

# Seyed M. Marandi: War of Attrition - Iran's Retaliatory Strikes

While the US and Israel aim for a quick regime change war, Iran believes it will prevail over time as it becomes a war of attrition. Seyed Mohammad Marandi is a professor at Tehran University and a former advisor to Iran's Nuclear Negotiation Team. Follow Prof. Glenn Diesen: Substack: <https://glennDiesen.substack.com/> X/Twitter: [https://x.com/Glenn\\_Diesen](https://x.com/Glenn_Diesen) Patreon: <https://www.patreon.com/glennDiesen> Support the research by Prof. Glenn Diesen: PayPal: <https://www.paypal.com/paypalme/glennDiesen> Buy me a Coffee: [buymeacoffee.com/gdieseng](http://buymeacoffee.com/gdieseng) Go Fund Me: <https://gofund.me/09ea012f> Books by Prof. Glenn Diesen: <https://www.amazon.com/stores/author/B09FPQ4MDL>

## #Glenn

Welcome back. We're joined today again by Saeed Mohammed Marandi, a professor at Tehran University and former advisor to Iran's nuclear negotiation team. Thank you for taking the time. I've seen some very disturbing pictures coming out of Tehran, showing attacks on the city center. You must be exhausted, so I really appreciate you joining us.

## #Seyed M. Marandi

Thank you very much for having me, Glenn. Yes, they've carried out airstrikes, and I heard from one of my friends that their home was badly damaged. So they are striking civilian targets.

## #Glenn

Well, this is the second day of the war. We spoke yesterday morning, before it was clear to what extent the Americans were involved. But now, of course, we have much more information after this has been going on for more than 24 hours. So, what do we know so far in terms of what's been targeted in Iran, and how Iran is retaliating?

## #Seyed M. Marandi

Well, the assassinations—except for the leader and the generals who were martyred—the other assassinations were not effective. And as you've seen, the Iranian response has been immediate and sustained. We've had missile strikes and drone strikes against the Israeli regime, but also against U.S. assets, targets, and military compounds—more than just military compounds. Wherever the U.S. has assets, they're also being targeted. I think the focus has been on the Emirates and Bahrain more than anywhere else. So this continues, and in addition to that, my understanding is that the Iranians

have mostly been using older weapons—older drones, older missiles—and the new-generation missiles have either been very rarely used or not used in many cases.

So what they're doing is trying to deplete the air defense capabilities, whether in the Persian Gulf or in the Israeli regime. Then I assume they'll move on to the newer weapons. The Iranians also carried out an airstrike—or a series of airstrikes—with their air force, which is an interesting development. I think that angered the Americans, and so they responded with their own airstrikes. A lot of people are on the streets in Tehran; it's spontaneous. I haven't been there myself, but people who have say it's just citizens gathering on their own, in mourning. But that's basically it.

## **#Glenn**

Well, we've seen a lot of attacks as Iran retaliates against American targets in the region. We've seen attacks on the UAE, Bahrain, Qatar, Kuwait, and Jordan. I wasn't sure if Saudi Arabia had had any strikes, but also Oman, because they have a port facility used by the U.S. military. Many people are surprised by the extent of this. They shouldn't have been if they had listened to you, though, because you made it very clear that this is what Iran would do if it was attacked again. But do you see a strategy in this—what they're going for—given that the Gulf states are, I guess, being targeted so much? And Israel, of course, has also been attacked again. But we haven't seen much in the way of attacks on the U.S. Navy, or maybe it's just me missing it.

## **#Seyed M. Marandi**

Well, as you rightly pointed out, if the Trump regime had people with any sense, they would have recognized that this would happen. The surprise is something that should surprise us—though it doesn't, because we're used to their ignorance. I think there's going to be further escalation down the road if the United States and the Israeli regime continue down this path. The Iranians are obviously striking, but they're not using their full capabilities. The tempo can increase very easily and rapidly. As I explained before, Iran's underground capabilities are not something the Americans can destroy.

