

'An existential war': Prof. Marandi on the coming US assault on Iran

Professor Mohammad Marandi of the University of Tehran joins The Grayzone's Max Blumenthal to discuss the looming US-Israeli regime change war on Iran and how his country will respond, both militarily and politically. Marandi forecasts economically devastating consequences, with an energy crisis brought on by the closure of the Strait of Hormuz, the possible collapse of Gulf family monarchies, and a militarily unmanageable environment for the Trump administration. While Trump reportedly considers a series of "symbolic" strikes to weaken Iran's negotiating hand, Marandi argues that Iran has no choice but to respond with maximum force. Subscribe to The Grayzone: <https://substack.com/@thegrayzone> Find more reporting at <https://thegrayzone.com> Support our original journalism at Patreon: <https://patreon.com/grayzone> Facebook: <https://facebook.com/thegrayzone> Twitter: <https://twitter.com/thegrayzonenews> Instagram: <https://instagram.com/thegrayzonenews> #TheGrayzone

#Max

Professor Mohammad Marandi, welcome back to The Grayzone.

#Guest

Hi Max, thank you very much for inviting me. It's always a great pleasure.

#Max

It's always great to see you. This week, amid a massive, unprecedented show of force ordered by President Donald Trump, Iran closed or partially closed the Strait of Hormuz. This was obviously a major message and a signal of what could take place if the United States and Israel—the Zionist axis—decide to strike Iran. But we've been told again and again by strategists that closing the Strait of Hormuz was a tactic of last resort for Iran, and that it wouldn't happen. To me, the message Iran is sending is that if the U.S. strikes in any way, it will lead to an all-out regional war, as well as serious economic pain. What's your reading on this drill to close the Strait of Hormuz, and what it signals going forward?

#Guest

Yes, it's exactly as you say. This is sending a message that we're going to shut the Strait of Hormuz, and there are multiple ways of doing it. It's not just closing the Strait itself, which is very easy because it's very narrow. You sink a ship or two there, and other ships can't pass through anyway.

You can lay mines, and you can strike very easily from the shore—you don't need long-range weapons to do so. So that is quite easy. Then you have the ability of the Iranians to strike ships throughout the Persian Gulf, and outside the Strait of Hormuz, anything that moves in the Persian Gulf can be destroyed. And then the oil wells, the gas wells—all of them can be destroyed.

Remember, the missiles that Iran used against the Israeli regime during the 12-day war were long-range missiles. Iran doesn't need those to destroy anything it wants to destroy in the Persian Gulf region. It has medium-range missiles, short-range missiles, cruise missiles, drones, and surface-to-sea missiles—it has all sorts of weapons. And anyone who looks at the map can see that the Iranians control one side of the Persian Gulf and some of the islands in the middle of it. The other side is basically a number of tiny, very vulnerable family dictatorships with lots of oil and gas wealth, but all of them host U.S. bases—bases that are, as we speak, being used against Iran.

So they are complicit with the Americans, and they are part of any conflict against Iran. The drone that murdered General Soleimani flew from Doha. That's right. So these entities are complicit in activities against Iran. And to be very blunt, the Iranians have been very tolerant for decades. In fact, Max, after the eight-year war with Saddam Hussein—when he invaded the country—and countries in the Persian Gulf gave him hundreds of billions of dollars, back then that would be like a trillion dollars now. And the West gave him chemical weapons. And just in Halabja, they slaughtered 6,500 people within a couple of minutes.

And Western media did nothing about it. Western governments did nothing about it. The UN did nothing about it. But in any case, after the war, when Saddam invaded Kuwait, Iran condemned it. And Iran restored relations with all these countries. It literally forgave all of them, even though they were deeply involved in supporting Saddam. So when Qatar—and even though Qatar and Turkey under Erdogan were working with the Israelis and Americans in Operation Timber Sycamore to support ISIS, Al-Qaeda, Jaysh al-Islam, and all these other horrible groups and terrorist organizations—when Saudi Arabia and the Emirates turned against Qatar, Iran supported Qatar and prevented it from falling.

And then, after things got better, Qatar again began to stab Iran in the back. So the point is, if you look historically, the Iranians have been far more tolerant toward these entities than most countries would be. And of course, this runs against the whole narrative about Iran, but in the West, the narrative on Iran is completely ridiculous. This time around, though, I think it won't just be the Strait of Hormuz. I think it will be all those elements together, and that will mean there will be no oil or gas coming from the Persian Gulf, the Caucasus, or the entire West Asia for a very long time.

And that would bring about, I believe, a global economic crisis—probably worse than 1929. The same would be true for the United States, even though the U.S. is self-sufficient. But that won't help the consumer. Those producing oil will make money for a few days—a lot of money—but the

consumer will pay the price. Factories will shut down, businesses will shut down, and then, of course, when everything shuts down, the price of oil will collapse too. So even those producers will probably, in the long run, rue the fact that Trump carried out a war. It will not end well for anyone.

And yet, Trump—I think there's a strong possibility he will carry out this war basically because the Israelis want it, and the Zionist lobby in the United States wants it. Their priority is Israel, not the American people. Of course, Iran will strike back at U.S. bases, at the Israeli regime, and at the U.S. Navy, obviously. But I think the biggest pain will come from the blocking of energy exports—and imports as well—since this area consumes a lot of goods, as you know. Under those circumstances, I think these small family dictatorships may not survive.

#Max

So Ali Larijani, who is an advisor to the leader of Iran, was in Oman speaking with the Gulf states—presumably about the stakes and the consequences they could face if a war were ignited by the U.S. and Israel. And yet, they still seem willing to allow the U.S. to operate at the Al Udeid Air Base and other bases. Saudi Arabia has been less supportive of anti-Iran activity than in the past, however. But what is the role of these states—Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and also Turkey—in obstructing the U.S. drive for war? And why haven't they been able to do more, given that they're clearly aware of the consequences you just outlined?

#Guest

They are terrified. And Dr. Larijani, who is now the chair of the Supreme National Security Council as well as the foreign minister, has warned these countries in the Persian Gulf and to the north of Iran. Because Aliyev—during the 12-day war—allowed and facilitated... Aliyev of Azerbaijan, yes, he facilitated the airstrikes in northern Iran. So they've all been warned. Yet these are weakened proxies of the United States. They don't have much agency. I know some people who take a lot of money from Qatar would like to see Qatar as some sort of revolutionary state, but it's a joke. Qatar carries out the bidding of the United States.

