

Iran War Round 3: Tehran Prepares Knock-Out Blow | Prof. S.M. Marandi

While the US lives in fantasy world about the Strait of Hormuz, Tehran has been busy preparing for the next phase of the war, which doubtlessly the US will restart once more. Since there is no diplomatic solution, Tehran is coming around to the conclusion that with the next battle, a decisive military change in the region must occur—in the US satellites. Prof. Seyed Mohammad Marandi joins me to discuss daily life in Tehran, Iran's trade routes under blockade, the risk of renewed US attacks, Saudi Arabia's position, missile strategy, and relations with Gulf states. He argues that Iran seeks to remove regional threats rather than spread instability, and recommends books for understanding Iran. Links: Seyed Mohammad Marandi on X: https://x.com/s_m_marandi Neutrality Studies substack: <https://pascallottaz.substack.com> Merch: <https://neutralitystudies.com/shop> Donation: <https://neutralitystudies.com/donate> Timestamps: 00:00:00 Tehran after the bombing 00:04:18 Iran's trade routes and the blockade 00:11:39 Risk of a renewed US war 00:20:28 Saudi-Pakistan-Türkiye agreement 00:24:03 Could Saudi Arabia become unstable? 00:28:18 Iran's missile strategy and US bases 00:38:07 Iran's security approach and Gulf states 00:47:20 Where to follow Marandi and read more

#Pascal

Welcome back, everybody, to Neutrality Studies today for an update with the always brilliant Professor Saeed Mohammad Marandi. Professor Marandi, welcome back. Thank you very much for inviting me. A great pleasure. Well, thank you very much for actually discussing again with us the situation in your hometown of Tehran, or the general situation of what's going on. We are currently in a kind of a weird phase. It's kind of not peace, but no more bombing, right? Can you maybe describe a bit the situation on this August the 13th?

#Marandi

Yes, for the time being at least. Excuse me. For the time being, at least, that's what is going on. There's, of course, a siege going on. The Americans have blocked all Iranian ports, which is an act of war itself. But there's no bombing, and life is normal in Tehran and across the country. If you come to Tehran and walk on the streets or take a bus or a taxi or take the metro, it'll seem very normal. You probably would not see any destroyed buildings because Tehran is huge. And in any case, most of those buildings have been torn down and they're being rebuilt. So you probably wouldn't see them anyway. But while businesses are active and restaurants are full and shops are full of people doing shopping, if you ask shop owners or businesses, I would assume that most of them would say business is not very good.

Inflation is pretty high. And the economic situation is more difficult than it was half a year ago, for obvious reasons. One is the siege, the sanctions, of course, that the collective West have imposed on Iran for many, many, many years, and the fact that the United States and the Israeli regime did bomb critical infrastructure. They bombed Iran's steel industry. They bombed petrochemical plants. They bombed Iran's natural gas production facilities. And, of course, they bombed homes and apartment blocks and brought down many apartment buildings. Let's say a 15-minute, 20-minute walk from here, there's an apartment building that was completely destroyed in an airstrike. They destroyed the whole building, I assume seeking a person.

Apparently, I'm not quite sure, but apparently the former foreign minister lived there. They killed him and his wife, but also the entire building was destroyed and neighbors were killed. So, you know, the damage is extensive. Hospitals, multiple hospitals, were destroyed or damaged. In the latest attacks, a children's cancer hospital in the city of Ahvaz was attacked and had to be emptied. So there's a lot of damage. And yet, if you walk around, you won't notice any of it. It looks just like any normal city, Tehran. In fact, if you come to Tehran, it's a very nice city. They take the trash every night, the city does. It's clean. It's pretty advanced. It's not Shanghai, but among cities that I've visited across the world, it's one of the better ones. So despite all the sanctions and war and everything.

