

Netanyahu in the U.S. to Sell War with Iran

Seyed Mohammad Marandi is a professor at Tehran University and a former advisor to Iran's Nuclear Negotiation Team. Prof. Marandi discusses Netanyahu arriving in Washington to push for increasing the pressure on Gaza and Hezbollah, and to sell another war on Iran. Follow Prof. Glenn Diesen: Substack: <https://glenndiesen.substack.com/> X/Twitter: https://x.com/Glenn_Diesen Patreon: <https://www.patreon.com/glenndiesen> Support the research by Prof. Glenn Diesen: PayPal: <https://www.paypal.com/paypalme/glenndiesen> Buy me a Coffee: <https://buymeacoffee.com/gdieseng> Go Fund Me: <https://gofund.me/09ea012f> Books by Prof. Glenn Diesen: <https://www.amazon.com/stores/author/B09FPQ4MDL>

#Glenn

Welcome back to the program. We are here with Seyed M. Marandi, a professor at Tehran University and a former advisor to Iran's nuclear negotiation team. Thank you for coming back. There's a lot happening in the world, but I thought we could focus on Netanyahu, who has just arrived in Washington. According to the Israeli media, he wants to discuss Gaza, Hezbollah, Iran—a lot of problems—and most of them appear to be solved through war. What expectations do you have for this meeting?

#Seyed M. Marandi

Well, thank you very much for inviting me. I hope you enjoyed your Christmas, and I hope you, your family, and your viewers all have an excellent new year ahead. And for our Orthodox and Armenian friends, brothers, and sisters, I hope they have a wonderful Christmas coming up. It's Netanyahu and Trump, so we really can't predict much. Trump, of course, is someone who is always flip-flopping. From my understanding, he has a weak personality—he's easily persuaded to move in different directions. We discussed this before, but when he first returned to office, he had an opportunity to end the Ukraine war. He could have ended it immediately. He spoke about it during the campaign, but he didn't.

And I think that just shows how weak he was, even when he had a mandate, when he had popular support, when he was backed by a strong majority of Americans. In the swing states, he had an absolute majority, but he failed. So I think that was a sign of things to come. And Netanyahu, of course, is someone who needs to stay in power—he and his wife, who is also a very powerful figure inside Zionist circles. So he needs crisis. He needs crises. But the road ahead is difficult. Lebanon—Hezbollah has been preparing itself over the past year. And the world, really, I don't think, is going to tolerate the Israeli regime anymore. People hate it across the world. Popular opinion, even in the West, has turned against the regime, especially in the United States, which is more important than anywhere else.

So another war, I don't think, is something that will be welcomed—anywhere except among Zionists, neocons, and Christian Zionists who tell us that Jesus supports genocide. At least their Jesus does—not the Jesus that the rest of the Christian world and Muslims know, who would be fully against genocide and against injustice. But in any case, a war with Iran, too, would have even worse consequences, because the Iranians have prepared themselves. They've been doing a lot of work in the last few months to strengthen their defense and offensive capabilities. So there is a war going on. In fact, President Raisi said that the United States and the West are waging a full-scale war against us and the Israeli regime. It's economic warfare.

They're always trying to cause internal strife, and that is going to continue. But whether Netanyahu gets permission from Washington or support from Washington to do anything big remains to be seen. Again, it's not a good time for the regime, because people have been watching over two years of genocide, and they've come to see it as genocide—which is very important. So if he restarts something, even though it hasn't really stopped—I mean, he's killing Gazans on a daily basis, children, Lebanese, killing people—nothing has really stopped. The ethnic cleansing in the West Bank continues. Teenagers in the West Bank are being killed. But if he expands the war again into a major crisis, I don't think it's going to end well for the regime.

#Glenn

I was reading today in the Times of Israel that Netanyahu's message to Trump was that Trump could either be remembered for rescuing the hostages and destroying Hamas, or he could be remembered for being outsmarted by Hamas and setting the stage for future conflict and more bloodshed over Gaza. So it does seem, as you were saying, that if he is weak—and you have to be weak, I guess, by definition, to fall for this kind of manipulation—he knows why Netanyahu is arriving. He's there to sell war in Gaza, Lebanon, and, of course, against Iran.