Qatar hosts Hamas because the United States wants it to. And Qatar and Turkey—they never support Hamas or Islamic Jihad in their actual defense of their lands. What they do, basically, is give scholarships to different people, do public diplomacy. It gives them a good image, but they don't do anything real for the Palestinian cause. In fact, these countries have tried very hard over the years, along with a lot of people on the payroll who live in the West—people who pretend to be big fans of Palestine but have been supporters of ISIS, al-Qaeda, and the U.S. dirty war in Syria for a very long time. And George Galloway is now living in exile, but none of these people are.

People should wonder why. But these people and these governments have always tried to create a division between the political wing of Hamas and Iran. That's always been their agenda. I know some of the people who've been doing that. They travel around the world—to Malaysia, to

Indonesia—and they talk more about the evils of Iran than they do about the evils of Israel, quite often. So they won't do anything that goes against U.S. interests. There's no doubt about that. Turkey, too—we know it continues to transport oil from Azerbaijan to the Israeli regime, even throughout the genocide. And Turkey now is beginning to feel the heat.

They destroyed Syria at the behest of the United States during the dirty war, to the benefit of Netanyahu. And now they feel vulnerable because they've destroyed the country that stood between the Israeli regime and Turkey. So they're all worried—but they're not Iran. They're not the axis of resistance. They don't have that ideological foundation or that sense of power or resistance that exists within the axis of resistance. So, you know, Al Jazeera may do a couple of good reports, or do good reports on Gaza, but that doesn't change anything. So, yeah, I mean, none of these entities have it. They could have, theoretically, but they chose not to.

They chose to. All of these princes and elites send their kids to the West. I'm sure many of them have—there's a lot of dirt on all of them. They're not very highly spoken of, many of these people. And we already see in the Epstein files, though there's very little we've seen, that there were elements within the Persian Gulf that were very friendly to him. So they are bound to the West. They do want to have better relations sometimes with Iran, with China, and with Russia, but they don't have that sort of courage or audacity to make the move that would be necessary to create a balance where the United States would feel it has to give concessions to them.

#Max

Yeah, you actually kind of forced me to recall being in Istanbul together for a conference, I believe in November 2024. I think True Promise—the Iranian retaliatory operation against Israeli attacks inside Iranian territory—had taken place, maybe one or two of them, I've lost track. We were speaking at a university there, and we'd appeared at a conference, and our hosts were fantastic. It's not a criticism of our hosts at all. But many of the students and participants there were very hostile toward you as an Iranian and were demanding to know why Iran wasn't doing more to support the resistance in Palestine. And I was thinking to myself, and I might have even said it out loud, like, what have you done? What has Turkey done?

Being the number two gas supplier to Israel, and meeting with some people on the sidelines of this conference who were closer to the AKP leadership, they said, you know, they're not supportive of Israel—they're disgusted by it. But they fear that their entire economy could be brought to the ground because it's so integrated, through Tel Aviv, into the global financial structure. And this really highlighted to me why Iran is the target—because it exists outside of the financial structure that we see today, the financial network elucidated in the Epstein emails. That, to me, is the real significance of the Epstein emails when we think about this conflict. Epstein will say, "I'm meeting with the Qataris on Tuesday, then I have this sheikh from the UAE meeting with me the next day, talking about Russian women." He's not meeting with any Iranians—and that kind of says something.

#Guest

Yeah, and the fact is that Iran is outside this financial system because it has been supporting the Palestinian cause. So when these people were saying, "Why aren't you doing more?" they're choosing to ignore the fact that Iran, for decades, has been making sacrifices—because of its support, its financial support, its military support, its political support for the Palestinians. Iran has suffered war, sanctions, and a huge amount of anti-Iranian propaganda. In fact, Iran—perhaps I'm not being very precise here—but I can think of three different trends that have always been hostile toward Iran. One is the empire: the Western media, Western elites, Western think tanks—always hostile to Iran, for obvious reasons.

Iran's support for Palestine, for Venezuela, for Cuba—for all these anti-empire entities, or entities the empire wouldn't tolerate—was consistent. South Africa, for example: Iran supported the ANC, the military wing of the ANC, and other resistance organizations in Southern Africa during apartheid. So that was normal. Then you had the left—and the left in the West especially—very hostile toward Iran. When it came to, let's say, Saddam Hussein, they were all part of the anti-war movement. I was part of the anti-war movement in the UK. I was a PhD student there; I'd won a scholarship here in Iran and taken an exam with a number of other people. We went to do our PhDs, and I got involved with the anti-war movement.

And Iran was opposed to the war. Sayyid Hassan Nasrallah spoke against it. Some Shia in Iraq were upset with him because he said, "This is not right, this is not principled." I was in the anti-war movement too. But the point is, Iran was against the United States. Iran hated Saddam Hussein. I suffered because of Saddam Hussein—I lost friends, I have injuries, I went through chemical attacks. But the United States and the West empowered Saddam. They were the real culprits. They had no moral authority to take the country. Yet the left was opposed to the war against Saddam Hussein, even though he was a horrible monster. I mean, the city of Halabja—he just wiped it out.

6,500 people—men, women, children—were killed in just a couple of minutes when he dropped chemical weapons on the city. I went there soon afterwards, not when the bodies were still there. The guards had already found them and buried them. But when I went, all the doors were open, and it was really a dark experience, even though there were no bodies. You could walk into people's yards—kids had died there, or women had died while cooking, or whatever they were doing. So the left, they were against the war. But when it came to Syria, they were pro-sanctions. They were pro-dirty war. Why?

Because Syria was somehow affiliated with Iran, even though the Assad government was in no way comparable to Saddam Hussein. In fact, ISIS—and you know this better than I—and Al-Qaeda, a lot of them were Baathists. They weren't even religious; they were Baathists in Iraq. They fought for Saddam Hussein. They were officers in Saddam Hussein's army. And then, after the U.S. occupation, when the U.S. disbanded the Iraqi armed forces, a lot of them went and joined Al-Qaeda. And then, of course, Al-Qaeda split later on, and you had ISIS and all that. So a lot of these people were, you

know—anyway, they were the monsters of Saddam Hussein. But the left has always been so hostile—the left in Europe.

My friends in Venezuela, Cuba, and Nicaragua—when I travel, they always say that Western leftists, when they come here, are more focused on turning us against you than anything else, really, which is quite fascinating. So this irrational dislike toward Iran, and the propaganda against Iran, that comes through. And the third trend is, again, under the authority of the West: the oil and gas money from the Persian Gulf region. From the beginning of the revolution, the Wahhabi and Salafi movements, and the media in those countries, have been demonizing Iran, demonizing Shia, and spreading hate and misinformation—or disinformation—about the Shia.

