



FROM IRAN: How the War Achieved the Exact Opposite

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Rami Yahia (RY): Good evening, everyone. This is Rami Yahia reporting for Reason2Resist here in the former US Embassy in Tehran, which is currently the Den of Espionage because we discovered that this was, in reality, not really a US embassy, or at least partially a US embassy and mostly a location where CIA was spying on the Iranian people as well as on the Soviet Union. I'm currently with Navid Zarrinnal, a historian based in Tehran of Iranian origin. Nice to have you today.

Navid Zarrinnal (NZ): Thank you so much for having me. The location, as you said, is really incredible. This is the former US embassy that was also used for espionage activities. So that's why the Iranians gave it the nickname of the Den of Espionage. And another cool fact that I found out recently is that what is today the Palestinian embassy on Palestine Street, it used to be the Israeli embassy. And that was always used for espionage activities by Israel, but when the revolution happened, they replaced the Israeli embassy with the Palestinian embassy.

RY: So we just spent the past week in Iran commemorating Sayyed Ali Khamenei, the Supreme Leader of Iran, who was martyred along with his granddaughter, his son-in-law, and his daughter. How do you feel about this funeral? It's been a large procession starting in Tehran that then went, I believe, to Qom, Najaf, Karbala, and then now for Mashhad, for the final resting place. What's your initial reaction to this ceremony?

NZ: So when the US and Israel assassinated Iran's leader, they claimed that he had no popularity in the country. And I think that was part of their false impression that led to the war, was that if they assassinate the leader, the whole system would collapse. And that's what the Iranian opposition was saying, too. But what we saw is that after the assassination, the chain of command was rather smooth, and Iran was able to retaliate on the same day, and the country did not fall apart. The biocracy, the institutions continue to function, and there was a

new leader, his son, that was appointed by the assembly of experts that was voted in by the people very quickly after his assassination. So that shows that he was not a dictator, was not one-man show, it was a much more complex system, and that he also had a great degree of popularity in the country that we saw in the funeral. So because of security reasons, the funeral was delayed for several months. But we finally had it this week. And there were millions of people who showed up. And so I'm not just going by the media accounts or by the state narrative here.,I went to the metro to go to the Mosalla where there were events surrounding his funeral in order to also report and document what was happening, and the metro for a second, I thought I was getting squeezed. It was really scary. There were so many people rushing into the metro to get there. I felt like there was going to be a stampede at any moment. But fortunately, there wasn't, and I'm still alive. But even at the Mosalla, the place where they had the events, it was packed. There were millions of people coming and going. They were coming from different cities. And then in Qom, there were also millions. Then again, in Iraq, there millions. And in Mashhad, too, even though the US bombed the railway that connects Tehran and Mashhad.

RY: Restricting people to get access to the Mashhad.

NZ: Yeah, I mean, I don't know what their intention was. Maybe they had some other intention, but it is restricting the people's movement into Mashhad. But still, people are going in the millions. And that shows that he was actually popular here with the people.

RY: And just before, while Sayyed Ali Khamenei's casket was in Najaf and Karbala, the United States announced that the Memorandum of Understanding would have been cancelled. And that launched significant attacks by the United States, specifically in the southern part of Iran, in Bandar Abbas, and in Mashhad, as you've mentioned, in the railway. Do you believe that this attack was coordinated to restrict the transportation of Sayyed Ali Khamenei back into Iran?

NZ: It might have been, I mean, so the initial, you're talking about the attack by the US?

RY: Yes and more specifically the timing. I mean it's in the middle of the funeral while Sayyed Ali Khamenei is no longer in Iran. What's going on?

