

Iran Withstands Attacks, Punishes US & Allies | Prof. Seyed M. Marandi

If you kill the leader of an entire religion, and start a war of aggression during a country's holiest month—the equivalent of being attacked in the West right before Christmas—you better be damn sure you have a swift way to victory. With every day this war drags on, the pain on the US and its regional allies—including Isreal, the primary reason for the war—increases. And Iran knows this. Professor Marandi tells me that Iran has been preparing for this type of scenario for decades. There are reasons why all their important military infrastructure is deep under ground. Listen to Dr. Marandi, Professor at the University of Tehran explaining what it means to be in the city of attack and how the Iranians are reacting to the US' largest assault on the region and on International Law. Support us on the Neutrality Studies substack: <https://pascallottaz.substack.com> (Opt in for Academic Section from your profile settings: <https://pascallottaz.substack.com/s/academic>) Merch & Donations: <https://neutralitystudies-shop.fourthwall.com>

#Pascal

Hello, everybody. Welcome back to Neutrality Studies. I'm Pascal Lottaz. I'm an associate professor at Kyoto University, and today I have the very special privilege—if not pleasure—of talking again with Professor Marandi from the University of Tehran. He's in Tehran, he's in Iran right now. Professor Marandi, welcome back.

#Seyed M. Marandi

Thank you very much for inviting me. It's a great pleasure.

#Pascal

Well, I'm glad to be talking to you. I'm glad that we can talk, because your country is under attack. It was, in my view, pretty viciously and pretty deceptively attacked on Saturday. We're speaking today on March 3rd—it's Tuesday. Can you tell us, how are you? How is it going? And how are you experiencing all the tragedy unfolding?

#Seyed M. Marandi

Well, you know, history is—well, as I see it, if not much better. This is the third war that the United States has engaged in against Iran. In 1980, when Saddam Hussein invaded our country at the behest of both superpowers, the United States increasingly became the driving force behind him. The West gave him chemical weapons—mostly coming from Germany, from the factories that

produced them. They set up those factories across Iraq and slaughtered many people. In just one instance, they killed 6,500 Kurds in the city of Halabja and the surrounding areas within a couple of minutes. And the US did nothing.

And then ultimately, when Saddam was still losing the war, the United States entered the fray. They fought alongside Saddam Hussein. They sank Iranian naval ships, destroyed Iranian oil installations, and downed an Iranian airliner, killing 290 people. Then, more recently, we saw the 12-day war, where the United States, through deception, pretended to negotiate with Iran. Afterwards, between rounds five and six of the negotiations, there was a blitzkrieg attack. And now, of course, this third war that the United States is directly involving itself in is another war of choice, carried out for the sake of the Netanyahu regime and the elite class that rules over the United States.

Excuse me. So this is not new. But this war is a major air campaign. The United States has brought literally everything it can to carry out airstrikes. And since Iran's key military assets are all deep underground and thus inaccessible to the American regime and the Netanyahu regime, they bomb cities. They bomb civilian infrastructure and homes. They bomb hospitals. Last night, I was on Iranian television for a show, and an hour later they bombed Iranian television. The night before, they also bombed Iranian television. The studio I was supposed to go to was bombed the night before. And then last night, I went to a different place.

I don't know exactly what was struck, but they bombed the Iranian National Radio and Television compound. They bomb hospitals, they bomb schools. Right now, as you and I are speaking, a funeral procession is taking place in the city of Minab. It's not a very large city. On the first day, American missiles hit an elementary school, killing roughly 165 schoolgirls—and there was complete indifference in the Western media: the BBC, CNN, everyone else—because these children are worthless to them. And on that same day, they also bombed a gymnasium where young girls were playing basketball, and they murdered the basketball players.

Sorry, they were playing volleyball, and they murdered the volleyball players. So after the first day, the Iranians decided to shut down all schools. Our schools and universities are closed. I had class yesterday, but since it was closed, I didn't teach. I don't know if we're going to have online courses in the days or weeks ahead. It's also, by the way, during Ramadan. Lots of people are fasting. And in a little over two weeks from now, we have the Iranian New Year. So death and destruction are being rained upon the Iranian people in a war of choice by the Americans during this period.