#Pascal

So, and how is the situation now developing with the non-West, like the trade relations with China and the relationship with Russia, now that Iran has withstood half a year of this warfare? And as you put it, the United States seems to believe that you can put an entire country under siege now with a blockade, a naval blockade. But there are, of course, trade links. And we've seen the Americans have been trying to smash also your land trade links with your railways and your road infrastructure. They seem to have the idea that if you can just strangle long and hard enough, in the end Iran will crack and break. It seems to me they are now settling in for a long war, a long siege. How is that developing, and is Iran able to keep its trade relationship with the non-West going?

#Marandi

Yes, well, the Americans tried that already. After the 40 days of fighting, where it began with Trump demanding unconditional surrender and ultimately failing, and he had to accept the Iranian 14-point plan as the framework for negotiations, a new brilliant idea came to his mind, and that was siege warfare. And he carried that out for more than two months. And it didn't work. And it was leading the globe towards disaster. So he accepted the MOU, the Memorandum of Understanding. And he justified it by saying that, "I don't want to be a Herbert Hoover." In other words, "I don't want to preside over another economic depression." So the siege warfare didn't work well then, and I don't think it's going to work well for the United States now either. Iran, just as it outlasted Trump back then, it'll outlast him now. I think the result of this war actually has been that Iran is diversifying its trade routes.

It's stressing on developing its routes to Central Asia, to China. In other words, Iran is appreciating even more than before the Belt and Road Initiative. So trade routes to Pakistan, or through Pakistan, through Afghanistan, but also to Pakistan and Afghanistan, are being developed. Central Asia, of course, the Caspian Sea, Caucasus, and of course Turkey and Iraq. So Iran has many land routes that it can use, and it's now trying to develop them further and as fast as possible to compensate for the problems. Of course, the problems will continue to exist, and they will bite. But Iran has been dealing with maximum pressure sanctions from the West, as I said before, for many years now. So there have been long periods when Iran effectively wasn't able to export oil. So it's not as if this is a completely unprecedented situation.

#Pascal

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#Marandi

On the other hand, the Strait of Hormuz is closed for the most part. Very few ships pass through, and that, of course, is making the global economic situation worse. What Trump was worried about last time when he signed the MOU is what he should be, and probably is, worrying about today as well. So not only are crude shortages growing, especially now that Saudi Arabia has provoked Yemen and has started a war with Yemen, and Yemen is also imposing a siege on Saudi Arabia because the Saudis have imposed a siege on Yemen for many years. Now Yemen is returning the favor. So the Bab al-Mandab Strait is closed to Saudi oil. So the oil installations, its tankers, are being targeted by Yemen.

And with the situation in the Strait of Hormuz as it is now, the crude shortage is growing, but also the shortages for all sorts of goods are accumulating: sulfur, helium, all sorts of different petrochemicals, LNG. And basically, the global economy is in need of all sorts of supplies from the Persian Gulf region, and they're just not available anymore. The fertilizers, which some are saying will create starvation in parts of the world in the coming year, God forbid—these are all getting worse by the day. So the United States, by imposing this siege on Iran, is imposing a siege on the world, just as it did a couple of months ago.

So we'll have to see how that plays out. But the difference between Iran and the United States is that the Iranians are fighting for their survival. This is a war that was imposed upon them, and they've seen the intentions of the United States. When Trump speaks about exterminating the Iranian nation, the Iranians look and see what the Israeli regime and the Americans are doing in

Gaza, how they're exterminating Palestinians. And they know that if they show weakness, these two regimes or the Zionist lobby in the United States will destroy and decimate Iran. So the resilience of the Iranian people is extraordinary.

And it is so also because of their cultural background, their culture, their civilizational heritage, their particular religious ideology as Shia Muslims. This has made them very resilient, and we've seen that in the funeral, how the people were united, how they came together. On the other hand, for the Americans, this is a war of choice, and Americans are opposed to this war, and it's not being waged for the American people. And so I don't see how the United States is going to be able to—how the American people are going to tolerate the difficulties that lie ahead because of the shortages and remain indifferent. So I think it's very clear that time is not on the side of Trump and that he's not going to win this war.