NZ: So the US claims that they attacked Iran because Iran had launched a drone against one of the ships that was using an unauthorised route. Because if you read the Memorandum of Understanding, I think one of points is pretty clear, there isn't much interpretive ambiguity. And it is pretty that Iran will be the transitional authority in a sense when it comes to the management and the opening of the Strait because Iran closed it after they were attacked by US and Israel. So the idea is that we are the one because we have the leverage here. And if you read the memorandum out of the 14 points, two of them are procedural points and two of are about the nuclear programme. But the rest of the ten points are in Iran's favour because Iran had the leverage because the global economy was going down after the strait was closed and the Americans were desperate for an agreement or for a deal. And so Iran had the leverage and the idea was that Iran will manage and reopen the Strait alongside Oman,

because Oman also has waters in the Strait of Hormuz. And some of the ships were using the unauthorised routes that the Americans have claimed the ships can go through and Iran launched a drone against that and then the US attacked Iran. And this had happened before, too. But I think you're right that they also saw the funeral as a good opportunity because they think that the people are distracted and this way their attacks will be more effective. So, and then the US attacks several positions in Iran's south, in the Persian Gulf, but they also came to other areas such as the railroad that is in the Golestan province. That is also strategic because I think it is a trade rail too, in a sense that it connects Iran to Turkmenistan and China.

RY: And Russia, too.

NZ: And so I think you're right that they saw the funeral as a good opportunity and they also extended their attacks because it used to be that after the ceasefire they would only attack the Persian Gulf region, but now they're attacking the north of Iran all the way to the Golestan province that borders Turkmenistan. And I mean, what's crazy to me is that despite the US blowing up the negotiations twice and despite Iran having the leverage this time, they're so arrogant that they – I mean, there's a good Persian term for this called Istikbar, it comes from Arabic, from the jidhr or the root of Kaf (ك), Beh (ب), and Ra (ر). Istikbar basically means global arrogance. It's another word for imperialism in a sense. And the Istikbar, the arrogance is so high that the US kind of wanting the memorandum, wanting the ceasefire, but not going along with the terms. And that's the thing, that's I think one reason that I think the Iranian negotiating team in a way is a little bit naive about the US's position because after the US pulling up in negotiations twice under Trump's term, they enter in a memorandum but the US is not respecting it. And I think that there's one argument that, no, Iran has the leverage, so the memorandum is good, but there's another argument that the US is using the memoranda as an opportunity to reorganise and attack Iran again.

RY: There was the NATO conference just before, I believe it was in Turkey actually, the NATO Conference just around the time of the funeral. And Trump during the NATO conference spoke out against NATO as an alliance and called out the countries for not supporting it during its attack on Iran, although Trump claims that he doesn't need NATO support and that Iran's Navy and Air Force has been completely obliterated, which obviously doesn't seem right considering Iran is still able to have control over the Strait of Hormuz. Do you believe that at that conference, he found the necessary support to put an end to the Memorandum of Understanding and to reengage in Iran militarily?

NZ: When it comes to the NATO countries, I don't think they're willing to get involved too directly. And even, if you remember, some European countries, such as France and Switzerland, closed their airspace to the US during the war, or even Turkey, for example, that's in NATO, I mean, they maintain good relations with Iran generally. So when it comes to NATO, I don't think they really wanna get directly involved. I mean, it's true that indirectly they're helping the US, also the Persian Gulf states, such as UAE and Kuwait and Bahrain, they're also helping the US because they host US air bases and the same with the NATO countries, so indirectly they are helping, but directly I don't think they're gonna get involved and I don't think the NATO Navy is not gonna actually come and try to confront Iran. So it

will be mostly, when it comes to the direct confrontation, US and Israel. But I think the US might be using the memorandum as a breathing space in order to reorganise, restock, and attack Iran again.

RY: When I was at Mosalla, where Sayyed Ali Khamenei was on display for three days at Mosalla, there were some chants of people who were commemorating Sayyed Ali who seemed to be critical and I mean, I don't understand Farsi, but when I asked certain people in my network, they said that these chants are not respectful towards Araghchi. You live in Iran, you've been here throughout all the US aggressions on Iran, at least since 2023. What is your sentiment towards the negotiation team? You mentioned their naivety. Do you believe that they are actually naïve? Or do you think that they're in a difficult position as well because Iran was not able to export gas through the Strait of Hormuz and this is not me building the case for Araghchi, but I'm curious for you as an Iranian and amongst Iranians that you interact with, what is your assessment about the negotiation team?