And sometimes it turns against them. For example, they talk about Taqiyya and create this fake narrative that the Shias are somehow deceitful. But Taqiyya is actually a concept in the Quran, where one of the companions of the Prophet, Ammar ibn Yasir, under torture, was forced to denounce the Prophet. He was very upset afterward, but the Quran said what he did was okay because they had murdered his parents and he was under torture. And the Prophet supported him. So that's Taqiyya, which is quite normal.

But the Wahhabi and Salafi, with the funding of these regimes, were saying that the Shia believe in this—it's a Qur'anic concept. And so, because they wanted to demonize the Shia, they said, yes, the Shia are hypocrites, they hide their true intentions, and all this sort of nonsense. But they fail to understand that in the West, people don't make a distinction between their fake propaganda against the Shia and against Islam. These anti-Muslims don't know what Shia or Sunni even means. They just say, "Oh, so you all do Taqiyya—everyone does Taqiyya." So it backfires against Islam.

So, in a way—or for example, more recently, and I'm sorry if I'm going on and on—but after the Epstein files, you have all this, you know, in order to counter what's happening and the destruction of the myth of Western democracy and Western values, with what's being leaked, they bring back these old orientalist stereotypes. "The Prophet married a child," which is nonsense. I mean, the myth about Aisha, one of the Prophet's wives—they say she was a child. She was ten years younger than her sister Asma, and Asma was twenty-seven at the time of the Hijra. So Aisha was seventeen, and she married after the Hijra—so she married at an ordinary age.

But the point is that whether it's the left, or these Wahhabi Salafis—back then it was more the Saudis, now it's the Qataris and Erdogan, sadly—even though Turkey is a Sufi society, his people are hardcore Salafists. In any case, the point is that this disinformation, misinformation, anti-Iranian propaganda, and hostility come from different sources. And yet, at the end of the day, who's the country that's supporting the Palestinian people? Who's the country that's made sacrifices all these years? Which country has been attacked? Which country is now being threatened? No one else is sanctioned, because no one else has done anything that would make the United States or the Europeans feel that their beloved apartheid regime—their beloved genocidal regime—is in any way or form threatened.

So the country they like to depict as demonic—and more recently, the riots in Tehran, where they created this fake narrative again about Iran murdering, I don't know, hundreds of thousands of peaceful people on the streets—all of that is basically just to demonize Iran. It's an extension of what happened in the past: to justify sanctions then, and now to justify war. So these different threads, or these different trends—even though they're hostile toward each other sometimes—at least the left and the mainstream Western politicians, when it comes to Iran, they're on the same page. And of course, as I said, the oil- and gas-wealthy entities of our region have that same hostility.

#Max

Well, I'm sorry you were exposed to so many Trotskyists during your time in the U.K. I mean, it really sounds like some Socialist Workers Party elements that you ran into. In the U.S., we had the International Socialist Organization, or ISO—we called them International PSYOP. They were—AOC, I mean, she's been—yeah, she's more the social democrat wing, but there was this group of Trotskyists that would burrow within the left and were obsessed with regime change in Syria. I just couldn't understand it. They were praising Jabhat al-Nusra.

But you also have this element on the left that's more like the AOC left, or the liberal left, that hates Iran because, you know, they're feminists and they see Iran as religious fanatics—patriarchal, forcing women to wear the hijab. And, you know, they carted out Masih Alinejad, the “My Stealthy Freedom” and “Women, Life, Freedom” campaign lady. We were exposed to her constantly—you know, the lady with the hair who was on TV sets here for the last two months. But now that Trump has airlifted all these bombs and brought, you know, one-third of U.S. naval assets to Iran, she's disappeared, because she did her job. It's like, “We don't need you anymore.” I mean, Max, all these people—they're partners in war.

#Guest

They're partners in crime. These people, you know, they demonize Iran, yet they say, “Oh, well, I'm against war.” No—through your demonization, through your dishonest narratives on Iran, through your lies, you've helped justify war. That's exactly what they wanted. The whole riot episode in Iran—the evidence is out there. The Secretary of the Treasury admitted that the plan was to bring down the currency and get people on the streets. Then Pompeo, the Mossad, Channel 14 of Israel—Pompeo again in an interview on Channel 15 or 13, I don't remember—all of them were admitting that the Mossad was there, the CIA was there.

They brought in the arms. They had killed hundreds of police officers, and the images were out there. But they were inflating the numbers, even when there was no Internet, so they couldn't have known—because the objective was to demonize Iran and to legitimize, you know, supposedly legitimize it, even though it was their dirty operation. They were the ones responsible for the deaths.

So they inflated the numbers to justify war. And now some of these people are saying, "Well, you shouldn't have war." But they've helped prepare the ground for war by repeating these dishonest narratives.

And then, when the Iranians released the official numbers—the names of all the people who died, their ID numbers, all their details—these people failed to provide any extra names to prove there were five thousand, six thousand, seven thousand, a hundred thousand people dead. But Western media—whether it's The Guardian or Breitbart, Fox News or the BBC—it doesn't make a difference. When it comes to Iran, they're all the same. It's like the Salafi-Wahhabi Takfiris who are allied with the West, and these leftists and the establishments, as I was saying earlier.

All of them are more or less the same when it comes to Iran. I mean, they'd probably be more sympathetic to Hitler if he were around, saying, "Oh, well, we shouldn't wage war against whatever country the Hitler of today is." But when it comes to Iran, Iran is somehow very unique, and anyone who is in any way associated with Iran is automatically considered illegitimate. So, in the case of Syria—a secular regime that actually had better relations with Turkey than with Iran—Assad and his wife would go on vacation with Erdogan and his wife. Iran didn't have that sort of relationship. Iran just had a working relationship; they cooperated in Lebanon and in helping the Palestinian groups. But the economic, political, and personal relationships that existed between the Syrian government and Mr. Erdogan, or Iran—or Qatar, I think, I'm not sure—but I saw this palace, I think it belonged to the sister or one of the princes in Qatar.

She has a palace in Damascus—I saw the palace. I forget who in Qatar, but the relationships were actually quite close. Iran only got involved after it saw, in 2009, 2012—two years later, I know you know all this—but in 2013, when tens of thousands of foreign fighters, thanks to Western and regional intelligence agencies, had come into the country. They were there at the behest of, you know, the United States—and the United States only does things in this region for Israel. Iran began to get involved to stop that. They didn't care if Assad was Alawite, Sunni, Christian, Jewish, Hindu, or Buddhist. They were against the CIA and the United States gaining a foothold in Syria—which they did. And now Turkey is nervous, as they should be. They brought this upon themselves, and the region has been weakened thanks to aiding and assisting the U.S.-Israeli plans.