But it is interesting that in all of these conflicts, there doesn't seem to be any real push for peace—unless peace is defined as reducing the conflict, addressing mutual security concerns, or seeking compromise. How can these different peoples live side by side? That doesn't seem to be a very common theme. Instead, it goes back to, "We'll have peace when evil has been defeated." Yeah, this is essentially a "war is peace" mindset. Do you think the US has any appetite for this right now, given all the economic problems building up?

As you suggested, Trump can play the mediator and the peacemaker in Ukraine, but it's been a year into his administration and the U.S. is still deeply involved. The weapons are American, the intelligence is American, and Americans are still engaged in war planning and financing. So he can stand there and be the man of peace all he wants, but not that much has changed. Of course, it's damaged a lot of the relationship with the Europeans. Beyond that, it doesn't seem like the U.S. has scaled back significantly at all. Given the difficult times in the U.S., how much willingness do you think there is in Washington these days to escalate all these wars?

#Seyed M. Marandi

Well, I agree completely. And I think war is possible, despite all you say. But there's a very strong case to be made against it. One is that the United States has deployed a big segment of its navy off the coast of Venezuela. And they have so many commitments around the world, including now in Venezuela, that they're not going to be able to focus on West Asia. Also, the economic situation is getting worse in the United States—it's getting worse everywhere, I assume. But in any case, the U. S. is heading toward a major problem, as some are predicting. It's getting more difficult. And a lot of people are talking about, you know, giving up on MAGA and speaking about "America First," meaning an end to the wars. And that's not going to go down well with that group of people.

It's obvious that Trump has a certain segment of society that will stick with him, even if it turns out he was doing something illegal with Jeffrey Epstein. Even if there's firm evidence, I think there's always going to be a percentage that stays with him. But a lot of people—a significant segment of his supporters—are disillusioned, and if he goes to war, it's going to get even worse. Then there's the issue of the war with Iran. The Americans and the Israelis didn't win, so what happens next time around? Iran is going to be more prepared than before, and the Israelis are going to be hit even harder. Lebanon is a major commitment, and Hezbollah is preparing itself for more—let's say, the future wars, the more modern, high-tech wars.

And if the Israeli regime wants to enter Lebanon, or if they want to fight, then they're going to have to deal with that as well. And then you have Ukraine, which is heading toward a sort of climax. The Russians are making great headway, and at some point, if the defenses in Ukraine collapse, that could get very messy. So you have a very... And then you have the Chinese carrying out major maneuvers near Taiwan. And the Americans—if they're going to get into another conflict—I don't think it's going to end well. But then again, I have no doubt it won't end well for them or the Israelis.

But then again, you have Trump. We wake up one morning and hear he's bombed Nigeria. The next morning, he's bombed another country—probably a fishing boat somewhere in the Caribbean. Not that anything is for sure. He carried out negotiations with Iran, and at the beginning the Americans were—well, Wyckoff was saying one thing, then they moved the goalposts, and it turned out that the whole time they were actually conspiring to carry out an attack on Iran. So it's really impossible to be certain about anything. And that's probably why the Iranians, Hezbollah, and the resistance are all preparing themselves for the worst. As we're speaking—it's recorded, of course—there's a major statement coming out of Gaza, too, from Hamas.

I don't know—we don't know what it is, because it's happening as we're speaking. But the point is that the resistance in Gaza hasn't ended, and there's no doubt that Hamas is preparing itself for the days, weeks, and months ahead. If the Israeli regime wants to get involved in Lebanon, that gives Hamas and its allies, Palestinian Islamic Jihad, the opportunity to inflict more harm on the Israeli regime. It's really impossible for me to say, because the Israeli regime, by its nature, is not one that's able to have peace. It sees Palestinians as Amalek—it sees them as inferior. If we go back to the

South African complaint to the International Court of Justice about two years ago, they gathered—and it's online.

I mean, I'm sure you've read it, but if people want to reread it—or if younger people want to take a look—the intention for genocide was there. They published statements made by the prime minister of the regime, the president of the regime, the governor, the defense minister, parliamentarians, Knesset members, senior government ministers—all expressing the intention to carry out genocide. So this is not a new situation. Why? Because they saw the Palestinians, and still see them, as subhuman. As long as you have Palestinians in the West Bank, Palestinians in Gaza, and Palestinians who've accepted Israeli citizenship—about 20% of the population of the regime itself—I don't see how there can be peace.

