

Seyed M. Marandi: Israel, Saudi Arabia and the US: All-in on War?

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#Glenn

Welcome back, everyone. We are joined today by Saeed Mohammed Marandi, a professor from Tehran University and a former advisor to Iran's nuclear negotiation team, and this time in person in Moscow, actually. So it's good to see you. It's great seeing you. So there's a lot of things happening now. It seems like we're reaching the end of the road, and everyone is still willing to push ahead. The first one I thought of was Israel, because even the IDF recognizes now that they're overextended. Yet you probably saw Netanyahu's speech at the UN. They will fight till the end. There's no other choice. We will fight the barbarians on behalf of civilization. We showed these little beepers.

#Marandi

Yes, the barbarians. Yes.

#Glenn

So how do you assess this? I mean, usually when a country is exhausted in this way, overstretched, and they still say, "We're going to go all the way," it reeks of desperation now.

#Marandi

He is a desperate person. I mean, the whole last three years has been escalation after escalation to stay out of jail for him. But the bulk of Israeli society supported the policies, regardless of how they felt about him. He succeeded in staying in power, and they say he is a brilliant manipulator and someone who has succeeded in staying powerful and in the corridors of power and at the height of power for a very long period of time. And while I don't follow his internal politics from close up, I don't follow that sort of thing very often. But obviously he's been the prime minister for a very long

period of time, longer than anyone else in the regime. So that desperation and these extremist policies have worked well for him. But I don't think they've worked well for the Israeli regime. I think that it's clear by now that the world has turned against Israel.

And a few years ago, I've always been active on Palestine, like many others. And just a few years ago, there was always an uphill battle convincing people, individuals at conferences, at gatherings, on campus, students, about the injustices that the Israeli regime carries out against the Palestinian people. Now it's so clear for people in Iran, like everywhere that I go, that for me, it's obvious that Netanyahu and his allies have been the most destructive force for the Israeli regime that has ever existed. But he, I think, wants to escalate. That's why I wouldn't rule out war before the midterms, because he has the ability to push the United States towards war, as we've already seen in Joe Kent's resignation letter, where he said that Iran is not developing a nuclear weapon and that this war is about the Israeli regime and the Saudi-Islamic.

So that hasn't changed in the corridors of power. That influence is still there. In American society, the Israeli regime is a spent force. It's despised and disliked by the majority, but in the corridors of power, it has that influence. So I would not be surprised at all if we had a war before the midterm elections, because the Israeli elections are just a few days earlier. They are on the 27th of October, and the U.S. midterm elections are the 3rd of November. So it could influence the next month immensely.

#Glenn

Well, I can imagine that would be a good selling point for Netanyahu, though, if his missiles were bringing down the Iranians. If it looks like the Iranian issue is unresolved before the election, it would not bode well for him. But again, Trump seems set on keeping things calm before the midterms. And again, everything's determined by elections, apparently. But would they go in directly, you think? Because wouldn't that be in defiance of the U.S.? And if so, is it—you know, you get some hints that they would like to attack all the energy fields in Iran and, you know, Kharg Island, all the infrastructure, which would then, well, essentially go all in in one big gamble, which would then, you know, compel Iranian retaliation. The U.S. is not really factored in. Is this what we think they're going to do?

#Marandi

It's quite possible. I would not put anything... I would not... I mean, Netanyahu could do anything. And he's evil. We saw his speech at the U.N. General Assembly. And I think it's quite possible. Of course, Iran will pretend they have immediately destroyed the oil and gas facilities on the other side of the Persian Gulf, which are far more elaborate and far more expensive than Iran's infrastructure. And that would lead to global economic collapse immediately. I don't think it will be a slow, downhill movement after that. I think the global economy will just go off the cliff. But it's possible.

The problem is that Netanyahu's interests—the problem for the other side—is that Netanyahu's interests are in stark contrast with Trump's. Trump is very worried about the midterms. He says he doesn't care, but he cares. I mean, when he says that this—the war—will be over after the midterms, like, what is going to happen after the midterms that can't happen before the midterms? So obviously, whatever he wants to do, he wants to keep things quiet for now so that he doesn't lose badly, or so that he doesn't lose. So the midterms are very important for him. So he wants to keep things quiet for now and then, after the midterms, escalate.