#Pascal

It's good that you're mentioning that because it seems to me that right now the U.S. seems to, you know, shift towards—well, the siege seems to shift toward a long war because shock and awe definitely failed. Regime change, a quick one, failed. Even the idea of, like, reviving the warfare failed. However, the situation, how it is at the moment, doesn't prevent the United States from sporadically doing another bombing campaign or whatnot. It doesn't prevent the United States from threatening an invasion and doing sporadic troop buildup. And it doesn't prevent the United States from trying to cause as much economic hurt to Iran as possible. And if we look at this, it seems to start to resemble the way that they approached Assad in Syria.

And, you know, it took them 10 years. But after 10 years, they won with the help of their allies in the region, especially Turkey. And now, just about 10 days ago, we saw how Turkey, Saudi Arabia, and Pakistan are forming something that people call an alliance, although I don't really think it is anything close to NATO. But if anything, it might signal the beginning of the outsourcing, right? The Americans love to outsource their wars. They love other people to implement their foreign policy for them, especially when it hurts everybody in the region except for Israel, right? But this strategy seems to be forming again. What do you make of it? And what do you think is Iran's approach toward it?

#Marandi

Well, there are a number of things here. One is, you're right that the Americans may actually begin striking Iran again. American forces in Saudi Arabia, in Jordan, in Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, and the UAE, they've gathered, they're prepared, and the Iranians have noticed that over the past few weeks, the United States has become more prepared for some sort of operation and some sort of war against Iran. And some believe it could last between 10 days and two weeks. It's unclear. It doesn't mean it's going to happen, but the way in which they've arranged their forces in these countries and, of course, their naval assets seems to indicate that they're prepared for something

that may last 10 days or two weeks. Now, the Americans, as we've read and as we've heard, have huge shortages. And that, if it's true, is quite baffling because if they launch a war against Iran, the Iranians don't have those shortages.

#Marandi

As we speak, the Iranians are...

#Marandi

Producing missiles and drones in their underground factories, and the underground bases across the country are expanding. So Iran is prepared for carrying out heavy missile strikes for a very long period of time. And so if the Americans finish, you know, if their air defenses are emptied and they're finished, the Iranians will continue firing. So some believe that perhaps the United States will not carry out an assault because this is what they're fearful of. But even if the Americans did not have these shortages, in my opinion at least, a war against Iran would be foolish because during the 48-day war, they weren't particularly concerned, at least in public, about shortages. But they failed ultimately.

And now we see that ever since Iran began firing missiles at the Israeli regime in retaliation for its atrocities a couple of years ago, Iran has consistently been getting better at warfare using missiles and drones. And in the 12-day war, that's basically what led them to victory. But during the 40-day war, even though the American forces were much larger than what existed in the 12-day war, Iran performed better in the 40-day war than in the 12-day war. And then after Trump effectively tore up the memorandum of understanding and violated all of its articles, literally from day one, and then restarted the war, the Iranians performed even better than during the 40-day war on the battlefield.

Iran's missiles have become very precise, and the drones and the missiles have caused devastation across the region during those 13 days, when ultimately the United States stopped firing, and the Iranians continued to strike the United States for a few more days. So I think that if the United States restarts the war, it's not going to end well for them. And that's why I personally think it's not logical for them to do so. But then again, it's Trump, and you can never use logic to calculate how Trump is going to behave in the future. Now, with regards to outsourcing, the United States has been very quiet about this agreement between Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, and Turkey.

And it comes at a very interesting time, let's say, because they didn't create this agreement, this partnership or this alliance or this agreement, when the genocide in Gaza began. They didn't even begin it when Israel was invading and taking over parts of southern Syria or southern Lebanon, or when the United States was waging war against Yemen, or when the Saudis were helping the United States and the Israelis wage war against Iran, because U.S. tanker planes would fly from Saudi Arabia to refuel Israeli jets and American jets. So the Saudis were assisting both the Israelis and the Americans against Iran, and they continue to do so as we speak. So it wasn't for that.

