

Seyed M. Marandi: If Saudi Arabia Collapses, the Entire Region Will Transform

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#Glenn

Welcome back, everyone. We are joined today by Saeed Mohammad Marandi, a professor at Tehran University and also a former advisor to Iran's nuclear negotiation team. Thank you for coming back on the program.

#Seyed M. Marandi

Thank you for having me, Glenn. It's always a great pleasure being with you and your good audience.

#Glenn

A very dangerous development is currently underway. That is, I think, the increased tensions now between Saudi Arabia and Yemen. Again, tensions is a bit of an understatement. There's a massive escalation. We see that the Houthis have been expanding their control along the Red Sea coast and also the Strait of Bab el-Mandeb. And the Saudis are striking Yemen's capital. A Saudi-backed government in Yemen, they announced a major offensive to try to push back the Houthis. And, of course, the Houthis are attacking the Aramco oil fields in Saudi Arabia again. I'm not sure if I got the sequence of this correct or if there's more to it. Again, it's all ongoing. I was wondering if you can unpack what is happening.

#Seyed M. Marandi

Well, this war began over a decade ago when the Saudis and the Emiratis launched a large-scale attack on Yemen to overthrow what they usually called the Houthis in the West, or Ansar Allah, or the coalition led by Ansar Allah. And after years of genocidal war, where, with the help of the United States and other regional countries, Western countries, they imposed a starvation siege and they

bombed the country day and night, very similar to what happened in Gaza. They bombed school buses, funerals, cities throughout the country, and yet they failed. And ultimately they failed because Ansar Allah, or the Yemeni government in Sana'a, led by what they called the Houthis in the West, they gained the upper hand.

Gradually, their military capabilities increased, their technological capabilities increased with the help of Iran, but they also developed their own military industry. Thus, the drones and the missiles that we see being used extensively against the Saudis and the Saudi-backed forces in Yemen. And ultimately, when they started destroying Saudi oil infrastructure, the Saudis backed down and there was a truce. But Mohammed bin Salman has so far refused to lift the siege on Yemen. And so people in Yemen are refused the vital goods to sustain themselves. It is believed that the number of people who died as a result of this siege that's been ongoing for all these years is somewhere between 400,000 and a million. So this latest chapter began with the Saudis bombing Sana'a International Airport as an Iranian passenger jet was returning to Sana'a, the capital of Yemen. Incidentally, I know quite a few of the people who were on the plane because they...

#Sayed M. Marandi

...in the funeral. And, uh, ultimately... And I know many of them online for quite a while. And then we met in Tehran on multiple occasions. And then on their way back, they were on the plane. And it was a very, very dangerous situation because they were approaching Sana'a International Airport. So the war began again. It restarted. But this time Yemen had the upper hand for a host of reasons. One is because of the differences between Saudi Arabia and the Emirates. The Emirates were forced to leave Yemen. Second is the Saudis are much weaker today than they were years ago because of their participation in the war against Iran. And that has, of course, weakened Saudi Arabia considerably, economically and militarily.

And then the third reason is because Ansarullah, or the Yemeni government in Sana'a, the capital, is much stronger today than it was years ago. It's been developing its missile and drone technology and its other capabilities. And fourth is the fact that Ansarullah is seen as very legitimate, the Houthis, in the eyes of people in Yemen and across the world, because they were, along with Hezbollah and the Iranians and the resistance in Iraq, the only people who tried to bring an end to the genocide. They shut the Red Sea to the Israeli regime, as we all recall, and that made them heroes, even though the Americans waged war against them, even though the Israeli regime bombed them, murdered many people in Yemen.

But they continued to remain steadfast to bring an end to the genocide, and that made them heroes across the world and across the region specifically. But among the people who were on the fence, that enhanced their stature and their legitimacy in the eyes of those who were skeptical beforehand. So now, basically, those who are fighting against them are fighting for Mohammed bin Salman, not highly motivated, even though they have much better equipment and they're much better fed and they have much higher salaries. These people don't have the incentive to die or to fight Ansarullah.