But after the elections in Israel, it's too late for Netanyahu because if he loses, he's out of power. So what Netanyahu can do is he can start a war. Remember, this war, when it began, what did the Secretary of State say? He said, "We fought, we went into this war because we knew the Israelis were going to attack anyway." So the Israelis have shown the ability to force the Americans to enter the war. And the Americans would have to enter the war if the Israeli regime is going to have any form of military impact on Iran that's hurtful, because they'll need the support, their jets to be refueled. And of course, those jets are in the Persian Gulf region. They get essentially free fuel from these countries in the Persian Gulf.

Then they give that fuel to these jets to bomb Iran. That's how the model works. So if Netanyahu wants to attack, in order to succeed, he'll need the support of the United States. Of course, Iran will devastate Israel. And then if he tries to take out Iranian critical infrastructure, then Iran will take all of the critical infrastructure out, because this is a bloc that works together against Iran. The regimes in the Persian Gulf, the United States, the Israeli regime—they are a triangle that cooperates. So it's possible, and nothing is impossible. I mean, I'm smiling about it, but it would be catastrophic for the world. I mean, imagine if the oil and gas assets in the Persian Gulf were destroyed—the region—that would lead to a global economic collapse. You don't need to bomb factories across the world or economic assets to destroy them. All you have to do is shut them down, and they're worthless buildings.

So people across the world will lose their jobs. Then, when we talk about refugees and immigration being a problem today, imagine what it would be like then. As everywhere is collapsing, millions of people—literally millions of people—will be moved from Africa. I mean, you may say to them, well, things are falling apart in Europe, but they'll just have to leave anyway. They're going to seek after something, or the West Asia or Latin America. It will be catastrophic beyond imagination. But why do I think it's possible? Because the United States has people like Trump who have shown the willingness to go all the way. We saw what Tucker Carlson just recently said in an interview, that he spoke to Trump and said, "We're all going to die anyway." So I don't know how to interpret it. I mean, you can interpret that sentence in different ways. But one interpretation is that he doesn't care.

#Glenn

That would reflect the Israeli position. Well, actually, the Israeli position could make some sense if they see this is the only way. At least if they go all in and just burn the region to the ground, at least the United States, as you said, they would be pulled in, as they did the last time around when Marco Rubio said, "We're going to attack, so we might as well join in." But one thing that perplexed me a bit, again, is Saudi Arabia, though, because they also seem to be going all in. But there, from what I understand, Trump has already refused the request of MBS. I heard that three times, which is when he asked Trump, "Can the U.S. help us? We have to fight Yemen," and it doesn't look like it's going well. So how do you make sense of the Saudi position at the moment?

#Marandi

It's very difficult to make sense of anything that comes from the White House or from Riyadh. You have to keep in mind, in my opinion, that Mohammed bin Salman has not shown wisdom during his reign. We remember how he kidnapped the Lebanese prime minister and beat him up, the then Lebanese prime minister, Mr. Hariri. Then the way in which he killed Jamal Khashoggi. I mean, regardless of... I mean, murder is a bad thing. It's a horrible thing. I don't... But he could have just had someone assassinate him. He could have just had someone run him over with a car, you know, like the mafia does or whatever. But the way in which it was carried out inside the consulate, and then apparently he was still alive when they were... I don't want to explain further.

And then, of course, the war, the genocide, the war in Yemen, and then the siege of Qatar, which was helping them with Yemen. And then before that, I'm sure you recall, he had that gathering of international investors at the Ritz at the beginning. And then a few weeks later, he arrested all of his family members, his extended family, and put them in the Ritz and tortured them. So, I mean, what does that say to those investors who were there just like a couple weeks earlier, when they saw the shakedown? This is not a person who I think is wise at all, and he's probably surrounded by yes-men like Trump, and that's what people are saying about Trump.

They're saying that one of the differences between Trump today and Trump during the first term is that now he's surrounded himself with people who are total yes-men and who are not very smart. So I think there's a parallel between the two. Saudi Arabia, you would think that it would not engage in war with Yemen. It would not provoke a war with Yemen at a time when it's having so much difficulty in the Persian Gulf region. But it chose to do so. So all I can think of is Mohammed bin Salman's own foolishness, although I don't know if he was provoked or pushed or encouraged by the United States or not. But I just see him as a foolish leader, just like Trump.

