

# Seyed M. Marandi: Iran's Military Strategy & U.S. Miscalculations

Seyed Mohammad Marandi is a professor at Tehran University and a former advisor to Iran's Nuclear Negotiation Team. Prof. Marandi outlines Iran's objectives and strategy in the war, and explains how and why the U.S. miscalculated. 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](https://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 to the program. Today we're joined by Saeed Mohamed Marandi, a professor at Tehran University and a former advisor to Iran's nuclear negotiation team. Thank you for coming back on the program. We're now well into the fourth day of this war, and we're starting to get, I guess, a clearer picture of each side's ability to inflict pain on the other, but also their ability to absorb it. I was wondering, what are your assessments of where we're heading and how the war is being fought?

## #Seyed M. Marandi

Well, thank you very much for inviting me, Glenn. It's always an honor. I think by now it should be clear to everyone—the West, the collective West, the elites in the West—that things are not going as planned. And as I've been saying for many months, and as some others, including mutual friends of ours, have been saying for a very long time, the calculations that Washington and its allies make are based on a narrative that is inaccurate. That false and misleading narrative leads policymakers to formulate policies that ultimately fail and create misery for people across the region, if not across the world.

The idea that the Islamic Republic of Iran is unpopular, that it's collapsing, that it's imploding, that it's a house of cards, that it's corrupt—that narrative may make Western leaders, policymakers, and journalists in the mainstream media feel good, but it doesn't reflect reality. In fact, I did a program on Al-Mayadeen last Friday, on a weekly show I host called \*Demystifying Iran\*. Because of the war, I won't be doing it this week. But last Friday's episode is available for people to watch, and in the first few minutes it becomes clear: the narrative about Iran—this forever "imminently collapsing" Iran, this idea that the country is always on the verge of collapse—has been ongoing for 47 years.

And I give some examples from the late 1980s, the 1990s, and the beginning of this century. If you take those pieces from the \*New York Times\* and the \*Washington Post\* and put them into today's \*New York Times\*, \*Washington Post\*, or other outlets, you wouldn't notice the difference. Back then they were saying the revolution had failed, that another revolution was brewing, that the youth—this is like 30 years ago—the youth who didn't witness the revolution were seeking something else. All the things we hear today in the Western media, the same narrative existed 35, 40, 45, 25, even 20 years ago. So it's always collapsing, but it never seems to collapse.

And you would think that by now—especially after the 12-day war, when they were expecting Iran to fall like a house of cards—they would rethink those policies. Of course, we didn't really expect that to happen, because we all have a lot of experience with the West. And when the riots in Iran happened on the 8th and 9th of January, they were reinvigorated. They started saying that the so-called "regime"—they love to call Iran a regime—was about to fall and collapse. But again, we said this was nonsense, that popular legitimacy in the Islamic Republic is high, according to all polls and the presence of people on the streets.

And of course, after this war, we saw the same thing. Trump wanted people to come to the streets. He was fantasizing based on those narratives that Western media and Western think tanks produce. People did come to the streets—but for the exact opposite reason: to condemn him, to commemorate Ayatollah Khamenei, whom they see as a martyr. And not only are they coming to the streets, Glenn, they're coming under fire, under bomb attacks. So at night—last night and the night before—across the country there were huge rallies, which I'm sure you've seen online. I posted some of them, the ones in Tehran, on my Telegram channel. The night before last, in Tehran alone, there were about twenty gatherings, each with tens or even hundreds of thousands of people. The same was true last night.

And you can see in some of the footage that people are on the streets while anti-aircraft missiles or anti-aircraft fire is visible. But people don't move. They don't budge. They don't run away. They don't hide. They chant slogans against Trump, against Netanyahu, against the Israeli regime, and in support of the Islamic Republic. That's the reality. For me, it was obvious that this was what was going to happen. But the miscalculation in the West is never-ending. I think until there's some sort of change in the West—which may be coming soon because of the multiple crises the West and the United States are now facing—until that happens, I don't think the United States will learn. But Iran is determined to punish the enemy, and they are determined to inflict a strategic defeat on Trump and Netanyahu.