Yet their fighters, of course, have that legitimacy in the eyes of the public for the heroic actions that they took against the Israeli regime. And that's why they've been winning on the battlefield for weeks now, taking new territory in the south. The city of Taiz, arguably the second most important city in Yemen, which they control 30% of throughout this period, but the rest of the city will soon be, as things stand, will soon be taken by the government in Sana'a. So their strength is growing by the day. The Saudis and their proxies are growing weaker, and they're striking back at the Saudis for bombing Yemen. So they hit Saudi oil facilities.

They do it in a manner which is very calculated. In other words, they don't just start destroying all of Saudi oil facilities and installations. Every day they hit a few of them to put pressure on Saudi Arabia in order to bring an end to the war and also to prevent a global oil crisis. In other words, they are sort of acting in the same manner as Iran. Iran allows oil to flow through the Strait of Hormuz to a large degree, to keep the price of oil manageable for friendly countries. And Yemen also doesn't want to create an energy crisis, but it wants to increase the pressure on Mohammed bin Salman to bring an end to the war.

#Glenn

I see that in this city of Taiz, if I'm pronouncing it correctly, you have all these Saudi forces which have now, well, allegedly been surrounded. I was wondering, though, how critical is it? Because you see that the front line is becoming problematic, but also in the economic sphere. The big news out today is that the Saudis are reducing their oil prices for energy sales to, well, to Asia to try to remain competitive, given that the costs of these exports are growing. And this is all happening while the Saudis themselves are under greater economic pressure. So do you see a pathway for the Saudis to rescue the situation?

#Seyed M. Marandi

In the West, they like to say that Ansarullah, or the Yemeni government, or the Houthis, as they say, are Iranian proxies. But we have to keep in mind that during the 12-day war, when Trump and Netanyahu attacked Iran, they did not get involved. During this war, especially during the 40 days when the war started at the end of February, they didn't get involved. So to accuse them of being proxies is just meaningless. They got involved after the Saudis attacked them. And the Iranians have been telling the Saudis for years, not just now, but for years, that just end the war with Yemen, end the siege, stop interfering, and the relationship will evolve.

In fact, if the Saudis had, 10 years ago, instead of beginning this genocidal war, if they had invested 5% of all the money that they spent during this decade on investments in Yemen, not just handouts, but investments, the relationship between Yemen and Saudi Arabia would have been very good

today. And the Iranians have been reminding the Saudis throughout that this is the way forward. But Mohammed bin Salman is very much like Trump. He's very arrogant. He's a Saudi prince. He's surrounded by yes-men. And he has a history of very unwise decisions, to say the least.

He once kidnapped the former, or the then Lebanese prime minister, Saad Hariri, and beat him up. Early on, he had a major investment conference in Riyadh at the Ritz. And then a couple of weeks later, he harassed his extended family and tortured them. And it was a massive shakedown. Well, the foreign investors who had been at the same hotel, because he took the family, the extended family, to the Ritz too, so the investors who had been there just weeks earlier, I think, had second thoughts about investing in Saudi Arabia. Then, of course, the genocidal war in Yemen, which has cost Saudi Arabia hundreds of billions of dollars.

The megaprojects, which have all been abandoned, wasting at least tens of billions of dollars. And then Jamal Khashoggi, the way in which they murdered him. Not just his murder, but the way in which he was murdered and where he was murdered. And the siege on Qatar, which had been with the Saudis at the beginning of the genocide and which was more or less allied to the regime in Syria, as they both backed ISIS and Al-Qaeda and the Wahhabi and Salafi-type groups. They turned on Qatar. And so when you look at these policies of Saudi Arabia under Mohammed bin Salman, you should not have great expectations.