And that actually, I think, sort of maybe—I may be wrong—but sort of increases the chance of this all-out war. Because if it's not important to preserve the energy assets of Saudi Arabia, then how important is it to stop an expanded war in the Persian Gulf? You would think that the Americans would be desperate to end this war because it's obvious that Yemen has the upper hand. They're more motivated. Their forces believe in their cause. They are seen across the region and beyond as

the people who, despite the hardship and the genocidal siege, stood up for the Palestinian people. And they have a wealth of targets.

Everything that they strike causes huge damage. What can Saudi Arabia do to Yemen except kill kids, bomb marketplaces, which is horrible? But the impact that the attacks on Saudi Arabia have are enormous, and if they continue for, let's say, a few more weeks, with these missiles and drones being fired, then Saudi Arabia will no longer be the Saudi Arabia that we've known since I was a child, a country that exports huge amounts of oil, which is key to the petrodollar. It's quite stunning to see this happen, and no one in the West trying to end this, and no one in Riyadh trying to find a solution.

#Glenn

Well, as you said, the United States would have strong incentives to put an end to this because I can see why the Israelis would have an interest in going all out and just trying to, even if it sacrificed the whole region, just to defeat its main adversary. It's not good for the Americans. You see, the Saudis, they're also stuck. This conflict isn't going their way. I haven't seen any analysts looking at this and saying, "Oh, the Saudis are going to turn the tide." So if they're worried about what the Israelis might do, they know that Saudi Arabia can be destroyed.

And then, of course, Bahrain, others would fall. Yeah. Why aren't they doing something? Because Iran has put forward this proposal now for de-escalation, this roadmap, and Trump hasn't seized upon it yet. Well, it should be surprising because, you know, isn't this a great gift? You see that your allies or proxies are, you know, they might do things against your interests. They might collapse soon. All your strategic interests in the region are falling apart. And then your adversary, your enemy, says, "Well, let's de-escalate." Why hasn't Trump jumped upon this, you think?

#Marandi

When you listen to yourself and I listen to myself, it's pretty clear that nothing makes sense. Very little makes sense. You're saying, why are they doing this? It's difficult to say. First of all, I don't believe that a destructive war by the Israeli regime will benefit them at all. If the Persian Gulf oil and gas assets are destroyed, Iran won't fall. It will be these regimes that fall, these oil- and gas-rich regimes that have nothing but oil and gas. They're family dictatorships that have been propped up by the West for decades. Who's benefited the most from the West?

#Glenn

The United States, first and foremost.

#Marandi

The United States sells, you know, they do business, of course, with China, but they buy U.S. weapons almost exclusively, which they can't use, as we've seen. Even during the war against Yemen, the Saudis have been an utter failure. I don't know if you saw the clip of the Saudi soldiers marching on the streets. It was pretty sad to watch. I felt sorry for the soldiers. But the extra wealth that is accumulated as a result of the sales of oil and natural gas and the products that come from the refineries and the petrochemical plants, where does that money go?

It goes for U.S. stocks. It goes for U.S. bonds. It goes to buy assets in the United States, some in Europe, but mostly in the United States. And not just the government, but also those princes and the elites who take their share of the wealth, they take it to the same place. So that strengthens the United States. Trump would always speak about milking these regimes. You recall when Mohammed bin Salman went to see Trump in the White House, he had these cardboard papers with these weapons, these naval ships, and so on, saying he's going to buy this, this, this. It was obvious that they were just taking their money.

And then, of course, Witkoff and Kushner and other Trump flunkies or overlords, depending on how you look at it, they will take their share of the wealth. So the destruction of these regimes, the collapse of these regimes, the impoverishment of these regimes hurt the United States badly. The Israeli regime needs the United States to sustain itself. It doesn't have anything on its own. It's just a tiny regime. All of its high-tech. Even Trump, if you recall, a while back when he spoke about the Iron Dome, he said, "It's our technology." I don't know if you saw that piece. This was like a couple of months ago. He said, "The Iron Dome, we did that." And he's right.