## **#Glenn**

Yeah, I saw some media reports as well—some Western ones—that suggested, because they had pictures and videos of a few women walking without their hair covered, that this was an indication of people standing up against the regime. They think women are compelled to cover their hair, so they

took that as a sign the government was collapsing. But, you know, this is the key problem: this self-delusion and misinformation. If you want to get along with Iran, you need to be properly informed. If you even want to defeat Iran, you also need to know something about it. So it's very strange, this self-delusion. I did want to ask how you see the war being...

## **#Seyed M. Marandi**

One thing I'd like to say is that dividing society between those who cover their hair and those who don't is so utterly childish—unbelievably childish. Among my own relatives, I have women who haven't worn the hijab for years in private or family gatherings and so on, and they're hardcore supporters of the Islamic Republic. And I also know women who wear the full hijab who don't support the Islamic Republic at all.

## **#Glenn**

But it's become the indicator journalists often use to gauge support for the government. I know it doesn't necessarily make sense. But in terms of how the war is fought, how do you see the focus on logistics? It appears that the Iranian strategy is to go after logistics—that is, all the warships and all the material of the United States. They have to dock somewhere to refuel and rearm. It seems Iran is targeting a lot of these ports, especially the U.S. Fifth Fleet based in Bahrain. Do you see the same focus on logistics, or how are you interpreting the Iranian strategy here?

## **#Seyed M. Marandi**

Yes, I think what Iran is doing is destroying the infrastructure the United States built across the Persian Gulf, which is very easy for Iran because it doesn't even have to use long-range missiles. They can use drones. Most of the drones and missiles being used right now are from the old generation—some of them are 20 years old. So they're using those to destroy bases, logistical capabilities, and warehouses. A lot of assets were destroyed in Kuwait. They're also targeting American soldiers. Many of the soldiers, and those linked to the armed forces of the Trump regime, sought refuge in hotels, and the Iranians said they're not going to turn a blind eye to that.

Wherever they are, we're going to hunt them. So if you sometimes see areas being struck that don't seem connected to military bases, those are places Iran considers U.S. assets, or locations the U.S. armed forces are using for the time being. Iran isn't going to pull any punches. It's striking the Americans, but it also sees all these countries—these family dictatorships—as complicit. The three airplanes that were shot down in Kuwait—whether it was friendly fire or they were brought down by Iran—doesn't make much difference. Actually, when they claim it was friendly fire, it sounds worse, because it just shows how incompetent they are, and how unreliable their weapon systems are.

But the fact that they were shot down over Kuwait, which is very close to the Iranian border—and U.S. and Israeli planes don't fly into Iran, they fire missiles from outside—shows that the Kuwaitis are

allowing them to use their airspace. And of course, the Saudis are allowing them to use their air bases. Oman or Jordan is allowing them to use their air bases too. Across the Persian Gulf, it's the same. Turkey, while continuing to transport oil to Netanyahu to help him carry out his genocide, also allows NATO AWACS planes to fly over Turkish territory to gather information about Iran and the resistance.

And they also allow U.S. bases in Turkey to be used to support both offensive and defensive operations. So all of these countries are in the American camp, and all of them are complicit in the war. The countries in the Persian Gulf in particular shouldn't expect Iran not to strike. Right now, oil and gas aren't leaving the Persian Gulf, and Iran has told ships to stay put. Those under pressure from the United States that try to leave are being hit. So far, I think seven or eight ships have been hit; the others are staying put. Iran doesn't want to halt the flow of oil. It doesn't want the destruction of oil or gas facilities in the Persian Gulf, nor does it want the tankers destroyed. Iran didn't want this war in the first place.