At night in Tehran, we're being bombed. During the day, we're bombed. And they have what's called a double tap—I think that's the term—double tap airstrikes. In Ferdowsi Square, one of my friends was there. They struck the square, the buildings around it, and then people rushed in to help, rescuers and others. And as they were trying to find survivors, they hit the same place again. So this is what we're dealing with—two barbaric regimes that have no humanity. But the Iranians are fighting back. We see Iranian missiles striking occupied Palestine. We see Iranians hitting U.S. assets in the Persian Gulf, and the U.S. is hurting.

#Pascal

U.S. jets were downed. Just—let's go there for a second, just to update everyone. Do you know what the official death toll is so far? And in Tehran, are you still able to move around, or is everybody scared and hiding in bunkers or whatnot? How is life working right now in Tehran?

#Seyed M. Marandi

Well, at night, people—well, let me first say that the government and the Supreme National Security Council, on day one, asked people who didn't need to stay in Tehran to leave, because the U.S. and Israelis were bombing civilian infrastructure. For example, they bombed the central building for emergency services, the ambulances. They bombed the central building of the Red Crescent. So these are the monsters we're dealing with.

#Pascal

These are purely humanitarian services. They're just there to rescue people. It's so harsh. That's the point. That's the point.

#Seyed M. Marandi

Just like the double-tap attack. The point is—well, what I was going to say is that last night in Tehran, and the night before, there were huge gatherings of people across the city to support the armed forces and to commemorate the martyrdom of Ayatollah Khamenei. I put clips of these on my Telegram channel and posted a couple on my Twitter account. Huge crowds—but not in one place—spread across different squares in Tehran, both last night and the night before, under air fire, under airstrikes. And in some of the images, you can see people on the streets as the Israelis are bombing and as surface-to-air defenses are working.

And people—men and women—stand their ground, denounce the Trump regime, and express support for the state and the armed forces. But businesses—it's not business as usual. A lot of them are closed. Those that are open, I haven't asked, but I'm pretty confident that if I go to some of the shops still open, they probably don't have that many customers. So Tehran is less crowded, partly because many people have left, but also because a lot of people, I presume, are staying at home. Government departments are functioning, but at a minimal level, to decrease the risk of their colleagues—government employees—being hurt, killed, or murdered.

#Pascal

Hey, very brief intermission because I was recently banned from YouTube. And although I'm back, this could happen again at any time. So please consider subscribing not only here, but also to my mailing list on Substack—that's pascallottaz.substack.com. The link's in the description below. And now, back to the video.

#Seyed M. Marandi

It's a very, very horrible situation, of course.

#Pascal

Can you tell me your assessment of what Iran is doing now? I mean, on the one hand, you have this mighty United States arsenal being unleashed on Iran. And of course, most of the things Israel fires are also made in the USA, and they're obviously striking in coordination. But Iran has now decided to strike back very hard—not only against Israel, but against all of the Gulf states. What do you see as the strategy here, or whatever you can share with us?

#Seyed M. Marandi

Well, I should also add that, alongside slaughtering Iranians as we speak, the Israeli regime is bombing Lebanon and killing Lebanese civilians. They're bombing Beirut, bombing apartment blocks, bringing them down, crushing people inside, and destroying families. And it's happening at a massive pace. Of course, the West looks away, and Western media looks away—no condemnation of strikes against civilians, because that's what the West does. They've dropped the mask. They are the barbarians they have always been—these regimes—for centuries, since the rise of Western empires.

And the facade and the pretense that we saw for a few days—the political correctness we saw for a few decades—that's all gone. So it's all out in the open. Right now, the Iranians are hammering Israel, occupied Palestine, with missiles. And it seems that the Israeli regime's air defenses are running out or are incapable, because almost all Iranian missiles are getting through. And there's no let-up. The Iranians are striking volley after volley. In the Persian Gulf, the Iranians are using a different set of weapons because they don't need those long-range missiles. Right now, they're bombing Tel Aviv as we speak. I don't know if you can hear it.

But you may hear it in a couple of seconds if some of the bombs strike close by. So, in the Persian Gulf region and the Indian Ocean, the Iranians are using shorter-range missiles because the Persian Gulf isn't very wide and U.S. assets aren't very far away. The underground bases they use there are firing missiles and drones that are very inexpensive for Iran. And since they're all in underground bases, they're not accessible to the United States. They're striking targets linked to the U.S. in the Persian Gulf region—U.S. bases—and the U.S. has moved its soldiers to hotels and other buildings, so the Iranians are hitting them in those places as well.