The high-tech industries in the United States, the money comes from the United States. They intentionally invest in the Israeli regime. It's not because there's something extraordinarily important happening there. In fact, it's the most vulnerable place possible because Iranian missiles can destroy all of those assets. It's not the best place for investment at all. So the Israeli regime needs the United States. It needs a powerful United States. If there is this destructive war, it will hurt everyone. But it will hurt the empire the most. It will hurt all the billions of people on this planet in a big way. But I don't think it will be good for Israel. It will be terrible for Israel because the world will blame the Israeli regime for this catastrophe, alongside the genocide, alongside this war that has been going on for seven months.

So it would be a foolish move. But Netanyahu doesn't care about Israel, in my opinion. He cares about Netanyahu. He wants to stay out of jail. His speech at the UN, in my opinion, was deeply damaging to the Israeli regime. But I think he was just speaking to his own population for the elections. He doesn't care about the damage that it does to the regime. He wants to tell his people that, look, I'm tough, I'm powerful, I'm the person that you want as your prime minister. If he cared about the Israeli regime, if he cared about its future, he would be trying to carry out his crimes in a much more subtle way to preserve at least the remnants of the supporters of the regime. But imagine if we have total collapse, economic collapse. Who will people be seeking out across the world? They'll be looking for those who caused it to deal with them.

#Glenn

This performance at the UN, for me, that was shocking. Well, it shouldn't be shocking. Well, if you bet on reason, as you said, they wouldn't go down this path at all. But he came off as this Bond villain. He's standing there, all this talk about fighting till the end. And again, the beepers, holding it up as some sort of intimidation. I mean, why would you do this after doing this terrorist attack, and then you hold it up in great pride? It reminds me sometimes a bit about Trump. That is, if people call him aggressive and say he doesn't care about international law, I don't think that matters so much. I think it projects strength, and I think that's the most important message to send. Yes, we're so powerful. You should fear us because we're not even constrained by law. And I think maybe that's what they're going with.

#Marandi

Again, I'm desperately trying to define it. I'm like you. I'm desperate to figure out what this all means. But, like at the UN, I think Trump was doing the same thing. He didn't care about the United States and the image of the United States. In front of all those leaders, not only did he threaten to carry out the greatest Holocaust in human history against the Iranian people, but he also, when he spoke of Venezuela—and I think the Venezuelan president, or the acting president, she was sitting in the hall—and he said, "To the victor go the spoils." He was saying that to all the world leaders or their representatives. But who is he really? That's immensely damaging to the United States. But why did he do that? I think he was speaking to his base, because his base, the MAGA cult, they don't like him. They like that sort of language.

We've seen him give speeches to them when he said, "To the victor go the spoils," and then everyone would cheer in the halls, his MAGA supporters. And these are supposed to be Christians. I don't consider them to be Christians, but, "To the victor go the spoils"—where is that in Christianity? But these Christian Zionists or white nationalists or whoever it is that comprise the MAGA base right now, they cheer this on. So he—if I was like Trump, God forbid—I would be using the UN as a platform to speak to my base and say, "I'm the tough guy. I'm the mafia guy. I'll give them an offer that they can't refuse," just like in *The Godfather* movie. So I think that the UN was used both by Netanyahu and Trump to speak to their own base for election purposes. I think because both speeches were catastrophic for the Israeli regime and the United States, in my opinion.

#Glenn

No, I think that's the major background, though, that everyone in the U.S. senses that the country is in decline. And while essentially showing any decency or morality, this can be seen as a weakness. When we hear him say, you know, Venezuela makes this big speech with taking their oil, all this oil, all this money goes to us now. I mean, this is, you know, we hear criminal activity, but for them it shows, okay, we show strength. We're not constrained, and now we are rising again. And the UN

speech sounded a bit like that as well, because the context of his genocidal threat was, listen, it's up to me. I can allow Iran to become very powerful, or I can annihilate the entire nation. So, yeah, for us, we hear the genocidal threat, but I think for him, he wants to project this, you know, I can make them powerful or kill them all. Like, this is the... I guess a lot of his base wants to hear this message of power, but it's...

#Marandi

It's also the story of the Pharaoh. It reminds me of the Pharaoh because the Pharaoh said, look, I can kill this person and I can let this other person survive. I have the power to kill. I have the power to give life. And Trump, in a way, is doing the same thing. I can choose to destroy this country. I can choose to wipe out this civilization if I want, and I can choose something else if I want. That, I think, appeals to the cult. I recall back in the day, Trump once said—and I forgot what he said exactly, and I've been too lazy to check on this—but he said, if I shot someone, I think he said, on Fifth Avenue in Manhattan, like, my supporters would still support me. He's right. His base would still support him.