Those underground capabilities directed toward the Persian Gulf and the Indian Ocean are far more extensive and potentially more destructive than the underground missile bases aimed at the Israeli regime. These bases have been built since Iraq was invaded, so the Iranians have been preparing for a potential U.S. attack, aggression, or invasion since roughly 2003, if not earlier. After 2003, they really began focusing on underground facilities, drone technology, and missile technology. So right now, the Iranians are basically harming the Americans, and they're also harming these Arab regimes, because the markets there are going to be badly affected—and probably permanently.

I recall—and I'm sure you'll recall—that before Saddam Hussein invaded Kuwait, Kuwait was the jewel of the Persian Gulf in terms of wealth and prosperity. But after he invaded, even though his forces were pushed back and Kuwait received all sorts of compensation from Iraq under Saddam

Hussein, it never really recovered. The economic power shifted to the southern part of the Persian Gulf region. I don't think the Emirates, Qatar, or Bahrain will ever fully recover from what happened, because it showed just how vulnerable they are. And if this continues, obviously it's going to get much worse for them. If the war expands, the situation will become even worse.

So there's talk that the Saudis and Emiratis may launch some sort of attack on Iran, which I think would be utterly foolish, because then Iran would have an excuse to hit them very, very hard. And they're very vulnerable. They're not strong people. The Emiratis only have a passport-holding population of about 1.4 million, and Saudi Arabia couldn't defeat Yemen. And of course, if Saudi confronts Iran, they could expect Yemen to open up a front against them as well. We'll have to see how that plays out. But in any case, the point is that Iran can do a lot more than what it's doing right now. Iran is planning for a long-term war, but we're seeing a pretty impressive wave after wave after wave of missile and drone attacks taking place.

## **#Glenn**

Well, we'll see now with the confirmed killing of Khamenei. I was wondering, what is the significance of this in terms of the conflict? I've seen, of course, some angry riots in Pakistan, in Karachi, as they seized and burned an American consulate. I've seen people in Bahrain celebrating as Iran pummels the American Fifth Fleet, and of course, in several Iraqi cities, people are also taking to the streets. But if you were to translate that into, I guess, the significance of this conflict—because for the U.S., this seemed to be, you know, "mission accomplished," put up the banner on their aircraft carrier—but what is the real significance of this?

## **#Seyed M. Marandi**

Well, Ayatollah Khamenei was a towering figure.

## **#Glenn**

And he spoke four languages.

## **#Seyed M. Marandi**

He was a master of Persian literature. He was also a master of Azeri and Arabic literature, and he knew English as well. That's something I have personal knowledge of—he read numerous novels in English that I know of. I think one of his favorite Western novels was *\*Les Misérables\** by Victor Hugo. He was imprisoned several times before the revolution, and after the revolution, when the war began, he became one of its leaders. When the war started, he went to the front as a volunteer, even though he had no military experience.

He gained his experience in the battles during the first months of the war, when the Iranian armed forces were in disarray. It was just after the revolution, and the whole army had been badly weakened. A lot of officers and conscripts deserted in support of the revolution, and many generals left the country—some were even captured. So the army wasn't in good shape when Saddam invaded. That's one reason why they did, obviously, invade. The Guards back then only had a few light weapons, so when he went, they were basically fighting not as well-trained soldiers but as volunteers—people who had almost nothing in the face of a very powerful army. When he became president, near the end of the war—when the Americans joined in and fought alongside Saddam Hussein—the war became much more difficult.

He left Tehran and went to the war fronts, to the most sensitive areas where the battles were taking place. There was a lot of concern that he might be killed, but he wanted to be there to boost morale. That's the kind of person he was. We saw that he stayed in his office—he was fasting during Ramadan, he was at work, and he was hit. Yet the West and anti-Iranian propaganda were saying he was hiding somewhere, while in fact he was in his office. We've seen people in the streets go out spontaneously since early this morning.