But Iran is putting pressure on the United States and these regional family dictatorships that have been complicit in this war, hoping it will end sooner. But if the war escalates, I have no doubt that at some point these tankers and oil and gas installations will be destroyed. And when they are, even if there's a ceasefire, there will be no tankers or oil going through the Strait of Hormuz. So the smart thing for the countries in the Persian Gulf would be to put pressure on the United States to bring this to an end, because ultimately they're the ones who are going to be hurt more than anyone else. Their own survival is at stake, and Iran is not directing its hostility toward them.

But the United States is pushing the region toward this situation. And if that happens, we'll have a global economic meltdown—worse than 1929, in my opinion. Especially when it comes at a time when the United States needs cheap energy for its AI projects, which are very energy-intensive. This is the most foolish thing; it's utterly immoral and murderous. Just this morning, we had a very large funeral for roughly 165 children that the Americans murdered in Minup City, and the Western media is completely different—obviously not like the BBC, CNN, and all the others. They're just stenographers for the Epstein class. But Iran does not want escalation. It's simply defending itself. So if these regimes are successful in forcing the Americans to retreat, it's good for everyone.

## **#Glenn**

Yeah, the attacks on the hotels are an interesting issue, because in the rules of just war, you divide it into two: the right to go to war, the *\*jus ad bellum\**, and then the rules when you are in war, the *\*jus in bello\**. And under the rules of war, it suggests that whenever you have— even if you have— military forces or weaponry placed in a civilian area, that area becomes a legitimate target. The crime, then, is committed by those who put the military in the civilian area. But you mentioned this escalation, and I read that there was some pressure from the United States for some of the Gulf states to join in directly—especially Saudi Arabia.

But there are also some news stories saying that the British and the French will send weapons directly to the region. They claim these will be used indirectly—that is, to shoot down Iranian retaliatory strikes. How do you see the possibility here for the war to spread even more? Because it could go both ways. On one hand, the Gulf states could put pressure on the U.S. to end the war, but on the other hand, the U.S. could pressure them to join in.

## **#Seyed M. Marandi**

What could these countries in the Persian Gulf actually do in a war? I mean, if Iran seriously wants to undermine them, it can do that very easily. All Iran has to do is destroy their oil and gas facilities, destroy their key assets. They're completely dependent on energy. They're not like Iran. They're not like some of the other countries in, let's say, Central Asia or the Caucasus. They're completely dependent on it. They have nothing else. The Emirates, the Saudis, the Qataris, the Kuwaitis—what else do they have? They have nothing. So they're very vulnerable. Just a few missiles and drones in the right places would bring everything down. Not something Iran wants to do. Iran did not start this war.

Iran doesn't host bases belonging to countries that are hostile to others in the region. Iran has no foreign bases—no foreign country has bases in Iran. So the smart thing for them to do, in order to survive, would be to convince the United States to back down. And the United States would have to retreat, to go away. That would, of course, be a major defeat for the United States. But Iran is going to see this through. Iran has no plans to end the war, and it will escalate when necessary. We've seen that Iran's capabilities are very substantial. The fact that the United States doesn't have the ability to destroy Iran's missile and drone underground bases is the reason why the United States and the Israeli regime are bombing hospitals. They even bombed hospitals in Tehran.

They bombed the hospital in Sadr-ul-Zohab in Khuzestan, and elsewhere they bombed schools. They bombed the central emergency—I'm not sure what it's called in English—but in Tehran, the National Center for Emergency, the place people call when they need ambulances, where first responders go to help people. They bombed that building. They also bombed the central building of the Red Crescent Society. They do double-tap strikes. One of my friends witnessed this in Ferdousi Square. They struck buildings, and then when people went to save or find survivors, they struck them again. They did that in another square in Tehran too, and in other cities as well.

This revenge killing, this taking revenge on ordinary Iranians, is because they're incapable of striking key Iranian targets. Most of Iran's underground bases haven't even been used yet. The overwhelming majority haven't been opened—they don't even know where they are or where their gates are. They're using a series of underground bases from previous wars and a few that are directed toward the Persian Gulf. But the vast majority of Iran's capabilities haven't been revealed. And Iran, as I said earlier, is using older missiles and older drones. So Iran is in this for the long haul. It's more than prepared to fight for a very long time.