NZ: So I won't say my position as such, but I will tell you what the different arguments is. So you're right that the people who are on the streets and they're supporting the armed forces, they are very sceptical of the negotiations because of Iran's historical experience in the past eleven years, when after the JCPOA, so the nuclear deal that Iran reached with the US and the world powers, that was supposed to give Iran sanctions relief in exchange for the limits of the nuclear programme. The Obama administration that agreed to that deal, they didn't actually implement sanctions relief in an effective way. I mean, they returned some of Iran's money, there was some settlement money for another lawsuits that Iran had historically. They returned the money for that. They gave Iran money for that, that was their own money in a sense, also the frozen monies and so on. But when it came to sanctions relief, they were very ineffective. And then the Trump administration withdrew from the deal bombed Iran twice during the negotiations. So because of that experience, it's very legitimate for the Iranians to be sceptical. And so they think that people like Araghchi and Ghalibaf, who are major players in the Iran negotiating team, they are taking the wrong strategy. And some of them get a little bit harsher and they start cursing at Araghchi. But I haven't seen that too much. It's mostly what are you doing? Why are you negotiating with someone who has killed the leader and who is not trustworthy? And I think it's very legitimate for them to have those worries.

RY: And I think I've been hearing from a lot of people in Iran that it's quite certain that war will restart. Well, actually, war never ended. I mean, even throughout the ceasefire, there were skirmishes, there were bombings, there were attacks. My concern here is that momentum was on the side of Iran, at least from the point of view of the Strait of Hormuz being blocked for a significant amount of time, alternative routes were not set up properly. Do you feel like Iran's biggest card was chaos and the memorandum of understanding took away that chaos and in some way allowed the imperialist forces to redeploy themselves and rethink their strategy? And now Iran is possibly at a weaker position than it was at the height of the war.

NZ: So that is the argument from the people who are opposed to Araghchi or Ghalibaf strategy in negotiating and doing the memorandum and all that, and they're saying that we

had the leverage, we are the country that is used to sanctions, used to resistance, we could have actually taken this for longer. We could've fought a war of attrition, whereas the Americans or the Israelis were not able to fight a war of attrition because the Israelis are not used to resistance, even though, I mean, they have lived in a condition where they are attacked by Hezbollah, by Hamas, in retaliation for their occupation and apartheid, but they're still not used to living on their sanctioned economy. And so the idea was that they cannot sustain a war of attrition, and the Americans cannot sustain it either because they have to worry about what happens to the global economy. So for that reason, we should have fought longer. If we fought longer, we would have more leverage to the point that the US would not dare cheating on an agreement. So that's the argument. And yeah, that is the worry that the US will use as an opportunity to attack. And they are already doing it, like you're saying, that they violated the ceasefire, the memorandum. I mean, from their interpretation, it's that Iran is doing something naughty by launching drones at the ships. But if you read the memoranda, I think there's no real interpretive ambiguity that Iran is the one who will reopen the Strait under their condition. So in a way, it is the Americans that are violating the memorandum. But that is a worry. But then to the other argument, because I said there are two arguments; one is this argument that we should have fought for longer and there is no trust in the Americans. But the other arguments are, like you said, that Iran also needs this memorandum because they have to sell their oil. They cannot deal with this blockade of the blockade with the US blockading their passage through the Indian Ocean. So there was also that, that Iran also cannot afford the infrastructure, petrochemical industry, all the industries to be bombed and so this is mutually beneficial and then the idea is that negotiations and war are a package in a sense. And you have to negotiate as you're fighting. And I think that was kind of the Araghchi perspective. And honestly, I'm not on the ground. So I'm not fighting. I'm a diplomat. So I don't know the things that these people do. So I think we should also give them the benefit of the doubts, but also hold them accountable from somebody who's on the streets. We should give them a benefit of the doubts that there is a strategy being played out by the Iranian negotiating team and the leadership. But at the same time, we should also hold them accountable and also make sure that they're not doing this so that they can, say, get business contracts from multinational corporations. Because that will play to the benefit of the capital holding class here, but not to the people who are on the street. So the idea is that if you do negotiate, you have to actually develop the economy in a direction that doesn't benefit the say the Iranian capitalists and wealthy people for them to get contracts with foreign companies, rather that you bring money into the country that it can develop the infrastructure and help the middle classes.