Now, if the economy collapses... if this all-out war happens, or even if there's an escalation without targeting the infrastructure, because that too will cause Iran to shut down the Strait, they'll drive up prices. That will also be catastrophic. But it's like a highway with three lanes. The strike, the targeting of infrastructure, is the fast lane. The escalation, the limited escalation, is the middle lane, and the path that we're going down today is the slower lane. They all go to hell. They all lead to the same place, but one just quickly takes us there, another one a bit slower, and the third even slower. But if he continues to go down this road or changes lanes and goes down this road faster, I think his base will be seeking to lynch him after the collapse. And I think the same is true for the Israeli regime. A global economic collapse may save Netanyahu or it may serve the fantasies of Trump, but ultimately it will devastate them both.

#Glenn

I think, yeah, this is probably a contradiction. Again, like I said before, with Netanyahu and Trump, whenever they make these statements, their base will say, "Yes, we're back." But they ignore or care not to care about the international community, because the rest of the world is looking at this going, "Dear God, whoa." You know, do you want to see these countries rise? I mean, you know, this ruthlessness. But I do want to ask about the Europeans as well, because, if I'm not mistaken, Macron, he implied that they might come to help the Saudis. I'm not sure if that's an actual plan or if it's just to, you know, try to show some strength, but they're also trying to sit on two chairs.

That is, they keep reassuring the Iranians, you know, we're not part of this war. This is America and Israel who attacked you, not us. But they want to do this. But on the other hand, they also want to show that they have value for the United States. They want to preserve the alliance system with the U.S. The U.S. sees them as weak, not great. And they want to then, of course, sell this idea that

we're a force multiplier. And so you then have two messages. One, we're not part of this war. And then you have NATO Secretary General Mark Rutte saying, well, you know, 5,000 planes took off from Europe to attack Iran. So until, like, up to April, and since then, it's a lot more.

#Marandi

Yeah, yeah. I was going to say that you raised... exactly. I don't think that Europe can do much against Iran. I mean, if they could, they'd do more for Ukraine. They're already sacrificing themselves for this foolish war that is destroying Europe, in my opinion. Germany—you know better than I—it's collapsing. And we've seen the election results, the local elections, as being catastrophic for the status quo. And I'm certain that the same is true almost across Europe. So Europe is collapsing. If this continues, I don't think the European Union will continue to exist in its current form, because the center is falling apart. The center cannot hold anymore. So he's going to go and take his troops to Saudi Arabia too, to do what? What does he have that he can use? I think that these countries don't recognize that they're increasingly irrelevant.

They're not important. France is not a major player. There are many countries now in BRICS that are more important than France. And the same is true with the UK, and now increasingly Germany. Europe is the biggest loser in all this so far because they sacrificed themselves for the United States. And not even just for Trump. During the Biden years, they sacrificed themselves. They sacrificed themselves by not signing a deal with Iran. I was at the negotiations in Vienna when the war in Ukraine began. And then we saw Nord Stream destroyed later on. But when they began sanctioning the Russians, I was telling journalists—journalists who, you know, some of them are quite famous—and elites and others, and diplomats who would come and see me. We'd have coffee together somewhere. You're not giving me coffee, but at least they would.

#Glenn

Next year.

#Marandi

Next year. So when I would tell them that, look, you need to deal with Iran. You know, do a deal, and you can invest in Iran's gas sector, and you can invest in Iran's oil sector. You can expand the pipelines that exist that go through Turkey. And universally, as far as I remember—this was like a few years ago—every single one, as far as I remember, would say, “Pfft, this war is going to go for weeks. The Russians are going to collapse. Putin is out.” And I would say to them, “Look, you failed against Cuba. You failed abroad back then—Venezuela, Syria back then, Syria.”