#Glenn

Fair enough. But overall, he used to be criticized very widely in the West, but that was when the policies were different, of course. He seems to be under more protection now. And also, everything tends to change depending on who the— if now there's a conflict with Iran, then suddenly Saudi Arabia goes into being the good guy. It's a bit like the proxy war against Syria. Then the U.S. and Saudi Arabia were fighting for human rights in Syria together, allegedly. But again, it depends. I always make the point who the in-group and out-group is. I often see the same dynamic in Europe. If the Europeans compare themselves to the U.S., the U.S. is often aggressive, they're arrogant, they're a bit authoritarian. But as soon as you have an adversary come in, like Iran or China or Russia, suddenly then the Americans go from being an out-group to in-group, and suddenly they can't be criticized.

They are just a beacon of freedom and democracy and virtue. It's an interesting dynamic, and you see how the same actor can then take on two different roles depending on if they're, in that specific situation, considered part of the in-group or the out-group situation. But the overall trend here, though, seems to be that this war is spreading into all this shipping and oil infrastructure around Yemen, as well as the Persian Gulf. And at the same time, we see other developments. That is, the United States has pulled out of Iraq. How do you see this? Is this because Iran has been destroying all their bases, as well as the Iraqi militia? And what is the significance of this? Because, again, it seemed to be a little blip on the radar of international news, but this was 23 years of occupation coming to an end. What is the significance, and how did this happen?

#Seyed M. Marandi

Well, there have been major celebrations in Iraq. Of course, Iraq is still not a sovereign country. All of Iraq's oil wealth, everything that it earns, whether it's sales to China or India or any Southeast Asian country, any country in the world, all that oil wealth goes to a U.S. bank. And the U.S. government decides if Iraq gets its money. That's how it's been all these years, which is something outrageous. The United States effectively has the Iraqi people by the throat, and the Iraqi government. So this is a major problem, but the United States also occupied Iraq. So that was a second major problem. The third is also the fact that the United States has planted its people all across the political establishment in Iraq and in the bureaucracy.

But the withdrawal of troops is an important milestone, and it is an indication of relative U.S. decline in our region. The United States has withdrawn from its bases that have been destroyed across the Persian Gulf, and that we all know. But in Iraq, the United States has a different type of presence. They support terrorist groups that are focused on Iran. They aid them, they fund them, they and the Israelis. And of course, they support them through their direct presence. That support continues, but that direct presence no longer exists, and it makes things more difficult for the groups that work against Iran. So it is significant for Iran.

Of course, the Israeli regime has a presence in northern Iraq, and so do the Americans, and they have very close relations with the local Kurdish government, and they have a strong relationship with these terrorist organizations, which Iran has been bombing for the last six, seven months. But still, the U.S. withdrawal is important. It is a milestone, and it does weaken these groups. And it is linked to both Iranian strikes on their positions during hostilities, but also Iraqi strikes, the strikes of the Iraqi resistance, which can happen at any time. And the Iraqi resistance warned the United States that if they do not leave the country by the end of September, as was promised, that they would attack U.S. assets. So the United States was effectively pushed out of Iraq. They didn't leave voluntarily.

#Glenn

It just seems like a lot of the larger developments are working now in Iran's favor. That is, Iraq will, of course, lean more towards Iran now that the U.S. left. But also, it looks to me that this is the main problem with finding a solution to Yemen. That is, it sounds easy if Saudi ends the blockade on Yemen, Yemen will end the blockade on the Saudis. But if that happens, Yemen would become much more powerful if it's not under this continuous, well, as you pointed out, this genocide for more than a decade, and also the blockade. But if this happens, Yemen will be quite powerful, more powerful at least, which would then put pressure on the Saudis to get along, not just with Yemen, but also with Iran. It seems like the whole U.S. presence in the region would then be weakened severely. Do you see other developments towards this end?

#Seyed M. Marandi

You know, you're absolutely correct in the sense that things are becoming more complicated. It's clear for everyone to see. If the Saudis had lifted the siege instead of bombing the airport, the demands of Yemen would have been to a large degree fulfilled back then. But now that the Yemeni armed forces have liberated much of the rest of the country, the part of the country where people live in. Because often we see maps in the media which show that Ansarullah, or the government in the capital Sana'a, control like a small part of the country, or let's say 20-30% of the country. But that's very misleading. Most of the country is desert to the east, and no one lives there. So effectively, until now, Ansarullah and its coalition have been controlling, by different estimates, let's say 70 to 75% of the population. 70 to 75% of the population have lived in areas under their control.