People were out till late last night, not knowing that he was a martyr. But then again, they went out early this morning. So, you know, a lot of people are in mourning, and overwhelmingly he's a very popular figure. The West would like to portray him as unpopular and hated, but you saw the February 11th rallies—I'm sure many of your viewers did—on the anniversary of the revolution. It's clear where popular sentiment in Iran lies, despite the sanctions, the difficulties, and the hardship imposed on the people.

But in any case, he'll be remembered as a martyr for Palestine, a martyr for the oppressed, and as someone who made Iran strong and supported the Latin American countries that opposed U.S. hegemony. In Southern Africa, too, he was key in supporting the anti-apartheid forces. He was a towering figure. But I think what the United States actually did was strengthen Iran, because there's a lot of anger—both inside and outside the country. In Iraq, people are angry; we're seeing images coming from there. Apparently, in Pakistan, there were American soldiers, if I'm not mistaken, who gunned down protesters. I think this is going to harden the Iranian position. And as you saw yesterday, immediately after the Israeli strikes, we saw the Iranian response.

And I think that was very significant. That response has been continuing ever since—yesterday, last night, and today. The Air Force, as I said earlier, participated, so I think that just shows the institutions are working well, that society is united, and that it's angry. Iran's supporters beyond its borders are outraged. I don't think that's good for the United States or any U.S. proxies or allies across the region. So, in a sense, they've done more damage to themselves than good, contrary to what they expected. They've turned him into a martyr—literally a martyr—and I think that's going to make him much more popular, even beyond his normal constituency.

This culture of Karbala and Ashura, and of Imam Hussain—the grandson of the Prophet—is very, very potent in Iranian and Shia culture, and in Islamic culture more broadly, even among many Sunnis. His martyrdom has been framed, or is seen, within that context because the enemy—the Yazid of our time, Trump and the Epstein class—targeted him. And so that boosts Iran's soft power; it boosts unity and sympathy for the Iranian position. I don't see this as a loss. I mean, obviously, there will be difficulties. Some of the generals will have to be replaced, and then a new leader will be appointed in accordance with the Constitution. But I think, in the broader picture, this actually strengthens the Islamic Republic and the resistance.

## **#Glenn**

One thing that stands out here, though, as a final note from the past 24 hours, is that this didn't follow a slow, traditional escalation ladder as many had expected. Not only were there retaliatory strikes against the Gulf states, but also the shutdown of the Strait of Hormuz. This was considered the geoeconomic nuclear bomb, essentially, and it was already launched on the first day. So how do you see possible escalations moving forward? Or do you think this was just everything coming out at once?

## **#Seyed M. Marandi**

Well, the Iranians have not yet revealed their capabilities. Their ability to destroy tankers and assets on the other side of the Persian Gulf is enormous, and they haven't really touched those capabilities. These drones you see being constantly fired into Dubai or different ports and U.S. assets—these are old drones, and they're just the tip of the iceberg. So if Iran wants to shut down the Strait of Hormuz completely, it can be done. But it can also do something far more devastating, and that is destroy everything. If it destroys everything and then there's peace, or a ceasefire, or a halt in hostilities, and the Strait of Hormuz is open, there will be no ships going through the Strait, and there will be no oil or gas production that ships can take out of the Persian Gulf.

What Iran can do is far greater than what it's doing now. But I think Iran is basically, just like during the 12-day war, managing the war because they want to see how things are going to play out. We don't know if this war is going to last two weeks, two months, or six months—we just don't know. Some of our mutual friends, as well as others, talk about the problems the United States and the Israeli regime will face in the coming days, with regard to ammunition but also the fighter jets. Since they have to fly from far away, they need to be refueled—twice, if I'm not mistaken—to bomb Iran. That causes a lot of difficulty; it decreases the number of times they can bomb Iran, and it also, I think, puts a lot of strain on the jets themselves.