They actually did overthrow Syria, Venezuela later on. But I said, you've been struggling to destroy these countries for years. You've been struggling to overthrow Iran for decades. So you're going to overthrow Russia? How is that going to work in weeks? But that's what they were saying to me. If

they had actually done a deal with Iran, they would be in less pain than now. If they had ignored the United States and stopped antagonizing Russia to this extent, they wouldn't be in this situation. Then they go and tell the Chinese that they want to work with them, but simultaneously they insult them and sanction them and punish them.

Okay, so you've lost the Chinese, you've lost the Iranians, you've lost the Russians, and then you go to the United States and Trump slaps you around. So what's left for you? So where are you in this global arena? So they're the biggest losers of all, and I don't think that there's much that Macron can do to help the Saudis against Ansar Allah. And that says a lot, that these imperial powers, which had so much influence across the globe, now there's no way that they can stop Ansar Allah, that has been starved and besieged in the southwestern corner of the Arabian Peninsula for decades. They can't defeat them.

#Glenn

Yeah, well, that's the problem now with the possibility of Saudi Arabia collapsing. But it doesn't even need to collapse. They already stopped exporting oil to the Europeans. So, no, I think they definitely painted themselves in a corner. I think it's desperation as well. As we said, their ally's main protector, they slap them around as well. And, yeah, they see their own position dwindling, and their adversaries, they can't defeat them. Like you said, with Russia, they did think it was going to be quite easy. And again, it's been scrubbed from the narrative now. But, you know, after they sabotaged the Istanbul talks in 2022 to end the war, you have people like Niall Ferguson, who then wrote in Bloomberg.

This was in February, March of 2022, and he interviews all these American and British leading military, political figures, and he says, well, they all have the same message: the only acceptable outcome is regime change in Moscow. So, and this kind of corresponds with what you heard the Turks say, the former Israeli Prime Minister. They all said the same thing. There was the opportunity to use the Ukrainians to knock out Russia. And, you know, all the evidence is there. But suddenly Russia didn't get knocked out, and suddenly we had to get rid of that whole thing out of the narrative. And now we call it Russian talking points. And if you repeat it, then it's quite incredible. But my point is, it's so much self-harm.

#Marandi

It's the arrogance of exceptionalism. It's an exceptionalism that is not manifested in the reality on the ground anymore. These were empires of old, not good empires. I don't think you can say there were many good empires throughout history at all. In the past, they had power. Now they pretend that they have power, but it doesn't exist. So they're behaving like they have a great deal of power, but in reality, they have very little. And it is, I think, through that arrogance that they misread

everything. They expect Russia to fall in front of them because they are superior. They expect Iran to fall because they are superior. They cannot acknowledge that the Chinese are innovative, that they're just as smart as anyone else.

I say, no, no, they can copy our innovations, but they can't innovate. They think Iran will collapse in days because they cannot imagine that the Iranians would have the resilience and the strength and the intelligence and the brilliance to create a defense capability that can outmatch the superpower and its proxies. It just goes beyond. So even if you provide them with the real facts, I don't think it would change their perceptions at all. They still say, forget the facts. We're going to eat them. We have this heritage. We are powerful. And I think the worst of them all is the United States under this American exceptionalism and all. That blinds them to reality.

And when you look at what they did to Russia, or what they said about Russia, and what they said about Iran, it's almost identical. The Russians are running out of missiles. They're tearing apart washing machines or dishwashing machines. And then the same with Iran. The Iranians are collapsing. They're falling. They're running out of missiles. Now, Bessent says we're going to collapse in two weeks. Well, he just said that on, what was it, D-Day? We were supposed to die. We were supposed to be gone by now. Now it's two more weeks. And then, okay, after two weeks, our currency was supposed to collapse. It didn't. Okay, now we're going to collapse in two weeks. Okay, two weeks. If we don't collapse, then what?

They constantly boast about their power, and then they fail to impose their will. But it doesn't change their worldview. It doesn't make them more humble, and it doesn't make them think more carefully. They continue to behave. Right now, the Secretary of Treasury is speaking like the Secretary of War, constantly boasting and making claims about, you know, what a tough guy he is and how he's going to smash the Iranians, and then after that doesn't work, he's going to smash them again. But there's no—there's no thinking at all. It's just that exceptionalism. And I think that the political establishment, to a large degree, allows them to get away with it because this is a collective problem, even if they hate Trump.