#Glenn

Well, the Trump administration's efforts to—well, he tries to position himself always as—I'm not sure how many wars he's ended so far. I think he claims it's up to eight wars he ended. But it's a strange way of—well, I guess it's a good way of marketing oneself, because he's pushing very hard the idea that he's a peacemaker, which is, I think, also one of his obsessions with the Nobel Peace Prize. If this is the branding people buy into, then they'll look the other way when he's attacking Venezuela or doing that casual Christmas Day bombing of Nigeria. But people still stick with him. It's very strange to see how he's marketed himself, and I think "marketing" is the right word to use for this business president who's very commercial in his outlook on the world.

And also the actual violence that he pursues. But of course, besides pushing Trump now for these military goals in Gaza and in Lebanon, it's also being reported that Netanyahu is pushing the idea to Trump that a war—or at least the threat of war—against Iran is required to move toward an acceptable settlement. Now, when he says "threat of war," I think it would appeal to Trump because it sounds like low-hanging fruit. That is, you threaten a bit and then you get what you wanted. However, I think the trap he could walk into, if he doesn't actually want this war, is that once he makes the threats, he's rhetorically committed himself. And once he doesn't get what he wants, he'll look weak.

And then you'll have another framing like this: are you going to be the weak one who let Iran become a nuclear power? Or are you the one who will bring them to their knees and bring peace to the world, more or less? So you can see the direction this is going. How likely do you think it is that we might see another strike on Iran? The reason I ask is that the Israelis have focused specifically not just on Iran's nuclear program now, but also on the fact that Iran is reconstituting its missile capabilities. This is the main thing being pushed out of Israel now—that they have to strike Iran in the coming months to reverse all the progress Iran has made in rebuilding its missile stockpile. What do you make of this approach?

#Seyed M. Marandi

Well, there are lots of things that can be said, really. First of all, if you recall, I think it was around 2015 or so when Trump said something like, "If I shoot someone on Fifth Avenue, my supporters will still support me." I don't remember the exact wording, but it was along those lines. And that's true. His base—no matter what, as I said earlier—even if there's footage of him doing something absolutely horrible, I think there's always going to be a percentage of Americans who will stick with him. It doesn't matter what he does. So Trump can say he stopped twenty wars—it doesn't matter to them. They'll just repeat the narrative. But I don't think they're anywhere near 50%. I don't think they're even 40%. His approval rating right now, from my understanding, is roughly around 40%. There are different numbers.

But the future doesn't look good, so it's only going to get worse for him. There's, of course, a case to be made that Trump could carry out a strike somewhere to distract attention from other issues—like the economy, like Epstein. That's something he could do. Actually, I personally think the whole Nigeria thing has more to do with distraction than anything else—to say he's a protector of Christians, even though he's killing Christians in the Caribbean. But anyway, I think that ultimately there will be war. I don't know when or how it will play out, or against whom. But the Israeli regime is not an entity that can live in peace. And as long as we have ethno-supremacism, as long as Palestinians are being killed every day and Lebanese are being murdered every day, there's not going to be stability.

And the Israeli government is not strong. It's not a powerful entity. The very fact that he has to go to Washington shows that it's a needy regime. Without full U.S. support, they really can't do much. On the one hand, Western media, Western think tanks, and leaders surrounding Netanyahu and others talk about Israel being a regional superpower—but a regional superpower doesn't have to have its leader constantly go to Washington to convince Washington to do something for it. So when we look at this, we have to keep in mind that public opinion in the West is turning against Zionism. The West—by which I mean the political West—is increasingly facing calls from ordinary people to take care of our own countries instead of carrying out wars abroad.

It's going to be increasingly difficult for Netanyahu, or anyone in power in Tel Aviv, to push the United States to do the kinds of things in the future that they've been doing in the past. I think the world is changing. And I think the war in Ukraine is actually important for our region. A Russian victory over Ukraine—regardless of what some people think about the nature of the war and who's right or wrong—is not going to be good for Israel. A Russian victory is going to be good for Iran because it weakens the West.