They have to be overhauled, so it's not clear how long the United States can sustain this. What I believe the Iranians are doing is exhausting them—they're depleting their air defenses. They're using their old missiles and drones because, in five years' time—and again, I'm not an expert on these things—they become increasingly less useful. So now is the time to use them. All these older missiles

and drones are draining their defense capabilities, and you know how expensive those are. So Iran is already preparing itself for escalation.

So it's hiding—keeping its capabilities hidden, intact, spread across the country—using older equipment or weapons, but striking effectively. So I think we'll have to wait and see how long this takes. But if we look at the previous model—and again, I'm sorry if my response isn't very useful, because I don't know the future and I don't know the details of what Iran is planning—but if the 12-day war that we saw before is a good model, I think it's fair to say the Israelis were exhausted after, let's say, seven, eight, nine days. I don't know exactly when, but things were getting worse. So while I don't know how long the Americans and the Israelis can continue this, I think that's the model the Iranians are looking to: exhaust them and then pile on the pressure.

## **#Glenn**

Well, what you're describing, then, is two different war strategies. It looked as if the U.S. was hoping for a quick regime-change war to knock out military and political leadership. And then the rest was, I guess, they hoped—if hope is a strategy—that Iran would crumble along the Syrian model. What you're describing, though, is a war of attrition, where the Iranians try to make themselves capable of absorbing the pain and the attacks coming toward them, dealing it back, and assuming the adversary will be exhausted first. Just as a last question—I know you can't predict the future—but given how you've seen the past, one thing I'd like to add here is that they have a history of miscalculations.

## **#Seyed M. Marandi**

I actually just did a program on al-Mayadeen that was broadcast on Friday. I showed that this narrative of Iran collapsing, falling apart—that the revolution is despised by the youth and that a counter-revolution or a new revolution is about to take place—has existed since the late 1980s, the 1990s, and so on. It just goes on; it's the same thing over and over again, and nothing changes.

And I mean, if some of your viewers have time to take a look—especially at the first half of the program—it's quite fascinating. You could just exchange the phrases and the headlines from back then with what you have now, and no one would notice the difference. It would be the exact same thing for over 40 years. So the problem really is that the West has this narrative it has invested so much into. And of course, they've put a lot of money into propaganda; they have tens of thousands of Iranians on the payroll in the West. I mean, just in Albania, they have three to four thousand Iranian trolls from the MEK terror organization.

So when they have that many people there, imagine how many are funded through all these anti-Iranian television channels that beam into Iran and Persia. There are far more of them in the West than there are actually in Iran—television channels, websites, news outlets, and so on—all hostile toward Iran. But the point is, the people they fund create a vicious circle. They reinforce that

narrative, and their policies on Iran end up being based on a false premise, which leads policymakers to make flawed decisions. Then they hit a brick wall. But since the narrative is so powerful, they don't change; they just go back and do the same thing over and over again. So, to me, the notion that Iran will somehow collapse is just ridiculous.

But for them, even though it didn't collapse in the past—and we had the demise of Imam Khomeini, the assassination of a president and a prime minister back when we still had a prime minister under the previous constitution, the murder of the head of state, all sorts of catastrophic events—just recently a president died in a helicopter crash. He passed away. I don't know if he was martyred; I don't have evidence for that. But the point is, the system is much stronger and more stable than they think. And I think this stems from Orientalism. They think, "Oh, well, Iran is just this Oriental despot—take off the head and everything falls apart." Whereas Iran, Iranian society, is very sophisticated. And the constitution, if anyone reads it, is a complex state.

And we have a complex state structure. So the leader, when he passes away or if he's martyred, is replaced. And Ayatollah Khamenei's stature in the eyes of the people, as I said before, has grown. He's become a great figure of the revolution. Many people would have preferred that he not stay at home or in his office, but that was his decision—to stay put. Apparently, he said that many people don't have anywhere to go, so he wasn't going anywhere either. That was his worldview. So the point is, they should have understood this, but they can't because of their narratives, their Orientalism, and their racism. And I think that's going to continue to be the case in the days and weeks ahead.