#Max

Well, a lot of people forget that Iran's parliament was attacked by ISIS in 2017, or by elements that claimed to be ISIS. We could call them Salafi or Sunni-supremacist jihadist elements. And Trump praised that attack—it almost looked choreographed. The IRGC fought in Syria and in Iraq, almost alongside the U.S. to defeat ISIS. And so, from a purely counterterrorism perspective... well, the U. S. didn't really fight.

#Guest

The U.S. was bombing from the air—yeah—and they actually entered very late. When ISIS came into Iraq, the U.S. only steps in when it sees it's no longer to its benefit to stay on the sidelines. So when ISIS advanced into Iraq, the U.S. allowed them to move forward. Nouri al-Maliki—who, now, the Americans are saying if the parliament elects him as prime minister, they'll sanction the country—this is how the U.S. enforces democracy. Back then he was the prime minister, and he asked for U.S. assistance, and Obama said no. And Barzani, the Kurdish leader in Erbil—when Erbil was about to fall—he asked for U.S. assistance, and the U.S. said no.

And then Iran came in both to support and defend Baghdad, and to defend Erbil. Only later, when the tide began to turn—when Iran began to train the Hashd, the Popular Mobilization Forces in Iraq, and strengthen the Iraqi army—and Hezbollah came in to help with training, did the Americans start getting involved. Not with Iran, but with the Iraqi government. I was in Mosul the day it was liberated. The Americans had bombed indiscriminately—homes, schools, and the university, I recall, were completely destroyed. And the same was true in Syria.

When the tide was turning and the Syrians were beginning to make progress, the Americans started moving to take territory in the north and northeast of the country to prevent the Syrian government from reclaiming it. So it wasn't as if the Americans were fighting ISIS because that was their real intention—because for years they were supporting ISIS. They allowed ISIS to advance on Damascus. We know that from the leaked audio where Kerry, the Secretary of State, told anti-Syrian activists that they allowed ISIS to advance on Damascus to put pressure on Assad to negotiate and so on.

So, you know, the U.S. intentions weren't benign, but the Iranians went in. And if the Iranians hadn't gone, Iraq would have fallen, Syria would have fallen, Lebanon would have fallen. The people who are now in power in Syria would have been much stronger than they are now. Now they're very weak and vulnerable because they were worn down during those years. But back then, ISIS was a powerful force to reckon with. And they were like the Israelis—they'd burn people alive, they'd slaughter. They were, you know, monsters of the worst sort.

#Max

Yeah.

#Guest

And so, you know, back then the Iranians were fighting while the Americans weren't helping.

#Max

And so that was sort of where I was leading. You know, when the U.S. gets involved and intervenes in the region militarily, it destabilizes the region. And the vacuum that's existed since the Iraq war

has been filled with these fanatical bandits, represented by the ideology of ISIS—whether they're ISIS, Al Qaeda, or HTS—who came in and participated in the slaughter of Alawites after seizing power in Damascus. We saw what they recently did with the Kurdish population in Aleppo. And it seems to me that with any U.S. intervention, one of the other risks—besides the economic risk you pointed out, the global economic crisis—is the revival of these ISIS-like elements, which have now been sort of shipped by the U.S. from Syria to Iraq to be held there in camps indefinitely. Do you see that as a risk—that an attack or a regime-change war on Iran could actually lead to ISIS infiltration?

#Guest

Well, that is possible, although I personally think that the United States—or a civil war, yeah—I believe that the United States will fail miserably, and that the Iranian response will devastate the Americans far more than it will devastate Iran. War will be horrible for Iranians; many thousands will die, obviously. The United States, like Israel, is ruthless. They'll kill people, and Western media will call it "surgical strikes." I mean, we know how it works. So war will be horrible. But I have no doubt that it will be the United States that loses. And a lot of the funders of ISIS and al-Qaeda—the traditional funders—will no longer be around.

There won't be that sort of money anymore. But I do think that, yes, there will be lawlessness—across the region, not in Iran. And I actually think that if the global economy collapses—and it could—it'll be hit very hard, and we'll go into a depression, especially since the global economy is already doing very badly right now. A lot of people say it's about to fall anyway. But when that happens, imagine how many people will be on the move throughout the world. I mean, if people are worried about immigration now, you'll see millions on the move in Latin America, millions in Africa, millions in Asia—and they'll be heading to places that are collapsing too.

I mean, if the economy goes down, if the price of oil and energy goes through the roof, factories will shut down, businesses will shut down. But those who are desperate will move to where they think there might be something. And so, I mean, if there is war, there are many terrible things that can happen. One of them is general lawlessness. And you know, a lot of these ISIS people, by the way, and the Nusra people who are now in government in Syria—these are just local thugs. These were people who were like the neighborhood bullies. And then, when there was a vacuum and the police were no longer patrolling the streets because they were busy fighting other groups, these guys would take over the neighborhoods. And that's why the situation in Syria today is so chaotic—because all these different groups are controlling different neighborhoods, cities, and villages.

And today, I'm told—I've been told by multiple people—that for Hezbollah to bring weapons into Lebanon, it's much easier than it was during the last few years when Assad was president, because he was becoming less cooperative and tilting more toward the Emirates and Saudi Arabia to get back into the Arab League. Yeah, and also to have the Americans ease pressure—uh, foolishly—but so they had a much more difficult time arming themselves. But now, all you have to do is give a little

bit of money here and there, and you can take anything you want all the way from Iraq to Beirut. And I'm sure other things are being taken, not just by Hezbollah—anyone can do anything. So that general collapse of society in Syria could expand to different parts of the world.

If the economy goes downhill across Africa, across Asia, across Europe, across the United States—everywhere will be affected very negatively. I mean, I'm against war. I don't want war. But if there is war, for Iran it will be an existential war, and Iran will do what it takes to defeat the United States. For the United States, it will be another one of those many wars of choice, but this one will be very different, and the price will be much higher. So I don't want war, but if the United States wants to start one, I support a maximalist approach on the battlefield by the Iranians—which is what they will do.

#Max

Well, it really is the ultimate war of choice and a war of aggression. Donald Trump isn't even trying to explain the rationale or the need for this war to the American public. The American public doesn't exist. Unlike during the run-up to the war in Iraq, when we were subjected to all kinds of psychological operations about WMDs or rhetoric about spreading democracy and enforcing global norms, none of that is happening now. Benjamin Netanyahu was just here in Washington—I saw the highways shut down for his presidential-style visit—and it's very clear why the U.S. is going to war with Iran. This sets Donald Trump up.