With regard to the Germans, the French, or the British, I think their armed forces are a joke, and their capabilities are not something Iran takes seriously. They already have more than enough problems in Ukraine, and those problems will probably get much worse under the current circumstances. All these air defenses are being depleted in the Persian Gulf region and in Palestine. We're seeing Iranian missiles go right through the defenses in Israel. Obviously, they're running out of air defenses—and the ones they have aren't very good anyway. The same is true in the Persian Gulf.

The drones and missiles we've been watching this morning—heavy strikes, a very heavy strike early this morning, I think—took place against a U.S. base in Bahrain. So, their air defenses are clearly not very good, and they're also being depleted. And that's not good news for Ukraine either, because the Ukrainians are desperate to get more air defense capabilities from the West. I don't take any of that seriously—neither the Persian Gulf countries, which are very vulnerable, nor the Europeans, who've already run out of weapons. Their armed forces... they couldn't even fill a stadium with their troops.

## **#Glenn**

You mentioned that the Gulf states are, well, let's say, excessively or even completely dependent on energy exports. We've also seen in the past few days that Saudi oil installations have been hit, as well as ones in the United Arab Emirates. In Qatar, they suspended oil and gas production—LNG. And of course, all this becomes even more complicated when you look at the shutdown, or partial shutdown, of the Strait of Hormuz. So, how do you see this? Is it a key component of the Iranian strategy—to shut down energy as an economic instrument to distance themselves from the United States? Or is it more about, I guess, shaking the ground beneath them, challenging their ability to continue as they've done in the past?

## **#Seyed M. Marandi**

Well, the Iranians have said they did not carry out the drone attack on the Saudi Aramco facility. And we heard—I didn't watch the Tucker Carlson interview—but we heard from him that the Israelis were attempting to carry out bomb attacks in Saudi Arabia and in Qatar. So it's unclear what the real story is with the energy facilities. If Iran wanted them destroyed, they would have destroyed them. If Iran wanted the tankers destroyed, they would destroy them. I don't know if you saw the footage of Iran firing a missile at a tanker that was disobeying orders to stay put. Someone was filming it, and you could see the missile just go right by the different tankers sitting beside each other. They clearly didn't want to touch any of those tankers.

The missile was just going right through—it was a cruise missile, I imagine—and it passed between the different tankers, leaving them untouched. Only the tanker that tried to leave the Persian Gulf under pressure from the U.S. Armed Forces, the U.S. government, was struck, along with a few others for the same reason. So Iran doesn't want anything damaged, but it is shutting the Strait of

Hormuz, for the most part, to put pressure on the United States—to bring an end to this war, to put pressure on consumers in the U.S. so they, in turn, would push to end the war.

If there is ultimately an escalation, it would be a result of the actions of the United States and the Israeli regime. Just as with the problems we have now, they are to blame. If anyone is upset about natural gas prices suddenly shooting up because Qatar can't send gas through the Strait of Hormuz, it's because the United States—because Trump and Netanyahu—started this war. If they hadn't started the war, that energy would have been on its way to Europe or wherever else it was supposed to go a few days ago.

## **#Glenn**

Well, there have been some reports that Trump didn't get the quick regime-change war he'd been hoping for. And there were also reports that he used some channels—through the Italians, I think—to ask Iran to agree to a ceasefire, to bring a quick end to it. But then they got a negative reply. Again, I'm not sure if that's true; I have no way of verifying it. But it does raise an interesting question: if the United States believes it made a mistake—whether it wants to walk this back permanently or, more likely, temporarily and try again in a few months—how would Iran respond? I mean, what are Iran's demands and requirements to end the war now that it's already underway?

## **#Seyed M. Marandi**

The United States has to be punished, and Iran is not going to accept some ceasefire. That's not happening. The Iranians have to reach a stage where they feel that, in the future, the security of this region will not be threatened by the United States. So the Iranians are prepared for the long haul. And remember, they were saying—I think it was Netanyahu who said—Iran had like 2,000 missiles, or 1,800 missiles. Well, I think, and I've always said, that's nonsense. The number of Iranian missiles prepared to strike Israel—you'd have to multiply that 2,000 by a large number to get to the real figure.