A couple of oil and gas facilities have been damaged, but it's unclear how that happened or who did it. The Iranians are not allowing oil or gas to leave the Persian Gulf. As you know, the price of oil and gas has gone up, although Iran isn't destroying any of the tankers and there's no major damage to any oil or gas facilities. But if there's an escalation, I'm pretty certain that will happen. The tankers that do try to leave the Persian Gulf—a handful of them under U.S. pressure—Iran hit every single one. So the other tankers are staying put.

#Pascal

Yeah. So basically, they're locked in and nothing's coming through. And the—what do you make of the—you know, Donald Trump said at the very beginning, in this unhinged speech of his, that all the Iranian forces need to lay down their weapons, including the police, otherwise they'll all be killed—every one of them, he said. And that the goal of the bombing campaign is to destroy the entire military infrastructure, and then, once that's done, the Iranian people should naturally rise up, take over the government, and be done with it. I mean, can you tell us how realistic that scenario is?

#Seyed M. Marandi

Well, this is unhinged, but the West in general—the political elites—have always been unhinged. They believe their own propaganda on Iran. They spend many billions of dollars a year on anti-Iranian propaganda through hundreds of Persian-language media outlets that beam into Iran or can be accessed there from the West—TV channels, satellite TV, things we can access online—all the time, very hostile toward the country. There are Persian-language Telegram channels and elaborate websites with news about Iran, full of disinformation, trying to create fear and despair among Iranians. And they have tens of thousands of Iranians on the payroll. I mean, in just one camp in Albania, which I'm sure you know about—the MEK terror organization—they have three to four thousand people there.

And they're just trolls. That's their job. I mean, that's just one small example. You have all these television stations, websites, and other troll farms owned by the same people, or by other terror organizations or the monarchists. They put a lot of money into this, and then these people use that money to pay Western politicians, who in turn support them. Then, in parliament or government, they approve new funding. This reinforces a narrative about Iran, because these people say what the West—Western regimes and elites—wants to hear: that Iran is unpopular, that the Islamic Republic is despised, that it's imploding, about to collapse, a house of cards, and all that nonsense.

And actually, I... I have this weekly program that I've been doing for, I don't know, twelve weeks or so—three months maybe—on Al Mayadeen television. But my show is in English, my program. It's a monologue. And in the last one, which was on Friday, the program was called **Demystifying Iran**. In that episode, I was talking about the never-ending narrative of Iran's collapse. I showed that in the 1980s, the 1990s, and the beginning of the new century, the headlines and articles about Iran in the **New York Times**, the **Washington Post**, the **Herald Tribune**, and all these other outlets—if

you removed the dates and published them now—you couldn't tell the difference. They were saying back then that it was about to implode.

The youth, thirty years ago, had turned against the regime—as they like to call it—and it was “imploding.” Another revolution was supposedly emerging. If anyone watches it, just see the first ten minutes; it's quite amusing. That narrative never ends. They're always basing things on fake calculations and fake stories. They implement policy, then hit a brick wall, and they never learn. During the twelve-day war, they didn't learn. And now they're talking about what they're going to do in the future in Iran—whether the Americans will have something to do with running the country and all that. All these fake assumptions. And they will fail, without a doubt. Iran will prevail, though at a great cost to the Iranian people. But we have no choice. It was an imposed war of aggression. Still, Iran will inflict a strategic defeat on the Trump and Netanyahu regimes.

#Pascal

Are you worried that Israel could use nuclear weapons against Iran?

#Seyed M. Marandi

I don't think the world will accept that. I think that would be a bridge too far. The world already despises the Israeli regime, and it despises the Trump regime. Even in countries that are allies of the United States, many ordinary people recognize the true essence of these regimes. But across the world, hostility toward them is growing. I don't think Russia, China, and others will tolerate that. But if they do, they still cannot destroy Iran with a few nuclear weapons. And Iran has said before that if there is an existential threat to the country—an existential threat—then it will change its nuclear posture. Iran does not want nuclear weapons; it has refrained from producing them.