RY: We were together at Enqelab Square along with some of your friends and I found it interesting that we kind of witnessed at a micro level this debate that is happening, I assume at a larger level within Iran, which is the struggle between reformists and I believe the word that we use in the West, hardliners, I don't know if that's the appropriate word.

NZ: I call them resistance.

RY: Resistance, I think that's much better. Do you believe that the negotiations and the dealings of Araghchi are pushing, are shifting people more towards the resistance point of view? I mean, you've mentioned that maybe Araghchi is pushed towards negotiations and implementing the Memorandum of Understanding due to the economic pressure. But if we look at the circumstances, it's not negotiations or a Memorandum of Understanding that will remove the blockade of the blockade. And we also know that Western countries started loosing, I mean, the United States was losing popular support, and Western countries were holding United States accountable for the increase of oil prices. There was no one else to blame. As much as the United States wanted to try to blame Iran for the oil crisis in the world, everything was escalated by the United States' unnecessary aggression of Iran. And now you're giving a lifeline to the West to now put the blame on Iran for the oil crisis, and by doing so, I believe that the Iranian people are probably holding Araghchi accountable for any loss of momentum. Are you seeing a shift of people to taking a more resistant stance within Iran?

NZ: No, definitely. So I think even beyond the people who come to the streets, like you mentioned, Revolution Square every night to show their support for the armed forces and for the resistance, even more generally in the country, I think there was a shift. Because before the war, the idea was that what did the resistance economy get us? And most were always saying that we are under sanctions, there is inflation, our car industry isn't great, we can't really manufacture domestic products that are of great quality with some exceptions. That was kind of the mentality.

RY: And was it all just paranoia too?

NZ: Why paranoia?

RY: I mean, in a sense where like, are we just investing in the military for no reason?

NZ: No, exactly.

RY: There's no actual threat.

NZ: So that was actually, I talk to a lot of people now, a lot my friends, who say that they used to make fun of the leader or the leadership and saying that, what are all these missiles for? Why are we spending so much on military? And even in relative terms, it's not even that much if you compare it to some other countries like the US. But at the same time, there was a mentality was that, yeah, the US is the one that attack us. What is this? Why are you doing all this stuff on America and the missiles and all that? But now they realised that it was necessary for defence. And the thing is, what I have to emphasise, just a quick tangent here, is that the mentality that you said death to America and death to Israel and that caused the war and that cause the sanctions is ludicrous because this has to do with the, one of the essential characteristics of imperialism, that it comes after countries that declare economic and political sovereignty. So the insolvency don't matter, being undiplomatic doesn't really matter. What matters is that the nature of the Iranian revolution that strives for political and

economic sovereignty, and when you have that, they come after you. And so those people are kind of shifting towards a resistance camp, because they're realising that after the war, they're realising that the resistance approach made sense, and also it got Iran advantages. Because if you're a country like the UAE, we saw that Dubai, fell apart in a matter of a couple of weeks, and you saw the white residents leaving, the capital fleeing. I mean, some of it apparently is going back to normal now with the memorandum. But then the collapse could be very quick if it's sustained, if the war is sustained, whereas when you're an independent country that have, you know, your own resources, your own production, your own industries, your missiles, you can stand on your own feet, even when the powers leave you alone, basically abandon you. So people are changing their minds for sure, but another problem is that once we had the memorandum and the ceasefire people again started being like, oh, why we're resisting? But when there is war, the spirits go higher and they can appreciate the resistance. So it's kind of contextual, but I would say yes the experience of the war, the 12-day war and especially this war have made Iranians more accepting of the leadership's policies of resistance.