Now it would be over 80%. And, of course, the areas where people live in, where people can cultivate crops or produce goods, and where trade goes on, these areas are increasingly under their control. So that strengthens their position. The demands today obviously would be greater than they were when the Saudis bombed Sana'a International Airport. So the more the conflict goes on, the more complicated it is. The same is true between Iran and the United States. When Trump and Netanyahu initiated this war, after the 40 days when there was a ceasefire, a solution would have been much easier. But after the United States renewed the war, imposed a siege twice, and now after seven months, bringing an end to the war becomes more difficult. And the demands of the Iranians have increased because they're saying the MOU must be fully implemented.

And now their interpretation of the MOU is a maximal interpretation. So, on the one hand, I would think that the best thing to do would be to end the war now, because the trend is that things get more difficult as we move forward. But on the other hand, since things have already become more difficult, it becomes more complicated, it becomes more difficult to end the wars. But during the 40-day war, I said this on your show more than once, I'm sure, that Iran's alliances are something that the United States should not underestimate. And back then, of course, Yemen did not get involved, nor did the Iraqi resistance for the most part. They did get involved, trying some drones at the Israeli regime or firing at American bases and that sort of thing. They did get involved in a more limited manner.

But if this war continues, if it restarts, already Yemen is much more deeply involved. Saudi Arabia thus becomes more vulnerable. The global economy and the U.S. economy, by extension, become more vulnerable. And then you have the Iraqis as well, who've not really been involved yet. The resistance in Iraq is larger than Hezbollah, and it is very well armed, for obvious reasons. It's right beside Iran. So the continued war will only bring more devastation to the world. But today it's more difficult than it was a few months ago to resolve the situation. And I think that if this continues, well, then things may collapse, and even resolving the issues later on could become more difficult or bear much less fruit, because if the global economy moves into depression, which I think, based on what we're seeing, is quite possible, then, I mean, we'll be living in a very different world altogether.

And the United States would probably have to withdraw because when there's a depression, there's no money for these sorts of adventures. But it would be a catastrophic situation for the globe. So the longer this continues, the worse it is for everyone, including Iranians. But the Iranians have no option but to resist because they know that if they appease Trump, he'll only demand more. And we've negotiated with him. We've had deals with him, but he's never been honest or serious about implementing deals. He's never been honest at the negotiating table. So the Iranians believe that unless he implements what he's already agreed upon, meaning the MOU, there's nothing really out there to talk about.

#Glenn

One of the major lessons of this war has been, again, after 30 years of unrivaled hegemony, the U. S., I think, assumed that they would have escalation dominance. They could choose when wars start, end, and also dictate who would be the acceptable participants. This lack of escalation control has really, I guess, characterized the war against Iran. Of course, the vertical escalation only intensifies. And this is the usual strategy. It intensifies the pressure on Iran, and then at some point it's assumed that they would have to give in. But it's not happening. But the other escalation is this horizontal.

It's just spreading, and unintentionally so. Again, starting up the war against Yemen is really a massive mistake. But now, of course, we see that Syria is far from stable. We're in the awkward situation that America's ally, Jolani, or al-Sharaa, the former al-Qaeda leader, seems to be the only one now capable of holding Syria together, which is probably not the kind of future scenario many had envisioned when a lot of the Western countries were spending all these years trying to topple Assad. But, you know, here we are. And I'm just wondering, where do you see this possibly going with further escalation?

Because the developments in Iraq, I just feel like it should have— it has great potential to spread so much further. I mean, they could move into Kuwait, which has been severely weakened, with the U. S. bases bombed out. But also, of course, they could march into Syria if Syria begins to collapse, which would make a future Turkey-Israel conflict even messier. But how do you see this possible vertical and horizontal escalation? Because we kind of can see that something is building up. It's escalating. It doesn't have to happen, but no one's hitting the brakes here. So, again, not speculating, but seeing possible paths of escalation.