Just like during the war, when the West gave Saddam Hussein chemical weapons, Iran refrained from producing them. There was a fatwa back then because chemical weapons were inhumane, and there's a fatwa now about nuclear weapons. The IAEA has said there's never been any indication that Iran was moving toward a nuclear weapon at any point. American intelligence has admitted, at least since 2003, that there was never such a move. But we've heard from an advisor to the leader over the last year—twice—Dr. Kharrazi, who was the foreign minister in the Khatami administration for years. As an advisor to the leader, he said twice that Iran will change its nuclear posture if there's an existential threat.

And Dr. Larijani, when he was an advisor to the leader—Dr. Larijani, who is now the chair of the Supreme National Security Council and a very, very important figure—he too said that if there is an existential threat, Iran will change its nuclear posture. So hopefully—I mean, the very fact that you asked this question, and the very fact that so many other people are asking it—shows how barbaric the Israeli regime is, that people can even contemplate such a thing. And it shows how barbaric Western regimes are, and how Western media is so captured by the Epstein class that they blame

the victims all the time. They never blame the Israeli regime for genocide or aggression, and they don't raise these sorts of questions. They look away because their journalists are not real journalists; their journalists are employees of the Epstein class.

#Pascal

It's absolutely insane. I mean, when Russia—when the full-scale war with Ukraine happened, the so-called special military operation—the entire West was screaming bloody murder because it was a nuclear-weapon state attacking a non-nuclear-weapon state. And this time, it's two nuclear-weapon states—two of them—working together to attack a non-nuclear-weapon state that's been saying, "We don't want nuclear weapons." And the other side accuses it of wanting them. They've been saying for 30 years, "We don't want them."

They're not producing them. But that's the ridiculousness of the situation we're moving in. But may I just ask again, to understand you correctly—I mean, the Supreme Leader of Iran, Ayatollah Khamenei, was killed on Sunday. Are you saying that, to Iran, that is not yet an existential threat? I mean, you're not perceiving it on that level yet? So Iran is still operating within a different set of assumptions about how to conduct a war.

#Seyed M. Marandi

Well, first of all, he is the most important religious leader in the Shia world, and he has the largest following among Shias across the world. We also have others, like Ayatollah Sistani, Ayatollah Makarim Shirazi, and others who have many followers, but they also support him and are all outraged. So the entire Shia world is up in arms. His credibility among Sunni Muslims has risen dramatically because he's the only person defending the Palestinian people—the only leader. No one else is doing this. And Shia countries, the Axis of Resistance, they're the only ones making sacrifices to stop the genocide in Gaza, whether it's in Yemen or in Lebanon.

Lebanon has made enormous sacrifices—the resistance there. Thousands of men, women, and children have been slaughtered by the Israelis in this small country. Many thousands. And so, Sunnis across the world are increasingly seeing through the Qatari, Saudi, Erdogan, and UAE propaganda. They've been trying to demonize Iran and the Shias and create division for decades through slander and disinformation, because they're all in the American camp. I mean, as we speak, they all host U. S. bases. Turkey is transporting oil to Israel—to the Israeli regime. NATO AWACS jets are flying over Turkey to help gather information on Iran.

American bases in Turkey are being used, and in Jordan their bases are being used too. Their radar is operating in Jordan. There are huge numbers of U.S. aircraft on Saudi air bases. So people across the Islamic world see that this propaganda, which has been going on for almost five decades, has all

been based on lies—and that the only ones sacrificing for Sunnis, for Palestinian Sunnis, are the Axis of Resistance. But it goes even further than that, because the Iranians have always supported the oppressed.

That's a part of their religious ideology—especially as Shias. They have a special ideological vision, and they support the oppressed. They support Cuba, they support Venezuela, they supported the resistance in Southern Africa against apartheid. And so, across the Global South—not so much in the West, but across the Global South—many people who've been seeking liberation view Iran very differently from the way the West has presented it. And over the past two and a half years, ever since October 7th, Iran's image, and that of their axis, has been growing across the Global South.