RY: Now, it seems like there is a new reality. The Memorandum of Understanding is cancelled through the words of Trump. But there's no large-scale, high-intensity bombings, at least in Tehran, as there were during the 2nd of March and June. How do you kind of see the situation evolving over time? Is this more going to be a war of attrition where Hormuz is no longer open or closed? Is it gonna be occasional bombings like the United States have kind of been doing over the last few days? Iran seems to have bombed US military bases in Kuwait and Saudi Arabia. What's the new normal? And how is that new normal going to impact Iran?

NZ: Yeah, you really ask a hard question. And I had predictions, because what if I was wrong? But one scenario is what we talked about, that the memorandum is just another trick for the US and Israel to reorganise and conduct another large-scale attack on Iran, like they did in March and April, possibly even a ground invasion through the Persian Gulf islands. But I think that's the less likely scenario. I think the more likely scenario is this kind of a sporadic warfare where the US bombs something, Iran retaliates and tries to escalate, and the US backs off, but then it happens again a couple of weeks later, and Israel might come and try to assassinate some of our scientists and leaders again, and Iran will retaliate again. So I think it will be this kind of...

RY: No war, no peace.

NZ: No war, no peace with occasional strikes on both sides. That's kind of the scenario that I see developed. And it might be that because of the oil shortages, the US might extend the oil sanctions waiver on Iran for longer, but I don't really foresee any comprehensive sanctions relief, whether it's the primary or the secondary sanctions. I don't think that's really in the horizons, especially with the Trump administration. Something might happen once Trump is out of office. But I don't really see a major shift in American policy, especially because of the Zionist lobby. But in the long term, once the Zionist lobbies weaken and there's kind of more Zionist opposition that's already growing within the Generation Z and the younger people in

the US, and once the US withdraw support from Israel, then I could see a major shift. But for now, I think there's no war, no peace with occasional strikes will continue for some months.

RY: The United States failed at its objectives of, quote unquote, "regime change". They had their own little proxies in the Pahlavist opposition within Tehran, within Iran in general. The Kurdish area of Iran doesn't seem very eager to secede or to escalate or to oppose the state, at least not at a significant scale. But I'm hearing that Balochistan could be the next ground for the United States to put pressure on Iran and specifically for the strategic place of where Balochistan is located, it encroaches into the Strait of Hormuz.

NZ: I mean, but Balochistan, I don't really see, because I don't think they have that level of organisation to overthrow the central Iranian state. I mean we saw what happened in January, you had riots organised by the US and Israel, assisted by the US in Israel, all over the country, that was probably the largest unrest since the 1979 revolution. And it was much more chaotic, because at least with the 79 Revolution, you had a lot of peaceful rallies and processions during the day that were happening. But in this case, this was at night, they had machetes, some of them were armed, it was much chaotic, much more spontaneous. Part of it was, in a way, assisted by the US and Israel, but it was spontaneous, in the sense that you didn't have, say, organised processions or rallies. It was more kind of, you know, like they wanted to fight and create chaos and break things and destroy public property and that didn't overthrow the state. So I don't really foresee a Baloch fighting force, whether it's mobilised from Pakistan or inside Iran, doing something. And I don't think the Pakistani Baloch liberation army, I don't think they're interested in overthrowing Iran and the state..

RY: Not the state but to secede.