This puts him in a precarious position, I think, politically, even though there isn't much pushback from the Democrats. You sounded a note of confidence in Iran's capacity to deter a U.S. attack. I think if a U.S. attack is deterred and there are military consequences for the United States, this would be politically devastating for Donald Trump. During the 12-day war with Israel, Iran was using more of its long-range standoff capacity, but there are other elements in Iran's arsenal. So I wanted to ask you about that—what does Iran have at its disposal to deter the United States, and how could it use those assets?

#Guest

People think a lot about the ballistic missiles, the hypersonic missiles that Iran has—of which Iran has far more than people in the West realize. They're also more advanced today than they were just a few months ago. There are more underground bases now, and those bases are more complex. There are many more ways to launch these missiles. In addition to that, not only are they more precise, but they're also larger in number, with more bases and more means to use them, which makes it more difficult to target them. Iran has also been working on its air defenses and anti-drone defenses. For example, recently a number of helicopters came in from Russia, and one of the things those helicopters are very good at is dealing with drones.

So if Americans and Israelis use drones, those helicopters will be very helpful. The Iranians are, in many ways, working on their defenses. But the real issue, Max, is that the Iranian defenses directed toward the United States are actually offensive capabilities. First of all, Iran's military doctrine has shifted—from defensive to offensive—and I think that's huge. Second, Iran's real offensive capabilities are not directed toward the Israeli regime. The Israeli regime has always been a sideshow; it's not a threat to Iran. The threat to Iran is the United States. Israel is a tiny regime, completely dependent on the West, and during the 12-day war, even though the U.S. and Israel carried out a blitzkrieg attack, Iran forced them to seek a ceasefire.

But Iran, ever since the United States took Afghanistan and Iraq—and Bush called Iran part of the “axis of evil” and said all options were on the table, and Obama did the same—the Iranians began to develop a major defense capability. So now you have lots of underground bases with medium-range and short-range missiles, which are much greater in number, very accurate, and easy to move around. You don't need those big launchers anymore. And then there are large numbers of drones—hundreds of thousands of them—that can take out anything. On the other side of the Persian Gulf, the sensitive targets are obvious. If you take them out, it's all over.

#Max

Yeah.

#Guest

So, you also have cruise missiles, which aren't used much against the Israelis, but in this region they'd be very effective—anti-ship missiles, for example. Iran's Navy is designed for asymmetrical warfare, and they have submarines too. I mean, what the Iranians could do in the first two or three days of a war in the Persian Gulf region, without even using their long-range missiles, would be far more devastating—especially when you take into account what the targets are—than what they did to the Israeli regime.

And then, when you look at the sensitivity of the targets—the oil of the world, the energy supplies of the world, oil and gas in the Caucasus, the Persian Gulf, and across West Asia—the devastation is just beyond imagination. Again, it's not something I'd want to see, because it would affect everyone. It would affect people in the southern tip of Argentina or Chile, or in South Africa or New Zealand. Faraway places would be affected, because when the energy crisis hits, it hits everyone. But if these countries, these entities, these tiny regimes—Qatar and the Emirates—they're complicit. They host U.S. bases. As we speak, as I said earlier, the U.S. is using these bases to prepare for war against Iran.

And then imagine, Max—let's say Qatar, with a population of about 350 or 400 thousand and a few million foreigners. If this happens, who's to say that the regime will stay? Or the Emirates, with a population of 1.3 or 1.4 million and around 10 million foreigners, mostly adult males. Why would

anyone be confident that the ruling family regime will stay in power, or in any of these other family dictatorships? So Trump is playing with fire. The same is true with Azerbaijan, another dictatorship that has already assisted the Israeli regime against Iran. And then there's the added element I forgot to mention—Iran's regional allies. They would be part of this war.

The United States already had a seven-week war with Yemen—and they lost. Yemen today is far stronger than it was back then. They've been developing their missile and drone capabilities. The Iraqis said they will be involved. This is a country of about 45 to 47 million people. The resistance there—Iran's allies—is huge in number. Iran's allies won the recent election. And then we saw, just a few days ago, footage of an underground missile base in Iraq, basically showing how sophisticated their capabilities are. So this is not a war that Trump can manage.

And again, one side is going to be fighting for its survival, and the other side is going to be fighting a war of choice—at a time when the Epstein files are eating away at the credibility of the ruling elites. The economy in the United States is floundering. The country is already deeply divided, even before they've seen those files. And I don't believe for a moment that, even if there's a false flag operation carried out to help justify a war with Iran—which is quite possible in the coming days—Trump can carry the American people. And once things get bad...

The very same MAGA people who stick with him, despite the fact that they've had never-ending wars—which he promised to stop—despite the fact that his people are now shooting white, blonde women in the face, and white nurses who are helping former servicemen, veterans—they're shot in the back. All that's okay now for these people. None of the values of MAGA exist any longer. And, of course, the Epstein files—despite everything—and Trump's well-known relationship with Epstein, it doesn't matter for MAGA. But when they lose their jobs, and when the price of gasoline goes through the roof, I don't think that—I think that MAGA people will be seeking out the Lindsey Grahams of the world and others who pushed the country in this catastrophic direction.

#Max

Again, I'm not saying this won't hurt Iran.

#Guest

War is everything. I hope there's no war, but if there is, the Iranians—you know this, you've been to Iran—are deeply influenced, as Shia, by the culture of Ashura, by Imam Hussain, by his sister Zainab, and by the idea of supporting the oppressed and fighting against the oppressor. That's why they support Venezuela. That's why they support Cuba, even though it's a communist country. That's why they supported apartheid South Africa. And that's why, when the Venezuelan economy was collapsing a few years ago, the Iranians went to their aid.

And that's why they support Palestine. Even though, in Palestine, you know, the Erdogan people, Qatar, the Saudis, and others have for decades been trying to tell the Palestinians that the Iranians are your enemies, that the Shia are evil, the Shia are horrible—you know, they're not Muslim. But that never deterred the Iranians because of that ideological worldview. So the Iranians will be very steadfast on the battlefield with the Americans. And I have no doubt that the Iranians will fight to the finish, and they will not lose this war. But I don't want one. No one does.

#Max

Well, the 12-day war began with this surprise attack by Israel, which was undoubtedly a powerful blow. It killed commanders in the IRGC who are legendary within Iranian society and were playing essential roles in negotiations and designing true progress—you know, Bagheri and figures like him.

#Guest

Supporting the Palestinians. You know, one of those commanders lives in a building within walking distance from here. When I say walking distance, it's quite a walk, but still within walking distance.

#Max

And they were off duty—they were at home.

#Guest

They were at home, and everyone in the apartment building was killed.

#Max

Yeah.