And now, during these days, they see that Iran is refusing to submit. So Iran's stature is growing across the world and across the region. And this, I think, is very bad news for the United States. The empire—part of its success is to project power—but when it's viewed as incapable, despite mobilizing its regional proxies that I just explained—the dictator families, the dictatorships in the Persian Gulf, Jordan, Erdoğan, and others—and then the entire Western camp on the side of Trump, supporting this aggression and this joint slaughter being carried out by the Trump and Netanyahu regimes, people see that Iran is fighting back, and the Axis of Resistance is fighting back.

So this is breaking the image of the United States. And on the other hand, the Iranians have closed, as I said earlier, the Strait of Hormuz, and there's nothing the Americans can do about it. We have to keep in mind—you live in a technologically advanced country—AI is the future battlefield, the last hope of the U.S. economy, because it's been deindustrialized. So they're focusing on AI. Iran is driving the price of oil and gas up, and the United States is desperate to succeed in AI. So if the Americans escalate, the Iranians can tighten the screw and drive oil and gas prices through the roof.

I think the Americans are in a very bad situation. They're carrying out atrocities 24 hours a day, no doubt. The Iranians are hurting, but the country is united. If anyone goes to my Telegram channel or my Twitter account and sees the images of people on the streets in Tehran and across the country every night, they'll be amazed—under fire. Because the Americans are not just bombing Tehran; they're bombing hundreds of cities. And they're bombing, as I said, schools, hospitals, police stations—local police stations. They're trying to destroy civil society. They're trying to destroy the structures of society.

#Pascal

It seems pretty clear to me that the number one objective of the United States is to try to bring about regime change. But short of that, they'll try to carpet-bomb Iran in a way that its social fabric collapses into civil strife. That's also why they target the police forces and the civil infrastructure of the civilian administration in these different places—because you need to create conditions where the whole country can fall into civil war, right? That's the second message.

#Seyed M. Marandi

That's why they bomb emergency services—so people can't call for ambulances.

#Pascal

So what is Iran's counter-strategy now? I mean, what would be a scenario where Iran would say, "OK, now we've repelled them"? If the U.S. and Iran become physically unable or unwilling to fire, at what point would Iran say, "OK, fine, we did it, this is done from our side"? Like, what would that look like?

#Seyed M. Marandi

That's complicated. You know, there's no clear scenario in my mind—it could play out in many different ways. But ultimately, the Americans are going to have to back down. We saw something like that in Yemen. Remember the war where the United States was going to defeat Yemen and Ansar Allah—what they like to call the Houthis? In the end, Trump announced victory and walked away. He said they capitulated, but they didn't. So Yemen won, after seven weeks of war and damage to the world economy and the U.S. economy. Yemen won the war, but really it was just the Americans giving up. After a period of time, the Americans are going to have to give up.

They're taking casualties. Their armed forces are paying a huge price. I mean, every time they bomb Iranian cities—since they're afraid of Iranian missiles and drones—their planes, their jets, stay very far away. They don't fly over Iran; they fire missiles at it. But to do that, they have to be refueled on the way in and refueled again on the way back. So the flights are very long. That's not good for the jets, and the fuel is very expensive. And of course, the bombs and missiles are expensive, and they're being depleted as we speak. The United States isn't an industrialized country like China, nor does it have a military industry like Russia.

These missiles are very expensive to make in the United States. Iran fires a drone at a U.S. base, and the U.S. fires anti-drone missiles. The Iranian drone costs a few thousand dollars, while the American missile costs a few hundred thousand. And then, of course, the price of energy is going up. So you have all of these things playing out. This is not going to end well, especially with Trump already being so unpopular. You have the Epstein files, you have the deep divisions in the United States. Unlike previous wars, where the Western media would just lie openly and Western leaders would lie openly—and most people would believe them and support the war, like in Iraq.

Here, despite the lies, we saw Witkoff claim that in ten days Iran would make a nuclear weapon, or Van Singh saying more or less the same thing—Trump talking about Iran making missiles to strike the United States. All these lies we heard back in 2002 and 2003. In those years, they were able to mobilize American society, like in other wars. The West is good at mobilizing the naive people of the West. But now, the distrust toward Western regimes and Western media is so great that, even

though the disinformation on Iran is effective, people still have overwhelmingly negative and bizarre views about Iran that aren't rooted in reality. Basically, Western media—from The Guardian to Fox News, from Breitbart to The Independent—they're all the same when it comes to Iran.