NZ: Oh, to secede? Okay. No, even that, I don't really foresee it as a real possibility. I think the biggest card for the Americans were the Kurds, and Trump admitted it. He said that they armed the Kurds. But that didn't get anywhere. So I don't really see the Baloch thing getting further. I mean I think that the Baloch are more likely to secede from Pakistan or create chaos in Pakistan. But I don't see it happening in Iran. I think that their biggest card were Kurds and that didn't really go anywhere because I mean for two reasons. One is that I think the Iraqi Kurds, so the Erbil positions were bombed by Iran because the Iraqi Kurdistan some of them are allied with the US and Israel and that was bombed. So Iran in a way prevented them from coming into Iran. But also Iranian Kurds the ones that are inside Iran, most of them are nationalistic. They have kind of this identity as being more an Iranian and loving the Iranian nation. Yeah, so I don't think they're gonna try to secede either or overthrow the central state. So yeah, I don't really see the separatist thing being too effective unless the central estate falls and that didn't happen either. They tried everything and that did not happen. But if the central states falls, then yes, there's a possibility that there would be secession and these ethnicity separating. But I don't think that's a big possibility either at the moment. But you never know. You never know what happens in the future. So you were here for the funeral procession and you were hear while the US attacked Iran this week. Fortunately, you're safe. They didn't attack Tehran. So what has been your experience?

RY: Well, I think as Westerners, we're exposed to insane propaganda every day about Iran. First of all, when we look at the coverage in Western media, I truly did not expect, first of all to see this many people honouring Sayyed Ali Khamenei. Of course, I came here to honour him myself as in many ways one of the most important leaders behind the Axis of Resistance. I believe that in Lebanon, in Palestine, many places where I've been, there's a lot of support for Sayyed Ali Khamenei and honour his contributions for the cause of justice, not just in the Middle East, but all over the world. And I remember being on the way to Azadi Square on this big boulevard, and we were on the top of some building, and I've seen a crowd of people that I've never seen in my entire life, to a point where it's impossible to tell the difference between two, three million people all on one boulevard and keep in mind that there's four arteries that lead to Azadi Square that were all filled with people. So I remember seeing this and remembering that there is popular support for the Islamic Revolution. And also, just walking around with you through the streets, you were telling me some amazing stories about the social welfare in Iran. You mentioned the food vouchers that all Iranians get that is able to get them free food. I mean, at least help them.

NZ: It's not much, but it helps.

RY: But it helps, as well as the free metro system. You just press a button at the gate of the metro and you get free public transit that allows you to basically navigate around the city quite easily.

NZ: And it was made free after the war.

RY: But I assume they'll keep it around for quite some time.

NZ: I hope so.

RY: And that just shows a bit that actually in many ways, and this is the conclusion I'm coming to today, that Iran is the single most progressive country in the entire world.

NZ: Even if you say that to some of the Canadian liberals, they will.

RY: But the Canadian liberals, they'll say that Canada and the United States are more progressive because they are based themselves on individual freedoms and the individual freedom to commit genocide. But for me, progressive value has a hierarchy of necessities. And the first one is opposing genocide. You cannot consider yourself a progressive and not materially take any actions to put an end to genocide. Iran is the only state, along with Yemen to oppose the genocide and of course the southern Lebanese people through Hezbollah.

NZ: No, but I mean, I don't think it's even the individual freedom to commit genocide, it's basically the idea that our individual freedoms and liberties get priority over community. But we have the collective right to commit genocide...

RY: Exactly. So that's what I meant, right? It's like you you can identify however you want, and is that a form of progressive value? I mean maybe for the Western liberal mind, but at the

end of the day in Iran you can oppose genocide materially, you can contribute to putting an end to the genocide, which I believe is the single obligation of anyone who deems call themselves progressives. And then you tell me about the food voucher programme. I took the metro system and it's entirely free for everyone. I believe this really shifted my mind that Iran is a country that is despite all the challenges, despite the aggression, despite these sanctions, is revolutionary at its core. And I've been to Cuba and truly, I apologise to my Cuban friends, but I truly sense a larger revolutionary spirit in Iran than I have in Cuba and China.

NZ: Wow, very interesting. And then as a Palestinian, how do you kind of assess the Iranian support for Palestine? You mentioned that it's very material, material support, which I think is very true. But there's this kind of cynicism within the liberals and even the left in a place like Canada, even including the Canadians of Arab origin, that, oh, they're just doing it for themselves and it's self-interested, blah, blah. So what's your response to that?