#Seyed M. Marandi

I don't think that the Iraqi resistance has an incentive to go into Syria unless Sharaa does Trump's bidding and goes into Lebanon. But the situation in Syria is very bad. Sharaa is basically the mayor of Damascus. And there are different militias from different Wahhabi, Salafi, Takfiri groups, and of course local gangs who've been enabled over the years because of the dirty war, who are in charge of different towns and cities. So there's no real central control over Syria. In fact, it is said, and I'm

confident that this is true, that support for Hezbollah is much easier now, or has been at least since I asked last, than it was under Assad's government, because there's no one to stop anything in Syria. There's no central authority.

The economic situation today is worse after the United States has removed the sanctions than it was during the last couple of years of the Assad government, when there were maximum sanctions and the starvation sanctions imposed on the country. So things are very bad in Syria. Iranians don't believe that there's a serious threat of war between Syria, Turkey, and the Israeli regime. Because throughout the three years of genocide, Erdogan has been transporting fuel to Netanyahu, thus enabling his war machine, among other things. So Iran doesn't feel that that is serious. But if it were to be true and this war of words were to evolve into something more serious, without a doubt the Iraqi resistance would go to the aid of the Syrians, and so would the Lebanese resistance. But so far they don't see this as serious because the government in Syria is a U.S. proxy. And Erdogan is, as I said, he continues to work with the Israeli regime.

But in Kuwait, I think the situation is different because the Iraqi people have always believed that Kuwait is a part of their territorial integrity. And they do have reason to see it that way. And as the powers and the regimes and the countries in the Persian Gulf region, these family dictatorships or these family governments, as they grow weaker and the war continues, then I think that it's quite possible that they would move to retake Kuwait at some point. I think that many things can change in the coming year, in the months ahead. Countries could collapse. When you have Saudi Arabia, which is a country with many tribes, and only one tribe, along with their Wahhabi allies, have thrived as a result for many decades.

And then the wealth decreases, and the central authority decreases, and the government is seen as an indirect ally of the Israeli regime. Well, then the tribes begin to rethink their role in the peninsula. And that could lead to greater fragility in Saudi Arabia and ultimately instability and collapse. And it could change the borders as well. Many things could happen because these are tribal areas. And of course, if Saudi Arabia becomes unstable, all these other regimes—the Emirates, the Kuwaitis, the Bahrainis—all of them, they wobble as well, to say the least. So I see things as getting worse, but I don't see Trump walking away. I think he is, because of the Zionist lobby, the Israeli regime, the very people who brought us this war, as we saw in Joe Kent's resignation letter, they are still very much in power, even if the American public and the global public don't want this, but they want it.

So that, and alongside the fact that Trump's ego and his sense of defeat is something that he can't live with, that, I think, will be the force that pushes us into further conflict. So I think in Tehran, the belief is that we will have a major military conflict or escalation or aggression by Trump and perhaps Netanyahu in the coming weeks. It could happen before Netanyahu's elections on, I think, October the 27th and the U.S. midterms on November the 3rd, or it could happen afterwards. But the belief is that within the next couple of months, there will be a major assault carried out by the Americans, led by the Americans, against the people of Iran.

#Glenn

Yeah, the midterms is, so to say, an interesting date. That is when Trump can finally play his cards without being punished by his voters. So the fact that he's openly stating that this is why he's delaying it is... I mean, I would be offended if I was a voter, but fair enough. But again, he has to either... I keep making the point that he can go... Well, it could be that he could be going both ways, because if he's choosing humiliating defeat or all-out war, both of them would punish him at... well, punish the Republicans at the midterms. So both of them would make sense to wait. But if you are correct, they were heading into another round of intense war, if not total war.

