Ep. 32: Is the war really about Iran – or about China? | Zineb Riboua

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Is Operation Epic Fury a regional conflict, or a testing ground for a new global order?

In this episode of Mideast Horizons, hosts Asher Fredman and Lahav Harkov are joined by Zineb Riboua to discuss the hidden layers of Operation Epic Fury and its role in U.S.-China global competition.

Zineb, a Research Fellow at the Hudson Institute, reveals how Beijing has helped build Iran's missile arsenal and mass surveillance systems, and used the Islamic Republic as a "laboratory" to test financial channels designed to bypass Western sanctions. She also discusses how the Iran war can help shape an Abraham Accords 2.0, and the unique role that Morocco can play.

In the first segment, Asher and Lahav break down the strategic significance of the strike on Ali Larijani, who served as a crucial bridge between Iran's military and political leadership, discuss a potential ground operation in Lebanon, and address the bizarre wave of online conspiracy theories, including claims that Prime Minister Netanyahu has been replaced by AI.

Key Topics Discussed:

- The China Connection: Why China views Iran as a strategic partner and shield.
- The Indo-Pacific Pivot: How a successful operation against Iran could finally allow the U.S. to focus its resources on Beijing.
- "Third-Worldism" & Propaganda: Why anti-Western ideologies are becoming more attractive in the West than in the Middle East.
- Abraham Accords 2.0: Deepening coordination between Israel and Arab states.
- Regional Deradicalization: Utilizing the Moroccan model of deradicalization to reshape the future of Gaza.
- Lebanon on the Brink: The potential for a broader ground invasion against

Hezbollah.

- The Sahel “Black Swan”: The overlooked threat of Al-Qaeda’s expansion in West Africa and its implications for the West.

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