RY: Well, my response to them is, what are they doing to support the liberation of Palestine? I mean, it's very easy to be quick and criticise the Iranians.

NZ: They sign letters.

RY: They sign letters, they sign petitions, they lift watermelons because they're scared of waving the Palestinian flag. Okay, so I always take this form of criticism, I don't really pay any much attention to it.

NZ: Iran is paying a huge cost in terms of sanctions, in terms of getting attacked. So it's not just this kind of...

RY: The highest officials of this country were elevated to the status of martyrs. I believe Iran is selfless and I believe that Iran could have picked a path of submission or let's just say relative indifference to Palestine which would have absolved it from all of these sanctions. The Iranian constitution obliges the government to contribute a budget line to the liberation of Palestine. We are in this same embassy that was taken over by students during the Iranian revolution, ten months after the Iranian Revolution, and they've released the African-American staff that was working here in this embassy. Iran is following deep revolutionary principles. Their principles come from both the Quran and through revolutionary theorists, like Shariati, Frantz Fanon, amongst many other academics. Sayyed Ali Khamenei was one of the most well-read individuals of our lifetimes. So I believe that Iran is following very, very thoughtful principles. And in many ways, I believe that one of the benefits that Iran has in supporting Palestine so strongly is that it's exporting an idea that I relate to and that is the idea of the legacy of Imam Hussain and the battle of Tarbela. And if all they get from me is an appreciation of Imam Hussein and the of Tarbela, then I believe that Iran has given way more to the Palestinians than what we will ever be able to give back to them. And I believe that the teachings of Iran should be absorbed and beloved by everyone who deeply supports Palestine. And you'll never truly deeply understand Palestine without understanding why the only people in the world, the reason behind why the only people resisting the world Palestine are doing it. And I've discovered that those intentions while

travelling in the south of Lebanon, in Iraq, in Iran, that Iranian people are truly just following the footsteps of their own Imams.

NZ: Very good.

RY: And you as someone who lived in the United States, what pushed you to come back to Iran? You told me a bit about your upbringing being from a family that opposed the Islamic Revolution.

NZ: So essentially for me, I mean, the kind of the immediate reason was I was teaching in Pakistan. I was an assistant professor there and I knew the war was coming. And that was one of the reasons that I came back. And my position was that it's easy to take these radical positions from the imperialist core, from the core countries like the US and Canada, and be radical there and wave the flag and the watermelon. And I mean, it does have a cost. It does have a cost.

RY: Radical, but still within boundaries.

NZ: Yeah, exactly, within boundaries. So one problem is that if you are, say, a professor in a Canadian university, you can only say so much. You might be able to hang a watermelon in your office, but that's kind of the extent of it. You can't really speak your mind too freely. So there is that. But in addition to the kind of performative and aesthetic radicalism that I didn't like, it is also the issue that you're not paying a big cost there. You're living comfortably. You have your Netflix, you have your lack of inflation, maybe 4% or 5%, but here you're dealing with, say, 40%, 50%. You hear bombs. You hear the fighter jets. And in a sense, you are paying a cost here. And my position was that if I'm advocating for these anti-colonial positions, I shouldn't just be in the comfort of the US or Canada. I should actually be where people are paying a cost. So that was one. But the other reason was the historical agency, because the Iranians, not just the people who are fighting or the diplomats, but the people who are on the streets, the historians, the journalists, the people are documenting, they're in a way agents, they're agents of history, they have historical agency, and in a way they're fighting in a decolonial war with agency. And I think this is a very important historical moment, because I believe that this is probably the biggest decolonial war of the 21st century. It's probably one of the most important moments of the 21st century. And just being here and participating, like yourself, even coming for a week, I think it has so much value, both historically and also morally.

RY: Navid, it was a great pleasure to interview you here, especially in the exact location of the former US embassy, the Den of Espionage, and hopefully to many more former embassies around the world.

END

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