What do you think is the U.S. strategy in terms of what can be done differently this time? Because you already outlined how much of the chessboard has been changed now. That is, Yemen is in the fight. The Iraqis are now without U.S. occupation. All the bases in the region have been bombed out. Again, I think the U.S. often seems to refer to the destruction of Iran's cities, its weakened economy, destroying its infrastructure, that this is essentially the measure of success. But why hasn't it translated into defeat? And is this essentially what you think the U.S. would just continue to do, or do you think they have something else up their sleeves?

#Seyed M. Marandi

I don't think the United States has any real strategy. The Trump regime will pretend to have a strategy, but it does not have one, as far as I can tell. The situation for Trump is worse today than it was seven months ago. The only front on which they've had success is with the Iranian economy. And they, through bombing and siege warfare and, of course, maximum-pressure sanctions that the collective West imposed on ordinary Iranians, have succeeded in making life more difficult. And that is an objective. They say openly they want to starve Iranians, bring them to their knees, so that out of desperation they'll rise up. They haven't achieved that result, but they have made life more difficult.

And I'm sure in the days and weeks and months ahead they'll try to have their people in Iran carry out riots or armed rebellion, but it won't succeed ultimately. But besides that, everything is going downhill for the United States. First of all, their own economy is suffering. That's clear. The global economy is suffering. Second of all, the Iranian military is much more prepared for war than it's ever been before. It's strengthening its missile and drone capabilities, and it's investing a lot in capabilities that can enhance Iran's position on the battlefield based on Iran's experiences over the last, well, more than a year now—the 12-day war and this ongoing war. So Iran is in a very strong position militarily, whereas the United States isn't.

And then you have U.S. proxies in the region becoming increasingly fragile. You have Iran's allies in Yemen weakening the U.S. position effectively in a very dramatic way over the last couple of months due to Mohammed bin Salman's own foolishness. Now, some believe that the U.S. pushed him to do that, to bomb the airport. I don't know. But in any case, that has dramatically weakened the U.S.

position. And, of course, the ongoing genocide in Gaza, where every day they're killing kids and women and Christians too. A couple of days ago, a Christian mother and daughter were killed. That continues to keep people angry across the world. So this is not going well for Trump. So if he initiates war again, I think it's going to only get worse. But General Soleimani once famously said that Trump is a gambler.

And he understood, I think, Trump pretty well. That's why Trump murdered him. Perhaps one could say that Trump knows that he's lost, but he's gambling. He's hoping that he can pull a rabbit out of a hat. I don't see that happening. I see no road to victory. I think the longer this lasts, the defeat for the United States and the world—the world economy—will become all that much greater. All roads lead to a global economic depression worse than the 1930s, as things stand, whether he massively escalates and carries out his threat of genocide, or then the Iranians will destroy all the regimes in the Persian Gulf because they'll be complicit, and that will collapse the global economy. There will be no more oil or natural gas or LNG or helium or sulfur or anything else, fertilizers coming from the region.

That will be catastrophic for the world. The Strait of Hormuz will no longer be important, really. Or he could escalate, but if he escalates in a more limited way, that would also hurt the global economy. Iran will shut the Strait of Hormuz completely for a period of time. I mean, the global economy is getting more fragile by the day. So that also takes things downhill. Or it can continue with what we have now, and that is also going to strangle the global economy. So as things stand, all I can see is things getting worse for people across the world because the Zionist regime, the Zionist lobby, and Trump and Netanyahu simply will—they have—their ambition is to continue with this war. The way out, of course, would be for the United States to implement the MOU that Trump signed.

Even if Trump walks away, it would be a better thing for the United States, but it won't resolve the issue because the Iranians will not normalize this trade until the MOU obligations are fulfilled. So as things stand, I think things are going to get worse. I think that anyone with any general grasp of the situation understands that. But the only thing I can think of is that Trump is gambling or that he is so deeply compromised that he has no other... But, you know, Glenn, I discussed this before on your show. All this was predictable. In the book, *Going to Tehran* by Flint and Hillary Leverett, who worked in the White House, they predicted this war. They said that ultimately the United States does not deal with Iran realistically. It's a very good book to read.