So one can assume that it is probably, at least in the case of the Saudis, because I believe that the Saudis, the Pakistanis, and Erdogan have differing views. But I think in the case of Saudi Arabia, it has more to do with Yemen. It has more to do with Iraq and the situation that it has created for itself by attacking the airport in Sana'a, the capital of Yemen. And then we saw the Yemeni retaliation, which was quite devastating. And Saudi Arabia is very vulnerable. And of course, then the Saudis bombed Iraq, and then the Iraqis said they're going to retaliate. So I think for the Saudis, it's quite clear that this has to do with Yemen, Iraq, and perhaps Iran. But that's not something that the Turks and the Pakistanis are interested in. Pakistan has had this sort of relationship with Saudi Arabia for many years.

And there's a very strong financial element to it for Pakistan. Pakistan has many difficulties, financial difficulties, economic difficulties. It has internal problems. The former prime minister was removed and arrested. They have serious problems with Afghanistan and, of course, with India. So Pakistan faces many challenges. Turkey, on the other hand, they want to expand their influence, but they also want to sell weapons to Saudi Arabia. I mean, there are multiple reasons, but at the end of the day, these three countries are not going to be a trilateral alliance against the neighboring countries. And without a doubt, it's not targeting the Israeli regime, even though some would like to think that way. But that's not the case. Otherwise, the United States—there would have been a lot of noise coming out of Washington in this regard.

#Pascal

No, my interpretation is also that this is probably more of a trade and military trade agreement than a proper alliance because, interestingly, they actually never published the text of their document. Right. They keep saying, yeah, we did this, but none of them published the actual text. So you would also agree that Iran doesn't really see this as a game changer in the region? Or did you hear voices that say this will impact Iran's strategy towards the GCC?

#Marandi

No, no, it won't. It won't impact Iran. And Iran's relationship with Turkey and its relationship with Pakistan is just as it was six months ago, eight months ago, ten months ago. And its relationship with Turkey is poor, just as it has traditionally been for the last few years. Ironically, Mohammed bin Salman, in some respects, could have been much better for Iran because he doesn't promote Wahhabism and the Takfiri ideology of the Salafists and the Wahhabis. And that has always been a good thing, because Saudi Arabia has been promoting them more than anyone else over the past few decades. In more recent years, Qatar has been doing a lot of the funding, and Erdogan and Qatar have been working together to use ISIS and Al-Qaeda and other such groups.

So the fact that that funding for these groups has died down in Saudi Arabia has been a good thing. But the problem with Mohammed bin Salman is that he's sort of like Trump. And, you know, we recall he beat up—he physically punished—the former Lebanese prime minister, Hariri, and sort of

kept him hostage in Saudi Arabia for a while as he was prime minister of Lebanon. You know, what he did to Jamal Khashoggi was quite outrageous—the way in which he was killed, the place in which he was killed. And the genocidal war in Yemen, the Saudis, where they starved the country, they did what the Israelis would do to Gaza: bomb weddings, bomb school buses and funerals.

I think there was a funeral where they bombed and killed hundreds of people just in one airstrike. And, you know, they starved the country. They blocked the Red Sea to food and medicine with the help of the other regional countries and the Americans and the West. They would prevent—they would dump medicine in the sea, medicine that was coming in, you know, people were trying to smuggle into the country. So, and then they besieged Qatar along with the Emirates. And that divided the Arabian Peninsula and created a lot of difficulty. So he hasn't been a very wise leader, to say the least. But for Iran, that was always a plus, that he wasn't supporting these groups for his own reasons.

#Pascal

Yeah, you know, Saudi Arabia and bin Salman might not be as firmly in the saddle as it might look. I mean, after all, he has about 2,000 or so family members who are all also kind of, would be potentially eligible for his position. And he needed to use force in the past in order to extort them and to put himself in power, and to also get rid of his cousin, basically, who was in the line of succession. Do you think that Iran is also looking at that? And overall, is your assessment that Iran currently would rather stick with the devil they know? Or do you think that a potentially shaky Saudi Arabia, or political turmoil in Saudi Arabia, might be rather beneficial for Iran?