And it's going to, I think, be terrible news for the EU and terrible news for NATO. And it's not going to be good news for the United States, regardless of whether Trump tries to pretend he has nothing to do with it. It's going to be horrific news for the political elites in the United States for many reasons. So I don't think time is on Netanyahu's side. But that, of course, could also be an incentive to do something now. Striking Iran, though, is going to be very costly. Iran's missile capabilities are

spread all over the country, and they're all deep underground. The Israelis weren't able to damage a single missile that was underground—they only hit a few missiles on their launchers.

They've been able to damage the gates or entry points of a couple of the underground sites, but they were never capable of doing any significant damage to any part of the missile program. From my understanding, the Iranians are now building new underground bases and redesigning their current ones so they have more ways to come out. They also have much greater drone protection. I don't know this from any official source or insider—I don't have any insider information—but my understanding is that the Iranians are increasing the number of longer-range missiles and developing more bases to the east of the country.

So that means the Iranians will be launching more missiles from the east, making it much more difficult for the Israeli regime to deal with them, because they'd have to go all the way across Iran instead of firing from Syria or Iraq. They'd have to come deep into Iran to strike them, and that makes them much more vulnerable. The same is true for the United States if it gets involved. And then there's another issue: if the United States wants to have a fight with Iran, if it wants a war, it's going to be like last time. Last time, the Americans only got involved in striking three places.

And then they went and said, "We're finished." They said, "We vote," as Trump said, "We have obliterated the nuclear program." Which, obviously, is not what the head of the U.S. Defense Intelligence Agency believed—and that's why he was removed subsequently. But that aside, the number of Iranian underground missile bases is huge. They're enormous. There may be hundreds. So the U.S. is going to have to carry out a long air campaign against Iran, and that will put all U.S. bases in the region, and the countries that host them, in real trouble. The Americans struck three targets, dropped a few bombs—fourteen, I think. I don't remember the exact number.

And then Iran struck back and destroyed key parts of their base in Qatar. Six of the missiles hit, and later on—though they denied it at first—it came out that they were severely damaged. Well, if the Americans are going to war, that was just one single strike. But if the Americans are going to wage a full war against Iran, that would be much more. And that's where the Iranians would have to deal with the Americans across the Persian Gulf. And those regimes that host U.S. bases—there will be talk going on. But the Iranians, the underground bases they use against the Israeli regime, the missiles they use against the Israeli regime—these are just a very small part of Iran's arsenal.

The real focus, the real strength of Iran, is the network of underground bases that hold drones and medium- and short-range missiles aimed at the Persian Gulf and the Indian Ocean. Because Iran is not—well, the threat from the Israeli regime, of course, with the full support of the West, on its own isn't much of a threat—that's one thing. But the threat from the United States has always been the top priority for Iran. And ever since, especially after the invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq, the Iranians have been preparing themselves for war. Even before that, these underground bases that the Iranians built, on the whole, were not for the Israeli regime—they were for the United States.

So if the Americans start attacking, you'll see thousands of drones and thousands of medium- and short-range missiles reaching their targets very quickly—not toward Palestine, but across the Persian Gulf, the Indian Ocean, and the Strait of Hormuz. And we all know how wide the Persian Gulf is—it's not very wide, and Iran controls half of it. That's why it's called the Persian Gulf. So if there's a war with the United States, that's the end of the global economy. What the United States did last time was just a small strike, but if they go after Iran's defense capabilities, that means a fight for existence.

#Glenn

This was a good argument for why the initial attack on Iran was a massive mistake. Because now the whole argument is that as Iran prepares itself for a possible second strike, or another war, of course it will rebuild or build a very powerful deterrent. And what the Israelis are complaining about is that this deterrent now consists of, well, conventional weapons—that is, as you said, long-range missiles, drones, and so on. But this should have been predictable: the idea that you can bomb Iran and then ask or demand that Iran give up its missile program and essentially not have a deterrent, even a conventional one, doesn't really make any sense at all.