I don't know if you've read it. They deal with many of the myths in the Western media and think tanks about Iran. They travel to Iran multiple times, and then they said that ultimately, if there isn't rapprochement, if the United States doesn't come to terms with Iran, then there will be war. And here we are. And as I said, the longer this war lasts, the messier it becomes, the more catastrophic it becomes, and it will be harder to find a solution. Already, the war has expanded, even though what's going on in Yemen isn't directly linked to Iran, because Yemen did not get involved until the Saudis bombed them. So no one can say that they're just proxies or anything like that. That's

nonsense. They have agency. They have their own interests. But they are very friendly to Iran. They're allies of Iran.

So now this war has expanded. And the Strait of Hormuz helps Yemen because it keeps the pressure on Saudi Arabia higher, and vice versa. What's going on between Yemen and Saudi Arabia and in the Red Sea benefits Iran too because it puts more pressure on Trump. So the war is already expanding. And then if the United States restarts the war, and let's say the Iraqi resistance gets involved, then I think it will be impossible to predict what happens next, except for the fact that the United States will not win. It will be a major defeat. It is already the greatest defeat in U.S. history, as neocons in the United States have been stating. But I think as we move forward, it's just going to get worse. But the sadness is that everyone across the world has to suffer because of the Israelis and the American regime.

#Glenn

Just as a last question, which also builds on the book you referred to, what is the main thesis here? That is, what is it that people don't understand about Iran? Why was this predictable, but yet it apparently wasn't predicted by the government? Because, well, Iran has, of course, been one of these countries which has been, if not one of them, possibly the most demonized country. Uh, and, um, yeah, what is it that people don't understand? Because, you know, we tend to live in an era where even trying to understand an opponent is something nefarious and dangerous. I often make the point that I often prefer to talk to, you know, in the West, former intelligence officers because at least they know that you should have a... If you think that you can make peace or harmonize interests, or if you think you have to defeat them or just manage the competition, whatever your goal is, they all recognize you should know who sits on the other side of the table. So don't delude yourself. And I think that from journalism to academia to the politicians, they all deluded themselves. And again, sorry, that's a long way of asking: what do you think people don't understand about Iran?

#Seyed M. Marandi

Well, if they read that book, that would help a lot. But also Alistair Crooke's book, *Resistance*, I think is very helpful to understand why Iran is so resilient in their resistance. And the same is true with the Axis, why they're so uniquely resilient. And they simply don't compare to other resistance movements across the world. A lot of it is, of course, Iran's independence. Iran is fiercely independent. A lot of it is idealism. In the cynical world that we live in today, the Iranians' insistence on ending the genocide and, of course, restoring the rights of the Palestinian people is deeply embedded in the ideology. They paid a price for it, and so has the entire axis of resistance. And the West likes—the demonization of Iran is actually far greater than Russia and China because it goes back further.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, things changed for a while. And China was fine until it reached a point where the United States recognized that it was going to become more powerful than the United States itself. And so, in, let's say, 2017 or so—well, Obama spoke about the pivot to Asia—but gradually China became more and more of an enemy. And Russia, of course, in recent years—you, your show documents that very clearly—what the trajectory was. But Iran was the axis of evil before any of these two countries were even seen in that sort of light. So the American people have been conditioned to hate Iran, and so have many Europeans. Across the Global South, it's also been, to a degree, seen that way as well, because Western media has always been so powerful, and Hollywood and so on.

But it's interesting how this has collapsed in the non-Western world and the global majority, and how much sympathy Iran has across the world, and how people don't believe Western propaganda anymore. And I think, in some respects, in the West, we're seeing change too among critics and among people who are more critical of the political establishment. We do see a change. I don't know how far it goes, but it's a substantial change in the way in which many people view Iran. But I think ultimately you can look at it in perhaps two ways. I mean, there are many ways to see it.