#Glenn

No, well, I noticed the same. I mean, they criticize Trump, but all the European leaders seem to be channeling their inner Churchill. They all want this to be their position in history. They see this, you know, rise of Russia, China, Iran, you know, this huge, menacing, you know, the barbarians. And this is the time to stand up and fight. This is when the history books are written, essentially. But it's not going anywhere. I spoke to a friend in the EU Parliament who was making the point that a third or half their statements in the EU are all about condemning someone. But it doesn't do anything here. Again, it's the idea of regulatory power. You can just make speeches and then the world will change. But it's not happening.

#Marandi

And they don't condemn the genocide. They don't condemn the war on Iran. They don't condemn the starvation siege against Iran. They only condemn what the empire needs to have condemned.

#Glenn

Well, if you see that the U.S. is losing interest in Europe and trying to snatch its territory, the logical thing would be to diversify your ties, that is, to become less reliant. So you have China, you have Iran, you have Russia. But again, I think the problem is that they want the same as the U.S. They're diversifying to Canada.

#Marandi

But what's the difference between Canada and the rest? It has to do with tribalism. It's not, you know, the Russians, they're Slavs, you know, the Chinese, the Iranians. So with Canada, Canada can come to Europe and they can talk and speak, you know, as if they're allies. But it's tribalistic. It's not based on morality. Because if it's morality, you'd have a very different world than that which we live in today. You wouldn't see—I mean, if the Europeans had stood up against Israel, that would be enough to end the genocide, regardless of the United States. That carries enough weight to have influence over events in Palestine.

#Glenn

If they had stood up, we'd have maybe a million people alive in Ukraine today who are gone, and they're mostly men.

#Marandi

So that basically means that Ukraine is finished. Because all those women, how are they going to have families? How are they going to have children? How is this country going to sustain itself 30 years from now? So basically, they demolished the country. And it's all for the sake of, you know, tribalism, for the sake of empire. And the facade of morality is gone. At least in the past, they had this facade of human rights and human dignity. But now they've just thrown it away. And the language of genocide and, as you said, condemnation of whoever they don't like is all that we hear. And it seems like the whole world is rushing towards demolition. It's unfortunate.

#Glenn

Well, that would have been those three powers, though, it would have been good to take out if you want to restore the unipolar moment. That is China, Russia, and Iran. But that's kind of what I want to ask, because all of them, all these projects are failing. And how do you see, you know, from within Iran, how do you see them, I guess, readjusting now or towards working with the Chinese, working with the Russians? Because this is kind of the alternative world order we see emerging now.

#Marandi

Well, let's take a look at President Pezeshkian. During the campaign, when he was in the presidential campaign, he criticized China. And a lot of his supporters were critical of Russia, critical of China.

#Glenn

And

#Marandi

The former foreign minister criticized Russia many times, Dr. Zarif, for whatever reason. But now his worldview has changed, and his administration has changed completely because he's come to power and he's seen the reality of the United States. He's not, you know—he's always been, in my opinion, a very decent person. And I know some of these revolutionaries and hardliners dislike him immensely. I see their comments online. But when he took power, the first thing that happened was on Inauguration Day, they murdered Ismail Haniyeh in Tehran, one of his guests for the inauguration. And then it went downhill from there. So then two wars were imposed as his foreign ministry was negotiating.

So, his worldview has changed. Then the worldview—so, let's say the reformist groups in Iran, which are very diverse, there's no single reformist ideology. But the reformist camp, anyway, is very broad. And so are the conservative or principalist camps. They're very broad, and they mingle. Iranian politics is very fluid, very fluid, very difficult to keep up with. And so, because it's not so much party-based. It's not like you're the conservative and I'm Labour, and so I follow—no, I may agree with you on something and not agree with them on something else. So the balances shift, and the politics thus become fluid. So the reformists who are in power now, they control much of the state.

That's where most of the money goes, the government. Their views have shifted. I mean, some of them have already been very different, but I mean, collectively they've shifted. Then you have those who—the liberal elites—who are Western-oriented and who are significant in number, but much more significant in wealth and influence. They're not obviously the majority or anywhere near the majority, but they're a substantial force. After the war that the United States imposed on us, especially the second war with Israel, their worldview has shifted. I was speaking to a number of colleagues at the university about something completely different just a couple of days ago.