#Guest

About 65 or 70 people were killed, and I think 25 or 30 of them were kids. And then Western media was calling this an intelligence coup and a precision surgical strike. They didn't care about the kids whose bodies were found 30 meters away. But of course, why would they, after what they've done and what they're doing in Gaza, in Lebanon, and elsewhere? And, of course, with the Epstein files, it's obvious they wouldn't care. But in any case, yeah, you're right—during the first day they hit hard, and a lot of these commanders... No, but it didn't deter Iran.

#Max

Building up to my question, though, I would assume that if they launch an attack, they'd try to go in the same way—with an element of surprise—and deal a devastating blow. We saw what the U.S. did in Venezuela, where it apparently even used an experimental weapon, took out the communication systems and command-and-control systems of the Venezuelan military instantly, and left them unable to respond. Thirty-two Cuban officers were killed. So we've never seen a U.S. force posture like this against Iran, where they're just so clearly telegraphing their intentions. And I personally—even if Trump thinks he's using this just to strengthen his negotiating leverage—don't see how he can find an off-ramp without attacking, because the political pressure on him is so extreme from within the Israel-first elements that surround him. So why doesn't Iran take the initiative? Why doesn't Iran launch a preemptive strike?

#Guest

Well, there are a couple of things here. First of all, Iran is not Venezuela. Iran's technological and military capabilities are, for the most part, indigenous. A lot of these high-tech systems were developed inside Iran. Also, after the 12-day war, cooperation with Russia and China increased, and Iran put extra money into its military—because, as I'm sure you know, Iran's military budget is below average for the region. Yet after the war, they invested more, and the Russians and Chinese cooperated more closely. Iran, of course, further developed its own industry. So Iran is not Venezuela, and the Americans will have a much, much tougher time.

I would say that if you combine Vietnam, Iraq, and all the other wars of the United States together, it still won't compare to what they're going to face with Iran. We'll see. But, you know, there's a moral issue here. The West likes to pretend that Iran is evil and immoral, but Iran won't initiate a war because it's against its religious values. We don't initiate wars. Now, having said that, my understanding is that the Iranians have said if they feel an attack is imminent, they will strike. So they're not going to wait until—this is my understanding—the Iranians are not going to wait until the bombs start exploding.

As soon as they're convinced that something is happening, they're going to go all out. And this, I think, is going to make it much more difficult for the United States. But the reason why—for Iran—yeah, I mean, Iran has a strong sense of morality. Contrary to what the West likes to say about Iran, during the Iran-Iraq war—you and I discussed this before—when Saddam Hussein, when the Germans, you know, the German chancellor, or rather, German chancellors in general, all of them were disgusting to me. None of them have ever apologized for what they've done. I survived chemical weapons, so I know how awful they are. I've been to Halabja.

I know the feeling of being in such a place. Never has a German leader apologized for what they did to the people of Iran and the people of Iraq, and that comes from the arrogance of their sense of racial superiority—the elites in these countries. And it's not just the Germans; the collective West was behind all of this. The Germans just carried it out. Everyone else allowed them to do it, giving

Saddam military intelligence, other weapons, political cover, and all that. But having said that, when Saddam was using those chemical weapons extensively against Iran, senior figures went to the leader, Imam Khomeini—who passed away in 1989—and said, “We need to make our own chemical weapons.”

And he said no. He said these weapons are against our values. Just like initiating the war—and just like making a nuclear weapon—the Iranians have said that we don't want nuclear weapons. Of course, they've said that if there's an existential threat to the country, Dr. Larijani once said, and a couple of times Dr. Harazi, who is another advisor to the leader, said our nuclear posture would change. But Iran has these values. I mean, the West can pretend otherwise—the Guardian can pretend otherwise, the New York Times can pretend otherwise—but actually, the values are over here, not over there. That's exactly why we support the Palestinian people, and they support the genocide.

#Max

I think another reason Iran is at the top of the U.S. target list—other than Israeli influence in the U. S. and Iran's support for Palestine—is geostrategic. Iran is located at the intersection of Eurasia, and control over Iran and its resources would put enormous pressure on both China and Russia. Absolutely. So, you were just in Moscow. You're not one to pull punches—do you think Russia and China understand the stakes here? And to what extent have they been supporting Iran militarily in advance of this latest round?

#Guest

I don't know the details, obviously, and I intentionally steer away from these sorts of things in general, because if I go into them, it makes it much more difficult for me to talk. But my understanding is that cooperation between Iran and Russia, and between Iran and China, has increased. More technology, especially high-tech equipment, is coming in from China. Part of the problem—some people think, or seem to think, that before the 12-day war the Iranians didn't want to cooperate and were focused only on their own capabilities. That's not really the case. The relationship between Iran and Russia has been evolving.

So in Syria, things changed because when the Russians were convinced by the Iranians to come into Syria in 2015, the Russian and Iranian militaries began working together. Then after Ukraine, the relationship evolved even more because both countries were now under sanctions. The Russians were no longer afraid of working with Iran since they were sanctioned too. So the American and European threats didn't make sense anymore. But after the 12-day war, the Russians did feel more concerned, and the Iranians also felt there were certain shortcomings they had to address. There's also the issue of budget—the Iranians have a limited budget, and the Russians have their own war going on.

But after the 12-day war, for example, with the Chinese, my understanding is that in certain areas they've been cooperating more significantly than before. The Iranians are also developing and enhancing their own technological capabilities. So again, I think Iran's capabilities are quite immense. The fact that the Persian Gulf is right alongside Iran gives it a huge advantage. And the fact that Iran's axis of resistance allies are large—well, relatively speaking—I mean, Qatar has a population of about 350,000, Iraq has around 45 to 47 million, Bahrain has, what, maybe a million? I'm not sure about the population of the Emirates—about 1.4 million passport-holding citizens, I think.

Yemen—tens of millions of people. If there's a regional war, the United States isn't going to have any regional partners in the Persian Gulf who'll be doing any heavy lifting at all. It's just not going to be manageable for the Emirates. But you're absolutely correct. The Americans—this is about Israel, or rather the Israeli regime, more than anything else. It's also about the Israelis trying to create an empire of sorts in West Asia and gain control over the Persian Gulf. And if Israel and the United States have control over the oil and gas resources, then the Russians and the Chinese are in a much more difficult position. So there's good reason for the Russians and the Chinese to be cooperating more with them.

#Max

You've been a fixture on podcasts, but also in mainstream media for years. I remember the first time I saw you was probably on the BBC during the 2010s, when you were jousting with an anchor and getting the better of them as they tried to corner and pigeonhole you. But there was still a level of respect there. When the riots erupted on January 8th and 9th, I noticed a shift. When you were brought on to Piers Morgan's show, he set up this ambush with that trashy monarchist Canadian woman, Goldie Gamari, who basically called for you to be chopped into pieces, ISIS-style.