#Marandi

No, I don't think Iran wants an unstable Saudi Arabia, because then you may see those very same Wahhabis and Takfiris come to power. But Saudi Arabia is in a lot of trouble. First of all, Saudi Arabia is not like Qatar and the Emirates. These two are not real countries. Qatar has a population of 350,000. The Emirates has a population of 1 million. The foreigners or the non-citizens who have been working in these countries—I don't know the numbers now after the war—but they are much larger. There are, you know, I think like maybe almost 10 million foreigners in the Emirates, or non-Emiratis, working there until before the war.

And in Qatar, it's similar. A much larger population than the citizens of Qatar are working there, or were working there at least. But they have a lot of oil and gas wealth. Saudi Arabia has a lot of oil wealth, but the population is much, much larger, and the country is much larger. And the Saudis have made many foolish mistakes. One, of course, is the fact that so many princes have been taking money from the country's resources. I mean, they've been taking wealth from the country's budget, from its oil wealth. They've spent hundreds of billions of dollars on the genocidal war against Yemen.

And Mohammed bin Salman has also invested a lot of money in these mega projects that have not been going well. Some of them are either canceled or almost canceled, like The Line. So Saudi Arabia's financial situation isn't all that great, as it consumes a huge amount of money. So it spends a lot, but it's not making a lot of money. And therefore, since it has spent a lot of its wealth fighting wars and doing the things that I explained, it's not in an ideal situation if this blockade in the Red Sea and then the Strait of Hormuz continues for a very long time. It could lead to instability at home.

Especially as you said, there are so many family members who are probably dissatisfied, especially with the way in which he treated family members near the beginning of his rule, imprisoning them in the Ritz and beating them and taking their wealth. But Iran doesn't want instability in Saudi Arabia. Saudi Arabia is a country which, if it falls apart, could become like Libya because it's not like Yemen or it's not like Egypt or Iraq, where it's a civilization. These are ancient civilizations. It's a construct. And so if there's instability, I mean, the country is named after a family. So if it begins to fall apart, it could go south very quickly and it could be very bad.

#Pascal

So overall, Iran's approach, you would say, is rather one of not trying to create further instability in the region. But then what would you say is the long-term strategy in order to counter the pressure that the United States is trying to keep piling on, that the Europeans are helping with? And one thing that I've been wondering for a long time: why is it that Iran seems not to be developing long-range ballistic missiles or even ICBMs? You know, at the beginning of the war, there was this talk whether Iran managed to hit Diego Garcia, which turned out to be fake news. That just didn't happen. But it's a question, like, why is Iran not trying to create the weapons in order to strike the United States where it hurts them even more? I mean, if Iran was able to strike Diego Garcia, that would actually change the game again.

#Marandi

Well, if Iran wants to strike Diego Garcia, they can do it. They have the technological capability to create missiles to do that, even though it was fake news, as you rightly pointed out. I think that Iran feels that its capabilities are adequate to protect itself, and we've seen that. It's defeated the world's superpower. This is an unprecedented event, a defeat for the United States. Robert Kagan said it's the worst defeat ever, and that was before the United States returned to war after the MOU and made things even worse for itself. And the war is still ongoing. So I think Iran's capabilities are quite adequate. And I know that the Iranians were not building missiles with a longer range because they didn't want to increase tensions.

So Iran has actually been the country that has been the adult in the room, unlike the Americans and the Europeans. In order for the Europeans not to be provoked, the Iranians, Ayatollah Khamenei, put a cap on the range of missiles. But Europe is weak. It's obedient to the United States. Of course,

it's not a threat to Iran because it's just incapable of anything. And it's becoming increasingly irrelevant. For Iran, Europe is almost completely irrelevant now. I mean, the decline of Europe is quite extraordinary. We speak about the decline of the U.S. empire, but the decline of Europe, I think, is taking place much faster than that of the United States. I recall in 2003, when the UN Security Council was debating the war on Iraq, and the French, they were steadfast in opposing the war.