We saw in Congress, when Trump gave his State of the Union, the only time all the senators got up together and clapped—Democrats and Republicans—was when he was attacking Iran. So the United States has not been able to convince the American public. And the world is more or less outraged, except for pockets of support, maybe in India and in some quarters in Europe. People are seeing through this. So it's going to be very hard for the United States—for Trump and the ruling class, the ruling Epstein class in the United States—to sustain this for very long. Because the hardship and the pain being inflicted are seen as being done for the sake of the Israeli regime. Not very...

#Pascal

Right. And one last question, because I know you've got a lot on your plate. The collaboration—or rather, the interactions—with Russia and China, how do you see those? Are they increasing? Are you hearing anything? Are others helping? Are you receiving humanitarian aid from them?

#Seyed M. Marandi

You know, ever since the 12-day war, the liberals in Iran—the ones who argued we should try to build bridges with the West—their position has been melting away very fast. And now I think there's a consensus. The West can pretend that Iranians support them, that those rioters represented Iranian society. They can say that all they want, they can pound their heads against a brick wall. That's fine. They'll kill people—they don't care—but they'll pay a price too. The Iranians are united against the United States and the West. And now that they've seen that every time they negotiate, the United States tries to deceive Iran. This time Iran was not fooled at all; it was prepared. Ayatollah Khamenei stayed at his residence, he stayed and worked in his office, because he chose to do so.

He was not afraid. When they asked him to move, he said a lot of people have nowhere to go except their own homes, so he wasn't going anywhere either. He knew, but he was steadfast, and that has made him even more heroic among ordinary Iranians. His wife was martyred, his son-in-law was martyred, his daughter was martyred, his granddaughter was martyred. But the rest of the military and political establishment was much less affected than during the 12-day war. Iran is united. And for the United States, that is, I think, the ultimate defeat—for the United States and the Israeli regime. The key Iranian military assets are well protected.

They're deep underground. As I said earlier, the Iranians have been preparing for an attack from the United States for decades. Or maybe I didn't say this before, but ever since the invasion of Iraq, the Iranians have been building underground bases across the Persian Gulf region and beyond, because the U.S. named Iran as part of the "axis of evil" and started saying all options were on the table—

Bush, Obama, and so on. So Iran has been preparing itself. This is not a scenario in which Americans can achieve victory. They can slaughter Iranians, but it will end in failure. And I'm sorry, I forgot your question. I'm not sure I was actually answering it.

#Pascal

The question was whether Russia and China are offering any kind of help.

#Seyed M. Marandi

Yes, right. So the liberals have lost the argument, and many have tilted away. As I said, those rioters don't represent Iranian public opinion—they're a small segment of society. Many of them now regret what they did because they see what the United States is doing to them. So the argument now is that we should focus more on friendly countries, those that are not attacking us. The consensus in Iran has been created partly thanks to Trump, the regime in Washington, and the Israeli regime. Relations with Russia and China have improved, and I think in the coming years those bonds will strengthen further.

#Pascal

Right. What a lot of people get wrong is that Iran is a very diverse society with many different opinions, but this war is now channeling those opinions into, well, the few avenues that are still possible. Professor Marandi, thank you very much for your time today, and please stay safe. You know, I'm not a faithful person, or I'm not a great believer, but if there's anything close to it, then I'd say I'm praying for you and everyone in the entire region to be safe. I'll also put the link to your X profile in the description of this video. Everybody, please go and check the updates from Professor Mohammad Marandi. Professor, thank you for your time today.

#Seyed M. Marandi

Thank you very much. As General Soleimani once famously said, we are the nation of Imam Hussain. If American analysts, politicians, and military officials had read a bit about the story of Karbala—about its impact on Iranian society, the grandson of the Prophet, and how deeply it's embedded in Iran's religious ideology of supporting the oppressed and defying the oppressor—they would have thought twice about attacking Iran. But hopefully, despite the fact that the days are dark for Lebanon, for Iranians, for people across the region, and for people across the globe—because people everywhere are outraged and deeply disturbed by what the West is doing—and of course, Gaza, Gaza, Gaza. Hopefully, despite the darkness, the sun will shine upon humanity in the future, the empire will collapse, and those who survive will see better days.

#Pascal

The sun will rise again. Thank you, Professor Marandi.