And then somehow the conversation turned to our students. And they were saying how the students have changed. Their worldviews have changed during the last seven, eight months. So you see all these different segments of Iranian society looking to the West and saying, "No, it's useless." There are still some who believe that, and I can't say numbers, but I'm sure they're substantial in numbers. Percentage-wise, maybe not so much, but still. But their numbers have decreased, their influence

has decreased, and the bulk of society has shifted away. I can imagine the same being true in China. And it used to be that when I went to Beijing University, because I go there a lot—I still do—students used to aspire to go to the West, to the United States—not to the West. More recently, I've seen a lot less of that.

In Iran, the same is true. In Iran, you see that. A lot of people who used to talk about immigration, they say, "No, I want to stay here." That's a stunning one. So, the United States has succeeded in creating hostility and anger towards themselves and bringing these countries together at the same time—countries that are very diverse historically. We've had many problems with Russia. Iranians have had, for historical reasons, suspicions of Russia. China, which is far away, and we didn't have much contact with them since the Opium Wars, because they collapsed. Now that Iran and China are being pushed closer to each other, that's a great achievement that Americans have done a lot in bringing about these changes. I'm not sure that that was their intention, but the way they did it seemed like as if it was their intention.

#Glenn

I often cite Zbigniew Brzezinski because he kind of wrote America's Bible for the unipolar moment. And for him, a lot of it was, if you want to preserve hegemony, you have to keep your vassals dependent and keep your adversaries, what he called barbarians, divided. But, you know, everyone's familiar with that work. What is interesting is, later on, he wrote another book in, I think, 2012, and he was making a point: if our hegemony is now going away, and it appears that's what's happening, we have to rethink because, you know, you can't just wed yourself to the strategies of the past because now a multipolar world is emerging. And if it is, you know, we can either facilitate it and try to be, you know, the first among equals, the leading state, at least in a multipolar system, or we can resist it. But then likely this multipolar system will nonetheless form, but then in opposition to us.

And, you know, I thought that was wise because that's exactly what you see now. Not only did they push Russia and China together, but now Iran as well. And, you know, I think that's a good thing, though, that they get closer. But for the United States, you don't want them to get together against you. So for me, this is, you know, it... And I would hope that the U.S., from this, also takes a new lesson. You know, you said the worldview of Iranians had shifted, that in the U.S. there are more people perhaps to take the Tucker Carlson view. That is, you know, perhaps it's in our interest to retreat a bit, scale back the empire, restore our strength. Yeah. And, yeah, you can't have a multipolar world and then still try to pretend you're a hegemon. I mean, this is what happens as a system punishes you, essentially. So any final thoughts before I finish off?

#Marandi

I agree. I think that—and I do think that—the United States is changing from the bottom, but I think that the problem is at the top, that they don't have that ability to change, or at least it's almost impossible for—it is impossible for most of them, and very difficult for a minority that may have a

more realistic worldview of the world. And that is largely because of exceptionalism. Because even Brzezinski, in his second book, he still says it from an exceptionalist perspective.

And that is what impedes you to really interact and be involved in this dynamic conversation, new evolving world. So as long as they try to hold the reins of power and simultaneously acknowledge change, that contradiction will remain very destructive. I don't even think the United States is there anyway. But things were changing at the bottom, but I don't think it's going to necessarily have an impact on the situation that we're seeing today for the time being. Well, we'll have to see, we'll have to see, but I think it's very hard to see.

#Glenn

Yeah. Now the elite, there's a problem, but that's also how you define decadent states and institutions or civilization. That is, you know, if you can't reform the institutions anymore to serve national interests, but instead institutions become, you know, they just seek their own self-preservation. For me, this is what elite politics in the U.S. is. And this is my point, because at the bottom, I think the majority of Americans, more and more at least, are starting to recognize: how is this in our interest? You know, how is bombing Iran in our interest? How is keeping the Ukraine war in our interest? It's just a... Yeah, there were peaceful paths which were taken.

#Marandi

But the difference between now and past declining empires is that now we have nuclear weapons, we have AI, and we have a global population that is much larger than before. I'm not a pessimist, but the road ahead is going to be very, very difficult. Well, that's a horrible note.

#Glenn

Thank you very much again for taking the time.

#Marandi

Thank you very much for having me. It's always an honor.