate to throw Israel under the bus, if he felt this was necessary for his career.

[Helena Cobban]

There's also, I know we need to wrap up very soon. But there's also the possibility of him doing it from fear of the *kompromat* that Jeffrey Epstein, without a doubt, was, you know, collecting throughout his life and handing over to the Maxwells and to the Mossad. On the other hand, you know, we know so much about the sleazy aspects of Donald Trump's...

[Mouin Rabbani]

What more could there possibly be?

[Helena Cobban]

Anyway, today, he's Jesus, right?

[Mouin Rabbani]

Yes, yes. Dr. Jesus to you.

[Helena Cobban]

Sorry, Jesus MD. So, yeah, I guess I think we're at a definitely at a turning point, both for West Asia and quite probably for the global balance in general.

[Mouin Rabbani]

Certainly seems that way.

[Helena Cobban]

So it's been really great to have your take on this, Mouin.

[Mouin Rabbani]

Thank you, Helena. Always a pleasure.

[Helena Cobban]

Have you on again, very, very soon. And if people are watching this, I want them to like, obviously, buy Mouin's book when it comes out, and we will put the information wherever we can and to donate to Just World Educational because everything that we do, we do it unpaid, but it costs a lot to get it up and disseminated and whatever. So once again, thank you, Mouin.

Talk to you again soon.

[Mouin Rabbani]

Thank you. Goodbye.