And then the missiles and drones that have been produced and are ready to fire toward American assets in the Persian Gulf and the Indian Ocean—they're much greater in number than the missiles prepared for the Israeli regime. So Iran is more than prepared to continue this war for a very, very long time, and it will make sure that the United States regrets this war. The smart thing for the United States to do is to accept failure and back off sooner, but if it does not, it will have to accept failure at a much higher cost. The Iranians are not going to accept a situation where the Americans can regroup six months from now, eight months from now, ten months from now, and then try their luck again. That's not going to happen.

## **#Glenn**

I'm a bit surprised by how surprised people are by the capabilities of Iran and how they're using them, because, well, anyone who's been watching this podcast or speaking with you, as well as other guests, has pointed out that Iran has a vast number of missiles and drones. But also, how Iran would respond—if it were attacked again by the United States—it would be seen as an existential threat, and they would essentially hit all bases across the entire region. This should have been common sense. But if you're going to accept that common sense, then you first have to accept that Iran would consider this existential.

I think a lot of media and politicians just can't accept it, because they insist they're promoting democracy or defending themselves—something along those lines. But in terms of the United States backing off, do you see the main or possible objective being to expel the U.S. from the region, or some kind of security arrangement where Iran's security is respected? Or do you think any diplomatic pathways are now impossible, given that the JCPOA was dumped and Iran has been attacked twice now during negotiations? Is there anything that can still be achieved through diplomacy, or will this just be resolved on the battlefield?

### **#Seyed M. Marandi**

Yeah, I don't think anything can be achieved through diplomacy. Iran has no interest in talking with the Americans. We've already seen how the Americans behave. Trump negotiated, but those negotiations were a façade—both during the previous war and during this one.

### **#Glenn**

And his opposition has no problem with that.

### **#Seyed M. Marandi**

This is important. The Democrats don't have any problem with murdering Iranians, betraying and lying about the negotiations, and having fake negotiations. They hate Trump. But during the State of the Union address, the only time the Democrats and Republicans all got up and clapped like seals was when he was attacking Iran. So you cannot trust the United States. And I think countries around the world are recognizing this, too. They see what's happening. So Iran is going to fight it out, and ultimately the Americans are going to have to find a way to retreat. That's the only solution that will be acceptable to Iran. If the Americans retreat faster, that's smarter. But if they don't, they'll pay a heavy price.

But I think the decisive strategic defeat that Iran wants to inflict on the United States would be one that ensures the U.S. never again thinks about doing this to Iran. That's what Iran wants—to make sure the United States is weakened and punished in a way that prevents it from repeating this. And I think that's already happening, by the way, Glenn. For four days now, Iran has acted on its own. So

far, Yemen hasn't been engaged, Iraq only mildly, Hezbollah mildly but increasingly engaged—and Iran's allies are still waiting. The Iranians can do much more than they're doing now. They haven't even used their key assets yet.

So, you know, what the Iranians—and really what people across the world—are already seeing is the superpower and its sidekick, or maybe the sidekick is the superpower. But the two of them, their forces combined with the support of the entire West and their regional proxies, including Erdogan, have failed. Iran has been hammering them for four days. And I think that's already destroying this image of the United States as an invincible superpower. That, I think, will have major implications in the future, regardless of the economic toll this is going to have for the Americans and the fact that it's going to make the economic situation in the United States substantially worse—far worse than before. But that aside, the world is seeing that this single country is striking day and night, and that does not make the United States look strong.