That era has long passed. It seems like a hundred years ago now. So now we see the Europeans basically destroying themselves for the sake of the Americans, whether it's in Ukraine or whether it's with regards to Iran. I mean, it's very interesting that when I was in Vienna when the war in Ukraine began, and I was a part of the nuclear negotiating team, I was a media advisor, just as I was when the JCPOA was signed. And I was speaking to European intellectuals, journalists, elites every day. They would ask to see me. We'd go have coffee or go walk together, talk together. And I would say, look, you need Iranian energy. This war in Ukraine is going to last a long time, and so you need to cut a deal. And I said that a European winter is approaching.

Without Russian energy, you're not competitive. I said this to some very well-known journalists and very well-known media outlets. And almost every single one—I can't say every single one; I don't remember anyone saying anything different, but just to be on the safe side, I'll say almost every single one of them—said, "No, of course not. Russia will lose this war within weeks, and President Putin," or they'd say, "Putin," "would be out." And I would say to them, "You know, you haven't been able to overthrow Cuba. Back then, they hadn't overthrown Venezuela or Syria. So I said, Syria—you haven't been able to overthrow Syria or Venezuela or Cuba. How are you going to do this to Russia?" And they were, you know... they were confident. Well, now they didn't. So they didn't, ultimately.

And ultimately, we had a text, and the Americans did not agree to it. The Europeans agreed to the text with Iran on a nuclear deal. And Joseph Borrell, the foreign policy chief, said the Iranian demands are reasonable, and hopefully the Americans will accept. And they didn't. And so the Americans wrecked their relationship with Russia, and they prevented them from being able to use Iranian energy. And look at Europe today. But in any case, Iran, in order to prevent the relationship with European countries from deteriorating further, they put a cap on the range. But the range is enough for Iran's needs because Iran's needs are to strike back at the United States across the region. What Iran wants is the U.S. to leave, U.S. bases to leave the region, to be evacuated.

And Iran doesn't care if Saudi Arabia or the Emirates or Kuwait have the best of relations with the United States. And they do all their trade with America. But Iran doesn't want any bases there, anywhere near it. And so that is Iran's top priority. And we've seen that Iran has effectively done that. Almost all U.S. bases are now destroyed around Iran. And so, although it's unclear what will happen in the months and years ahead, Iran's primary objective is to make sure that it's no longer a threat. And sadly, Saudi Arabia and these other countries, they've been a part of the war. Otherwise, Iran did not start the war. Iran did not escalate the war. But these countries, not only have these

countries facilitated the war against Iran, but this is something that I don't know if you or your audience knows.

They funded the war. It's not as if the United States went and rented these bases. These bases that they have in these countries are all... I don't know about Jordan. Jordan doesn't have much. But in all these countries in the Persian Gulf, these bases are there not just for free. The host countries pay for the expenses on these bases. And so during the war, the expenses increased. And so Saudi Arabia has been paying the United States to help it kill Iranians, not just facilitating, not just being an air force base for the United States so that U.S. and Israeli jets could be refueled to bomb Iran, but also the Saudis have been providing them with the jet fuel and helping them with other expenses.

So a significant part of the burden is on the shoulders of these regimes, and it's also costly, too. This is one of the problems that Saudi Arabia is facing, among the other problems that I explained earlier. So Iran does not have a problem with any of these countries. Remember, when Saddam Hussein invaded Iran at the behest of the United States, the Soviet Union also supported him, but the West supported him. And the West encouraged the war. And they gave him everything, including chemical weapons. I survived two chemical attacks. Well, these same Arab regimes that are now helping the United States attack Iran gave Saddam Hussein hundreds of billions of dollars, especially the Saudis.

And yet, after Saddam invaded Kuwait, these countries wanted rapprochement with Iran, and Iran accepted. And the crown prince at that time, Abdullah, he came to Tehran, and he met the president, and he met the leader at that time. He took part in an Islamic Conference for the Heads of State of Muslim Countries, and the relationship improved for many years. So Iran forgave them then, and I don't think that Iran would be unwilling to close this chapter again if they change their posture. But as things stand, the tensions will continue. And I believe that there's a possibility that these regimes in the Arabian Peninsula will collapse if this continues for long.