I mean, it's very hard for anyone to explain exactly how this would work, which is why I was a bit surprised by the way the first war was fought. I thought that if they were really going after Iran—a big country like that—and then tried to just leave it with a bloody nose, it would only strengthen those political forces that believe there's no compromise to be made and that they have to arm themselves to the teeth. So I thought they might do something even more aggressive. But do you think another war would play out in a similar way? Or do you think the Israelis and Americans could even consider using, for example, nuclear weapons?

#Seyed M. Marandi

Well, nuclear weapons, I think, would create a complete change in global affairs. The Russians and the Chinese would see that all red lines are now gone. And that, I think, would make the chance of a world war with nuclear weapons very likely. Once you start even talking about these kinds of weapons in a way that threatens other countries, you're really beginning to wipe away the final red lines for humanity. And also, Iran is a huge country, and after the war, the Iranian leadership and intelligence have changed the way they operate.

And it's clear to me—I mean, as an Iranian—it's clear how, you know, if someone wants to speak, a lot of senior officials are from my university. The University of Tehran has always had a large presence in every administration. For example, colleagues notice that accessing some of their counterparts in government is more difficult now than it was before the war. So the way Iran protects itself—its intelligence, its assets, its people—has changed. And, you know, the Iranians have always said they do not wish to pursue nuclear weapons.

But the Iranians have also said that if there's an existential threat to the country through nuclear weapons, then they would change their nuclear posture. Dr. Kharazi has said that twice. Dr. Larijani, who was the Foreign Minister under President Khatami, also said that some time ago. He's now the chair of the Supreme National Security Council. So the Israeli regime won't know—if they seriously contemplate using nuclear weapons, the world won't accept that. Trump and the United States—the U.S. government is too small to confront that kind of pushback or that kind of reaction from the world.

But what I do know—and also, Iran has huge numbers of underground bases and missiles. And Iran will be relentless. They can't. The Iranians, in the previous war, were not using their weapons. In fact, I may have said this on a different program, but if the war had lasted three days longer, the Iranians were on the verge of launching a very large number of their older missiles, because the Israelis had run out of interceptors. By the end, they were unable to even intercept or advance against Iranian missiles. So the Iranians were preparing to launch a huge barrage of older missiles—well over a hundred—which would have devastated Tel Aviv. But they didn't want to use them because they're not that pinpoint.

They're older generation. And the leader is very insistent on not hitting civilian targets—civilian sites—as much as possible. But the armed forces were preparing for a very large attack. Now, the Iranians have had months to prepare themselves for war. You know, since Iran hadn't been in a war like this for a very long time, a lot of its capabilities were on paper—they were theoretical. And when the war actually started, the Iranians saw that a lot of their thinking was flawed, or that some of the things that did work worked better than expected. So they began to work harder to develop what they were good at and to reassess their shortcomings. So once you wage war, it's like the Russians.

We all recall that in the first couple of years there were lots of ups and downs for the Russians, and then they started to adjust. Now the Russian armed forces are defeating the Ukrainians very easily. They're defeating them in a very different way—it's very different from what it was two years ago. So the Iranians now are much more prepared for a missile war, a drone war, air combat, than they were a few months ago. It won't go well for the Israeli regime in any case—whether it's with Iran, with Hezbollah, or restarting the genocide in Gaza. You know, contrary to what people in the West—think tankers and newspapers associated with the state—say, that Israel is stronger, I think the regime is much more vulnerable.

The United States is much more vulnerable. And as we move forward, it's going to get even worse. So I don't see any of this ending well for the Israelis. But again, I'm not saying it won't happen—you can't rule anything out. But the very fact that you raised this question about nuclear weapons, Glenn, what does that tell you about Zionism? What does that tell you about Israel? That they could even contemplate, that you could even imagine they might seriously think about using nuclear weapons. And it's not just you; it's so many people. Many people talk about it. The very fact that it's something people can imagine them doing says a lot about who they are.

#Glenn

Well, that would be the great irony. It shouldn't really be that ironic, but given that this is the main accusation they use against Iran... yeah, I just want to ask one thing.

#Seyed M. Marandi

By the way, Glenn, before I forget, there's another thing coming up. One of the Israeli-controlled media outlets—it's called Iran International—it's fake news 24 hours a day. Now they're saying Iran is putting chemical weapons, or that they have intelligence Iran is putting chemical and biological weapons in missiles. The chemical weapons, Saddam Hussein, all that—it's clear what they're doing.