## **#Glenn**

Well, one sees from the literature these common flaws in narratives. For example, after the Bolshevik Revolution, you know, the people who really hated the communists were the ones who went to the U.S. So when the U.S. suddenly had to learn about this new country that had emerged—the Soviet Union—they turned to the diaspora at home. And, of course, the information we get is from the ones who hate the government the most, who try to reassure them that if you just, you know, push them, they'll fall over easily—you know, "go get our country back," essentially. And there are also some narratives, of course, that have been made deliberately.

So that's interesting. It's always a common, I guess, playbook—that the adversary is all-powerful and weak at the same time. The adversary is evil, irrational, all-powerful, but also weak. So if we just push on it, it will fall apart. You kind of see the same narratives, whether it's Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, or Syria—it's always the same storyline. It's just a population there hating the government, waiting for us to come and free them, and then the weak government will fall apart and we'll be greeted as liberators—you know, the George Bush line, essentially.

## **#Seyed M. Marandi**

If I were to tell American analysts to do one thing—even though, honestly, even if they did it, they still wouldn't learn—I'd tell them to read about Karbala and Ashura, the events there, and how they influence Iranian society, culture, and the axis of resistance in general. But they can't see the world that way. They can only see it through their narrow-minded worldview of exceptionalism and supremacism. And, of course, the Epstein class—as a class of people above politics and above politicians—is another thing altogether. They're incapable of learning. But if they did learn, they'd behave very differently toward Iran.

I think the kind of things I've been saying over the years really irritate them. They get angry when I say it and call it propaganda, but it's actually just reality—the simple facts on the ground. They just can't see it; they can't absorb it or understand the logic. From their supremacist perspective, they dismiss it and call it propaganda. But the reality is, it's been 47 years, and they've waged two wars—and with Saddam Hussein, that makes three. Maximum pressure, sanctions, war after war, yet it hasn't collapsed. So you'd think someone would say, "Wait a minute, let's rethink this whole thing."

This isn't working as planned, but that's not going to change until they hit a brick wall that's, uh, bigger than just this conflict. And that, I think, will be an economic crisis or some kind of internal social crisis that this war will no doubt contribute to. But I think the only thing that can change the West is a major historic shift. And that, I believe, will take the form of a collapse—whether it's a mix of economic, political, social, or military collapse, or more one than the other, I don't know. But I think that's the only thing that's going to bring about change in the West and in their mentality toward the rest of the world.

## **#Glenn**

Just a brief last question. Without, of course, having a crystal ball to see the future, what do you expect to see today?

## **#Seyed M. Marandi**

I think the war will continue to be tough, but we will keep fighting. We are determined. As General Soleimani once said, we are the nation of Imam Hussain—and that's who we are. So we will see this through. We will defeat the United States and the Israeli regime. They will have to come to terms with a strategic defeat. It will come at a major price, but it's the only way forward. We're not going to accept subjugation or humiliation, and we cherish our sovereignty. I don't see any other way forward. This is going to be a battle of wills, and for us, it's an existential war.

For them, it's a war of choice—for the sake of the Epstein class, for the sake of the Zionists. But in addition to that, Iran and the Axis of Resistance have that extra capability, and that is the culture of Ashura, which is such a central part of this whole Axis of Resistance. And as I said, the march of the Muba'yat al-Khamenei is something that has shifted the situation across the region. People in Iraq are moved, people in Yemen are moved, people elsewhere are moved. If the war continues and

expands, this is going to be very detrimental to the West because it gives the resistance more strength—it makes it more potent.

## **#Glenn**

Well, thanks for taking the time. Yeah, everyone I speak to about this seems to agree. Some think this can be put in the category of being sympathetic to Iran; others are more hostile to Iran. But everyone seems to agree that this was not a very well-thought-out war—that it's probably a massive mistake. I think over the next few days, that will become evident to everyone. So, thank you again for taking the time.

## **#Seyed M. Marandi**

Yes, I have no doubt this was a catastrophic mistake for Trump and the whole Zionist project. But they're too drunk to understand what they've done.