#Pascal

Yeah, so it's good that we are getting there, because I would really love to understand that one better. Because on the one hand, it seems to me that Iran has a completely different conceptualization of what defense means and what security actually means. It's not playing the same deterrence game as the Americans. The US and Europe believe that if they create the ability to completely obliterate everybody else, you know, total destruction, then that will somehow increase their security. It seems Iran doesn't go there. Iran doesn't—the strategy is not to threaten as much as possible, because if that was the case, you would already have nuclear weapons and you would have ICBMs and so on. So Iran is not trying to play that game. It's trying to do something different strategically.

If we look at war in the Clausewitzian sense of politics by other means, it seems to me also that Iran kind of gave up trying to convince the United States of anything, but it's trying to convince the Gulf

states to change their posture, right? So can you maybe speak to this? How close is Iran to actually getting through to the Gulf states and saying, like, guys, you just need to change that. You need to be neutral. You need to not support the Americans. You don't need to be our best friends, but you need to cease being a threat to us. Because if we look at one, I think the closest one you've got is actually Oman, that is not buddy-buddy, but it's definitely in negotiations, right? And you're getting to a point where maybe with Oman, there's some agreement possible. Can you speak to that?

#Marandi

You know, you mentioned something that reminded me about what I said earlier. I said there's a place not far from where I am now, a 15-, 20-minute walk, an apartment building that was destroyed because they wanted to murder the former foreign minister, Dr. Kharazi, and his wife. They murdered his wife and the neighbors. But Dr. Kharazi himself said on more than one occasion that if Iran wanted to develop nuclear weapons, it would have developed them many years ago. Iran has had this capability for a very, very long time. And today, Iran is far more technologically developed than it was 15, 20 years ago.

So he was very clear about this. And Iran didn't do so. So Iran's defense doctrine has never been to produce nuclear weapons. It sees them as immoral. In fact, as you know, during the war, when Germany and the West were giving Saddam Hussein chemical weapons to use against people like me, Ayatollah Khomeini, the leader of the revolution, the first leader of the revolution and the Islamic Republic, he banned the production of chemical weapons by Iran. The West also prevented Iran from purchasing gas masks. So Iran was opposed to chemical weapons back then, and Iran is opposed to nuclear weapons now. Yet Iran is the threat.

You know, if you look at the Western narrative, they have nuclear weapons, they've used nuclear weapons, they've helped use chemical weapons against other countries like Iran, but Iran is the threat. And then the missile issue that you raised: they have missiles that can strike anywhere in the world, they have nuclear warheads, but Iran has intentionally refrained from producing missiles that go beyond a certain range, meaning our own region for Iran's military protection. So who is the responsible actor? It's just like the issue of human rights, where it's just a fabricated story. We saw the funerals in Iran. Tens of millions of people participated.

And for the first time, Western media failed to downplay the funerals because they were so enormous in Tehran and Qom and Mashhad. And Iran is a very, very highly educated society, one of the most highly educated societies in the world. So why would people show such support for a state that was terrible at human rights? Yet the West, which pretends to support human rights, they're the ones supporting genocide in Gaza. They supported the U.S. assault on Iran, the Israeli assault on Iran, and so on. I mean, the list goes on: Venezuela, the strangulation of Cuba, the dirty war in Syria, the destruction of Libya. I mean, we can go on forever.

But so the Iranians have been very responsible. And also with regards to its neighbors, as I said, these very same countries, they helped Saddam Hussein kill Iranians. But ultimately Iran moved back towards rapprochement. But then again, they started supporting Wahhabi groups, initiating dirty wars in Syria and Iraq and in Afghanistan and so on. Again, going back to what I said about Mohammed bin Salman being, in this respect, somewhat better, but Qatar replaced Saudi Arabia. But in any case, Iran has been talking to these countries one-on-one. And in some instances, they've had more progress; in some instances, less progress. But at the end of the day, Pascal, these are not independent countries. They're bound to the United States. And the United States put them in power, these families.