#Glenn

Well, that's the same old playbook, so it's always good to use that. You recently did a program on Iran's nuclear issue titled **A Manufactured Crisis**. I was wondering—this is the last question—if you could explain why you see the crisis over Iran's nuclear program as manufactured. Because whenever someone is making the case for war, whether in the West or in Israel, it's always the nuclear program that becomes the focus.

#Seyed M. Marandi

Well, I've been asked by Al Mayadeen Television to do a weekly program—a sort of monologue, about 21 or 22 minutes each week on Fridays. They also publish it on their English website, Mayadeen English, and on their Twitter account as well. I've done four so far; the fourth will be shown this Friday. The one you're talking about is the third one, which was shown, I think, last Friday. I go through the history of the nuclear program and how, from the very beginning, the Americans created it. They were key. This was under the Shah, and the country spent a lot of money then to build infrastructure—in fact, too much. Way too much.

Just like what you see on the other side of the Persian Gulf—how they spend all that money and buy a lot of junk, weapons they never use, and overpriced goods or military hardware from the West. That's what the Shah did too. So Iran spent a lot of money developing its nuclear program, and the Americans, the Germans, and the French were central to it. Then, when the revolution happened, they walked away and sanctioned Iran. So Iran was left with all this half-built infrastructure and thousands of people who'd been trained—some of them in the United States. During the war, of course, the Iranians couldn't do much because they were focused on defending the country.

But after the war, they wanted to restart the nuclear program, and the West blocked it. Then the crisis began—the accusations—and after that, multiple negotiations. I point out how every time the Iranians sat down to negotiate with the United States, the Americans betrayed them. About twenty-some years ago, they had an agreement under the Khatami administration, and the Iranians carried

out all their obligations, but the Europeans didn't fulfill any of theirs. Then there was, I don't know if you recall, when Obama sent the Brazilian president, Lula, and Erdogan to Iran to negotiate with the Iranians.

He gave them a limited mandate to negotiate a deal within a certain framework, and Obama was hoping the Iranians wouldn't accept. But the Iranians did accept. Then Obama went on and said, "Forget it, we're going to go for sanctions anyway." So he wasn't serious about negotiating. It's sort of like with the Minsk Accords and the Russians—how the Russians, the West, and the Europeans negotiated. Later on, we saw that former French President Hollande and former German Chancellor Merkel both said in interviews that they were simply buying time. It was never serious. The Minsk Accords I and II were never meant to bring an end to all this; they were just to help the Ukrainian government prepare itself for further war.

And the whole issue with Iran—as those who watch the program will see—again, this is the third program. There were two before: one the week before and one the week after, and I'm doing one a week for now, for the time being. But in the one that aired this Friday, I show how, on multiple occasions, they negotiated, but the West never did so in good faith. They're always making outrageous claims about Iran to justify their policies. And in the West, people are easily fooled. The mainstream media go out and demonize, just like they did with Saddam Hussein. They're good at convincing people that they're facing immense danger. Some polls in the United States show that a significant number of Americans actually believe the country is being threatened by Venezuela.

So they probably can't find Venezuela on a map, but it makes it easier for them to carry out outrageous, imperial, and deadly policies. But again, we still have to keep in mind, despite all that, what you alluded to at the beginning of the program—that the problems the United States faces today are very different from what they were facing 20 or 30 years ago. The United States today is not the United States after the fall of the Soviet Union. It's not the United States of the early 2000s, at the beginning of this century after 9/11. This is a country whose fortunes have been going downhill for a very long time. That's exactly why Trump came to power in the first place. And from what we can see, things are only getting worse.

#Glenn

Well, thank you for taking the time to shed some light on these events. I'll be watching the meeting between Trump and Netanyahu carefully, trying to cut through all the marketing, branding, and BS, to be honest. And, yeah, see what direction they're going, because it just seems, at this point in time—with the war pending now against Venezuela, the crisis about to unfold in Ukraine, the growing tensions with China—all of this, it would just be, I guess, the worst idea to set the whole Middle East on fire.

#Seyed M. Marandi

Yeah, I actually think each of these would be a bridge too far—but this one would be another bridge too far.