But one is China. And if the United States has control over the Persian Gulf, that's bad news for China. Of course, Iran has very good relations with China for obvious reasons. And so if Iran is defeated by the United States, that's very good news in its global ambitions with regards to Russia, but ultimately China. But I think it's deeper than that. And it is Zionism and the influence of the Zionist lobby in the United States, which has, in recent decades, before the genocide began in Palestine, become a— they've succeeded in making this, creating this narrative of Judeo-Christian culture, sort of, which really means that the influence of the Zionist lobby in the United States.

And so the United States and the West, they're deeply sympathetic—the political establishment and the media and so on. They've been deeply sympathetic to the Israeli regime, despite apartheid, despite ethnic cleansing, despite previous acts of genocide, but they've always been very sympathetic. And so, since the Zionist lobby has been very hostile to Iran because of its support for the Palestinians, they've succeeded through their immense wealth and power in creating a culture of hatred towards Iran, a very irrational culture of hatred. But I see that as weakening now because Zionism is weakening. It's weakening among young Jews, young people across the United States and across the non-Western world.

So a lot of this hatred for Iran is not because there's a problem with Iran among Americans, that Iran is a threat to the United States. In fact, if it wasn't for the Israeli regime, Iran would probably have very good relations with the United States now. After the revolution, of course, Iran became independent. They're no longer in the U.S. camp. But rapprochement was always possible. And that's what that book, *Going to Tehran*, was all about. So there's no reason why Iran and the United States could not have excellent relations. And there's no reason why Iran and European countries could not have excellent relations, except for one thing, and that is Israel.

#Glenn

Yeah, well, it's part of the thinking. I know it's the same with China and Russia. That is, if you call for, you know, considering their concerns, you know, making compromises—God forbid—yeah, well, it's seen as being pro-China or, you know, a panda hugger or, you know, Kremlin apologist. Or, you know, the same applies for Iran. I always make the point: it doesn't matter if you like these countries or hate them. At the end of the day, you do it for your own security as well. That is, you know, if you can find a way of reducing the security competition with your opponent, the idea is that that is a good path if it then also enhances your security. So ideally, you wouldn't hate these countries, but even if you do, you still have an interest in managing the security competition. The idea that interest or patriotism was always defined as escalating against the opponent—it's a wild argument, but it's quite convincing, apparently, because it's always bought. Any final thoughts before we finish?

#Seyed M. Marandi

The only thing that comes to mind is that the solution to this war is actually quite simple. It's not all that complicated. What the Iranians are saying is that Netanyahu must leave Lebanon, stop bombing Lebanon, which he does day and night. He must end the genocide in Gaza and end the siege on Yemen and hand over Iran's assets that were stolen, lift these sanctions—just what's in the MOU. There's no change in borders. It won't even bring an end to the Israeli regime in any way or form. It's just end this order that we're seeing today and hand over Iran's assets because the United States has destroyed and killed so many schoolchildren and civilians over the last few months.

The Iranians are saying that, well, if you want peace, then you have to hand over these assets that belong to us that you've taken over the years. So what I'm saying is that there's not going to be any radical change in the world, but just ending the killing in the region and handing over a bit of what belonged to the Iranian people, and to end the harassment of Iranians. And then the war would be over. The Strait of Hormuz would be normalized. Iran wants trade in the Strait of Hormuz. Iran wants more ships to pass through because it brings wealth to the region. Yeah, so it's not as if this is a situation—peace is something that is unreachable. It's pretty close. But the problem is that the Zionist lobby, the Israeli regime, are saying no.

No compromise. No compromise. We want war. We want Iran destroyed. Well, Iran is not going to be destroyed. And what is being destroyed is the global economy. The Iranian economy is hurting too, no doubt. But the global economy is hurting badly. And with all the crises that have accumulated over the decades previous—the endless wars, the war in Ukraine, the bond market, the debt—this could be the catalyst that brings down the U.S. economy very rapidly. So I think there's a great reason for peace. The price is not very high, but Trump won't choose that. Thank you for taking the time. I always appreciate your insights. Thank you very much for having me. It's always an honor.