And the elites that surround these families, they all go to the West for their vacations. They go there for education. They go there. They send their families there. And a lot of them have no doubt that Western intelligence agencies have been monitoring them closely. The Epsteins of the world have all sorts of dirt on these people, on these princes, on these elites. And so, no matter what happens, you will see that while the world is tilting away from the West and you see the rise of BRICS and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, you don't see any such thing in this region. They are all about—even though their number one trading partner is, I think, for all these countries, China—but still, they will take their money and put it in U.S. stocks and bonds.

And by the way, one of the things that is going to hurt the United States is because of this war. I mean, all the other problems. We see what's going on in your country, Japan, with the currency and the potential effect that it will have on the U.S. bond market. But the same is true to a large degree with the countries in the Persian Gulf, because these countries, they're not making money anymore. And they have lots of expenditures. They consume more than other countries. And so they're going to have to start taking money from the United States. They're going to have to start selling stocks and bonds and using money from their accounts in the United States. And that's going to have an impact itself on the U.S. But in any case, their leaders and their elites are bound to the West. And so they have very little room for maneuver.

#Pascal

Right. Okay. So you're not actually seeing a lot of chances for them to change quickly. But in that case, Iran will keep working on trying to eliminate the threat in its region.

#Marandi

Yes, I think that as the United States declines, these countries, if they remain stable, will have to rethink their foreign policy. It'll just be inevitable because the United States is clearly showing that it does not have the ability to maintain the hegemony that it had in the past. For me, it's sort of like—and I said this yesterday to someone—it's like the emperor who has no clothes. We've reached the stage where everyone sees that the United States is naked.

But no one has yet—that little child who said, "Mom, Mommy, he's not wearing anything." Then afterwards, the murmur begins, and everyone acknowledges what they know, but they won't say it out loud. The world is still, to a large degree, intimidated by the United States. Threats being made against Cuba and elsewhere. But I think we're reaching that point where I think it will become increasingly evident that the United States cannot maintain this. And so some of these regimes will have to either sink or they'll have to learn to swim.

#Pascal

I think the metaphor is quite adequate. And in a couple of years from now, we might actually look at what Iran managed to do, of how it managed to withstand the assault. And that was the figure pointing, saying, like, "Oh, you have no clothes." And now everybody looks at each other, trying to check whether everybody sees the same or not. But in any case, it will take some more time for this to clear up. And we are very grateful that you keep providing us with updates from Tehran. So, if people want to follow you and would like to read from you, where should they go?

#Marandi

Well, I only have a Twitter account. I've been removed from Instagram and Facebook years ago for saying things that they believe I shouldn't be saying. Again, I would advise your audience to just read books on Iran: Going to Tehran, which I've mentioned on your show before; Resistance by Alastair Crooke. These are all good books on the nuclear program. Gareth Porter's Manufactured Crisis. These are good books to read, and they're not written by Iranians or terrorists and extremists and dangerous people like myself. So when people read them, I think Going to Tehran was written by two former White House officials and academics, Flynt and Hillary Leverett.

I think if these books are widely read, people can more easily convince Western audiences about the merits of these books and what's written in them. Iran is, you know, it's a beautiful country, a wonderful people, and a very dignified people. And what they've done, I think, has been a great service to humanity over the past five, six months—a great service. And hopefully, after the war, more people will come to Iran and they'll see that it's just the exact opposite of what they've been hearing in the Western media for the last 47, 48 years.

#Pascal

I'm crossing my fingers very much for increased and much more tourism to Tehran. Tourism is a great thing. Any kind of human-to-human connection is a wonderful thing. Thank you very much for also ending on this. Professor Seyed Mohammad Marandi, thank you so much for your time today.

#Marandi

Thank you, Pascal. It's always a pleasure.

