

What Trump's Blockade Says About American Power

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Once upon a time, Indian Ocean was famously called Mare Liberum, meaning a 'Free Sea' in Latin. It referred to a golden age of commercial freedom, when Indian Ocean was a true global commons. International trade was free, not governed by any state. Merchants of Arabia, Persia, India, and China rode the monsoon winds to form a cosmopolitan global economy. But one day in 1507, a Portuguese admiral named Afonso de Albuquerque, seized the tiny Strait of Hormuz with naval guns, and turned a free port into a toll paying gate. In search of 'Christians and spices', Portugal then muscled in to break a 'system of natural liberty' with its military, grabbing markets through murder and marauding, gaining monopoly control of Indian Ocean.

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