## **#Glenn**

We're in a very unique time in history, I think. That is, after the hegemonic era—or the unipolar moment—following the Cold War, when there was only one center of power. I think for the U.S., as well as for the wider political West, war was something that happened in faraway countries. Overall, there was this assumption that as long as there was the will, the U.S. could dictate every outcome everywhere in the world. I think, as we speak, we now have two wars—one in Ukraine against Russia, and another against Iran—where there isn't the ability to impose the desired outcome. And again, I think it's a wake-up call that the international distribution of power has shifted. But that kind of takes me to my last question, which is: what do you see as the long-term implications of this war? Because if it were to end today, you could argue the impact might be limited. But given that it will likely drag on for some time, how do you see this impacting the...

## **#Seyed M. Marandi**

I guess global alliances, energy partnerships, trade—how do you see this war shaping the world? Well, one thing I should point out here, which is anecdotal, is from my own experience. Some of these young people who were influenced by the West and were out on the streets rioting—uh, in January, the 8th and 9th... Sorry, our calendar is different from yours, so I get confused—I think it was January 8th and 9th. Some of them, or at least three of them, have approached me directly and said, "We want to help." And, sort of indirectly—some more directly, some less so—they were trying to say that they regret what they did. Now they want to see what they can do to help.

I told them to go and see if volunteers were needed on the streets to protect people and so on. I was also speaking to a colleague of mine who's very active online in the Iranian cybersphere, and he said there are strong indications that many of those people—whose worldview was shaped by the West, those liberals and so on—their mood has changed. They didn't think the Americans would strike schools and hospitals, destroy the Red Crescent Society, carry out double-tap strikes in

different cities, including several in Tehran, and destroy people's homes, murdering ordinary people who were just sitting at home waiting for the war to end.

So they have consolidated the Islamic Republic. And Ayatollah Khamenei—his status has gone through the roof. And not just in Iran, but across the region and beyond. You can see that what the Americans did has been the absolute opposite of what they intended. They made Iran and the whole movement much stronger. And of course, as we discussed before, Islam—and particularly the Shia ideology—supports the oppressed and stands up against the oppressor, with Karbala and Imam Hussain as central symbols. If American intellectuals or elites, to be more precise, and policymakers had studied this a bit, they would have known they'd chosen the wrong country to pick a fight with.

And so I think that in the long run, what's going to happen is that despite all the harm, despite all the deaths, despite the destruction of civil infrastructure—and with more to come in the days ahead—Iran will emerge stronger. And Iran's adversaries are going to be weaker. I think the consensus among Iranians about building stronger ties with non-Western states and ignoring the West altogether is going to be much stronger. I already see that happening. The United States and those aligned with it are seen as unforgivable.

So the United States has even demolished that small—well, you know, small percentage—but still, that segment of society that was looking to them, believing, naïve and young liberals, believing that they were a symbol of hope and freedom and democracy and so on. They've destroyed that base. And I think that for a generation or two, that will make the United States no longer able to have any influence in Iran. But I think by then the U.S. empire will have collapsed—much, much sooner than that. And I think the war against Iran is pushing that collapse forward very swiftly. In the political science literature of the 1990s and 2000s, a lot of these articles and books focused a lot on the...

## **#Glenn**

Power of the United States—not just its military and economy, but its soft power: the appeal, even to its adversaries, the assumption that it would follow certain rules and uphold certain values. That had a kind of gravitational force, which wasn't as easy to measure as economic or military power, but was nonetheless immensely powerful.

I think, well, many people began to argue that this was being squandered 20 years ago with the attack on Iraq. But obviously, from Gaza now to Iran and all these other wars, I think it's a very precious asset that the Americans have thrown away at their own peril. So no, it doesn't make any sense—any of this. Why they thought an attack on Iran would work, why they thought that killing the highest religious authority in Iran during Ramadan would cause people to take to the streets as if they'd been liberated by American bombs—I mean, all of this is just too wild to accept as real, you know. But no, I think a lot of mistakes have been made, and hopefully, if someone learns from this,

perhaps more peaceful relations could be established in the future. But for now, it doesn't seem any peace is coming in the near future, and yeah, it seems all sides are escalating. So, yeah—troubling times ahead. But as always, thank you very much for taking the time.

**#Seyed M. Marandi**

Thank you very much for having me, Glenn Diesen. It's always a pleasure.