I saw the kind of background noise on social media from these opposition elements toward you in particular—it was very violent. I mean, they're violent; they threaten everyone violently. You even saw Christiane Amanpour get screamed at by these people and told she was washing the hands of Khamenei, and so on. That's their character. But I was wondering about your experience during this period, and whether it affects your calculus going forward as such an important voice from within Iran—and what it says to you about the nature of Western media and the opposition, these various elements you've confronted.

#Guest

Well, thank you for your kind words. I don't think I'm very important, and fortunately there are quite a few young people now—men and women in particular—who are increasingly active. You've had one of my young colleagues on your show a couple of times, at least that I know of. And it's very encouraging that we have so many self-confident young academics and other activists. They don't

have to be academics, but I know the academics best, that's why I mention them. So it's not like I'm a lone voice anymore. But yeah, I get lots of threats, and the threats are quite stunning. They come in the hundreds.

A lot of them are bots and things like that, but they're quite stunning—threatening children, threatening family members, threatening all sorts of crazy things. And actually, on that Piers Morgan show, I decided never to go on Piers Morgan again, because on previous occasions I was also attacked and insulted by him. I mean, I invited him to Iran on two occasions, and he basically said, "No, I'm not coming, because you'll hand me over to people to take me as a hostage." Who would care to hold you as a hostage? I mean, who are you? But anyway, so I decided not to go. And then his producer contacted me and said, "Yeah, we really need you on."

And I said, okay, only if it's a one-on-one. Under no circumstances will I be—uh—because others will just jump in, like this mad woman. And they said, yeah, sure. And then as soon as I started talking, he brings in this woman I'd never—I didn't even know her name. I don't even know her name now. I don't remember her. But this, as you know, was recorded. And the threats she made on air were recorded and broadcast; they weren't cut out. And of course, later online, she wrote that she was going to cut me into little pieces and that my biggest piece would be the tip of my little finger, or something like that.

And we've seen no reaction from Piers Morgan or his team, because they obviously do their research and know who they're inviting. It's not as if they don't know these things—they know exactly what they're doing. The reality is that Piers Morgan is part of the establishment. I mean, during the Iraq War, he took a different position. But when the Israelis attacked Iran—that was the previous time he invited me—I was in the Press TV building. They had just threatened to bomb Iranian radio and television, which included Press TV. So they emptied the building, but I stayed. I refused to leave because I wanted to do the interview with him.

The reason I was at Press TV was because they'd slowed down the internet. I didn't have a personal connection at home that I could use for video, so I stayed in the building. I told his people, but they kept delaying my segment—it was supposed to happen much earlier. I kept saying, "Look, everyone's left. The guard keeps coming and saying, you have to go, you have to go." I was more worried about the guard than about myself. He was still in the building, and if they bombed it, something could happen to this young man. They bombed the central IRIB building while I was sitting there.

That's when they evacuated the building, and reporters were killed. No one cared in the West, of course. But then he started attacking Iran. He went on this rant about how evil Iran was—how we beat women, kill women, all sorts of things—how awful, how horrible we are. And that was basically to justify the Israeli aggression. So, as the genocide was taking place in Gaza, Iran suddenly carried out this attack, and people like him—and the entire Western media—were justifying the war by

demonizing Iran, saying how evil it was. When Iran is portrayed as evil, it makes the war look more legitimate. So all the women and children who are slaughtered, and all the innocent soldiers who are just conscripts and die—you know, it's okay, because Iran is evil.

And so after that, I didn't want to go on the show again because it was insulting. You know, I took a risk by being on his show, and he wouldn't let me talk—he just kept insulting Iran. So this time around, I decided not to go. I mean, I decided not to go on his show again. And then I said, "Look, I'll only do one-on-one," and then this happened. The point I'm trying to make is that whether it was on this show, or when I did CNN with Amanpour—where she was hostile—or on Channel 4, where the lady, I don't remember her name, was very hostile too, and, you know, with other people as well—the fact is, they work for the Epstein class.

Whether it's the BBC, which is state-owned, or Fox News or CNN, it doesn't matter—the narrative from the West is the same. And I think everyone knows this now. If I had said this three years ago, or you had said it three years ago, a lot of people would have said, "Well..." But after Gaza, I think it's clear as day. And now, for example, by trying to attribute Epstein to Russia—you see how all these media outlets and senior people are making this ridiculous connection—it's clear what the function of the mainstream media is. I don't take them seriously at all. I don't really care what they say. And when they insult me, it doesn't bother me, because I expect nothing different. I used to be surprised.

You know, nothing surprises me anymore. I shouldn't have ever been surprised, because after I went to Halabja in—what was it—1987 or 1988, I don't remember exactly when, it was a while after the attack. And after I saw what I saw—and, you know, I'd already experienced one chemical attack before that, and another came later—I should have understood. Because they brought Western journalists, and nothing really happened. No one condemned Saddam. Or when they shot down the Iranian airliner that was flying from Bandar Abbas to Dubai and killed 290 people, the Western media collectively repeated the U.S. version of events, which was a complete lie. It was just an ordinary plane flying in its designated corridor. Everything was normal.

They shot it down. They were lying. They said it had left the corridor, that it was moving toward the U.S. ship. They could have asked Iran, they could have checked the radar, they could have gone to Dubai, they could have gone to Bandar Abbas. It could have been easily discovered. No journalist said anything about it until years later, when someone gave Newsweek the green light to publish the true version, which was the Iranian version. So back then I should have understood this, but it took me a while to really grasp that this wasn't just ignorance or something like that—it went far beyond that, and still does. But while I don't watch Piers Morgan, and I didn't watch the show you were on, I did see the clips you retweeted, and you were fantastic.

#Max

Thank you. Well, they put me up against an Israeli, a former IDF spokesman who played an essential role in manufacturing consent for the destruction of hospitals in Gaza, including by planting guns in Al-Shifa Hospital. His name is Jonathan Conricus, and I'd been very much looking forward to calling him out for that. It was kind of an unprecedented opportunity for me to confront someone directly involved in genocide. But at the same time, the way they present him on that show, or in Western media in general, is as just an analyst who's being brought on to explain why the U.S. needs to strike Iran. And to me, that's a scandal that goes to the heart of what's wrong with Western corporate media.

On a related note, during the 47th anniversary of Iran's revolution, there were what were said to be unprecedented demonstrations and celebrations, bringing millions of people out. In many ways, it was a reaction to the riots that had taken place for two days the month before, which left something like 3,000 dead, according to official statistics. But we also saw some new messaging coming—I don't know if this is coming down from Iran's leadership or just from supporters of the Islamic Republic—where effigies of the pagan symbols Moloch and Baal were burned as representations of what you call the "Epstein class." What does this symbolize, and what do you mean when you refer to the Epstein class? Who are you referring to?

#Guest

Well, I wasn't involved in that. I actually saw it. And by the way, after the riots on the 9th and the 10th—or I think it was the 8th and the 9th—you know, the Iranian calendar is different, so I sometimes confuse the dates. It was the Thursday night and the Friday night. On the Thursday night, they killed a lot of police officers. And on Friday, the Ministry of Intelligence, the Guards Intelligence, and the police told parents not to let their kids go out on the streets. Then there were street battles between these terrorists, the armed rioters, and the police. After that, it was quiet. So almost all of the 3,117 people were killed during those two days—350 police officers, a lot of innocent bystanders, a lot of people burned alive by these monsters.

I mean, they're like ISIS—just like those people abroad who threatened to tear me apart. That's what these people were like. They surrounded a clinic and burned it, and this young woman inside, who was a nurse, burned alive. They did that to mosques too. It was just outrageous. But in the West, they were all called peaceful protesters. The point I want to make is that on Monday the 12th—I think Friday was the 9th, yeah, so the 12th—there were counter-protests against the riots. In Tehran, we had something like three million people, and huge numbers across the country, because every city had its own gathering. And in the West, they tried to pretend this was AI-generated or something. And this was on a working day, so it was massive.

And there was helicopter footage. I was there, so I saw the helicopter. And Musk and his people, and others, were trying to pretend that this was AI—that these were not real people. So, on the anniversary of the revolution, people came out in even bigger numbers. In Tehran, it was around

four million people. And even though it was a holiday—well, I'm not sure, my memory's terrible—it was like a three-day holiday. So a lot of people wanted to, you know, it was a good time to leave town, their city or whatever, because it was happening across the country. People didn't come to Tehran to participate; each city had its own gathering. So the numbers were even larger. But this time around, they had the opportunity to invite a number of people, like Rick Sanchez.

I was in Russia at that time for that conference. But Rick Sanchez was here, and some others were here too, so they couldn't hide it. The numbers were extraordinary. Now, this Baal—I thought it was pronounced "Baal." So, Baal... I mispronounced it. Anyway, Baal. I saw it on television when I was in Moscow, or maybe I saw it on my phone. Well, this is my phone—sorry, it's right in front of me. This is basically a representative of the Epstein class, of Zionism, of ethno-supremacism, of living beyond the law and without morality—this whole class of people. You know, this pro-Zionist class, which is both Christian and Muslim. I mean, you've been to Iran. You're Jewish. You've been to synagogues.

I don't need to explain to you that this has nothing to do with Judaism, Iran's problems, or Zionism. And Jews who are opposed to Zionism have been a heroic part of the resistance throughout these many years, especially during the last two or three years. But this is about the Epstein class—a class of people who have no sense of morality, who live above the law, and who have really exposed that this democracy in the West is just a facade, and that the elites are basically part of the same—what, cabal, did you call it? My English is not as good as I'd like it to be. So this is a rejection of that.

And this is a rejection of all the things coming out of the West. I mean, this began, of course, with the genocide—and the fact that when I would go on television, on the BBC, as you mentioned, during the genocide, I'd say "the genocide," and the host or presenter, whoever was talking to me, would say, "Well, this is a word that's highly contested, and the international bodies have not acknowledged or accepted this." They would be defending the Israeli regime instead of screaming, "You know, this is what's going on—every day we're seeing children being ripped apart."

The media, the elites, the think-tankers—none of them had any problem whitewashing the Israeli regime, just looking away. And it's not just Israelis; it's the entire collective Western elite—whether it's the British prime minister, MPs, members of parliament, people in the cabinet, or in France or Germany. They're all part of this. They're all in bed together. And in our part of the world, the Emirates are Zionist too—the regime in Abu Dhabi is as Zionist as any other. We saw in the Epstein files how the head of the courts controlled by the Emirates sent, I think, a torture video to Epstein, and that lady who's a foreign ministry official introducing her daughter or whatever. Anyway, this is about all of that.

#Max

I don't know what that video was. It might have been referring to something else, but there's plenty in there that really stands out.

#Guest

Well, apparently he deleted his account, and he's been removed from his position. Again, I haven't been following up on the Epstein files. The only things I see are what different people post, and if people like you post it, I'd be very confident about it. Some of the things that people post—I'm not sure if they're right or wrong, because I don't know who they are. But in any case, this is about that whole class of people at the top.

#Max

Yeah.

#Guest

Whether it's Bill Gates—you know, someone like Bill Gates—or any of these other people. This is what they were protesting against.

#Max

Yeah. Yeah, I really think we're at an inflection point for global capitalism, where under Trump it needs to grab everything it can and plunder everything it can before the money essentially runs out, it falls into crisis, and begins turning on itself. That's why it targeted Venezuela. Cuba's being targeted—everything.

#Guest

I mean, it's stunning. It's stunning that as you and I are speaking, there's a siege on Cuba. Women and children are being deprived of food. And then they have the audacity to talk about Iran, as they're about to attack Iran. And no one talks about Cuba. No one says anything. It's a starvation siege. And what threat is Cuba to the United States? I've been to Cuba—you've probably been there more than I have. I mean, they've impoverished the island, a really decent, very friendly people. And what threat is Cuba to the United States? Why are you starving them? And why is no one saying anything? How can you starve a nation? But that's what's happening. The media says nothing.

Yet they want to present Iran as some sort of evil entity so they can bomb it and kill more people. But they do it because of Israel. It's just—you know—this is an upside-down world we live in today. But the good thing is that a lot of people are waking up: people from different countries, different races, different religions, different walks of life, different classes. A lot of people are waking up, and that's something that should encourage us. We shouldn't be discouraged or depressed. We should just push harder and harder until we bring about change. These are very, very dark times, but darkness shouldn't make us depressed or discouraged.

#Max

I think you're right, and I think Gaza has exposed everything. Professor Marandi, I've kept you longer than I said I would. It's always a real joy to talk to you, and I always learn so much. Is there anything you'd like to add before we go?

#Guest

No, it's an honor to be on your show. I learn a lot from you. You're a hero, and so are your colleagues. I'm looking forward to seeing your work in the coming days and weeks. I'm confident that, despite the very dark and difficult times we live in, because of the awakening of people across the world, we'll ultimately see better days.

#Max

Thank you. We're just doing our job, and we look forward to having you back very soon. Professor Mohammad Marandi of the University of Tehran, thanks for joining us at The Grayzone.

#Guest

Thank you.