Iran Reveals War Goals. New Missiles Hit US & Israel | Marandi

Tehran under bombardment, Iran’s leverage in the Gulf, and the price of ending the war all come up fast. I’m joined again by Professor Seyed Marandi in Tehran, and we talk through the strikes, the Strait of Hormuz, US military assets, and the hard question of what “victory” would even mean. Links: 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 Timestamps: 00:00:00 Introduction and Tehran update 00:05:42 Hormuz pressure and Gulf escalation 00:10:04 End conditions and compensation 00:14:39 Evangelical politics and holy war claims 00:19:58 Ground invasion and regional proxy risks 00:24:36 Carrier groups and naval escalation 00:28:42 Gulf neutrality and regional order reset 00:33:00 War sustainability and bombing limits 00:35:44 Diplomacy channels and distrust of deals

#Pascal

Welcome back, everybody. This is Pascal Lottaz from Neutrality Studies, and I'm joined again today by Professor Saeed Marandi from Tehran. Professor Marandi has been on the channel many times before. I'm sure all of you know him, and he’ll give us an update today on what's going on in his hometown of Tehran. Saeed, welcome back.

#Seyed M. Marandi

Thank you very much for having me back, Pascal.

#Pascal

Always a pleasure. Professor Marandi, let me maybe ask you—or start with this: what's going on currently in Tehran? I mean, we've seen the bombing campaign over the last week, and it seems to have been horrible. It seems that, you know, the destruction is huge. Can you give us an update on what Tehran looks like at the moment?

#Seyed M. Marandi

Yes, and it's happening across the country. They’re bombing even small cities that are very far from the Persian Gulf region or any major centers. It seems that they really don’t care about what they’re striking. They’re hitting a lot of neighborhoods that are particularly crowded, where there’s nothing but apartment blocks or civilian infrastructure that has nothing to do with, let’s say, the military. They’ve bombed Iranian radio and television—the national radio and television complex—multiple

times. But the employees there are quite heroic, because we still have people working there. I went there a few nights ago for a program. I went to the building I thought I was supposed to go to, and it had been bombed. Then they took me to another place.

And then, after my interview was finished, about an hour later, they bombed it again. Yeah, good. So this is what Trump and his allies and his proxies—and of course the Israeli regime—are doing. Last night in Tehran there was some heavy bombing, and I just posted or tweeted about a little girl in Tehran, a one-year-old whose body was being recovered, just so people could get a sense of what's happening. These people have absolutely no regard for life—just like in Gaza, just like in Lebanon, just like elsewhere where they carry out their dirty wars, like in Syria, or what we saw earlier in Iraq and Libya. There's no humanity. And what is particularly disturbing is how, in the West, even those who oppose Trump in the mainstream media, have no issue with the immorality and illegitimacy of these strikes.

And instead, they focus on demonizing Iran to somehow justify what is happening. Even those who oppose the war don't oppose it in the sense of saying we're committing crimes against humanity, or that we're carrying out war crimes, or that our attack is illegitimate. No, at best they'll say it's a failed policy. But they won't say that what we—the United States or the West—are doing is evil. Of course, nowadays the elites and the media in the West don't necessarily reflect public opinion all that much anymore. But in any case, it's still a force to deal with. A lot of blood has been shed. And you know, the thing, Pascal, is that on the battlefield they're failing. The Iranians have been very effective in defending themselves against drones.

And that is different from the previous 12-day war, even though the attacks are much heavier now because the Americans are involved, and they're far more powerful than the Israeli regime. The Iranian missiles, as you can see—as everyone can see—are striking across the Persian Gulf region, where the United States has bases and assets. And of course, despite the heavy censorship in Iran and across the Israeli regime, Iranian missiles are causing devastation. But again, the important thing I want to remind your viewers before we start is that any destruction or disruption caused by Iran is a result of this illegally imposed war. Otherwise, Iran would love to have ordinary relations—business as usual—with oil flowing and trade with its neighbors. But this is simply something the United States can't tolerate.

#Pascal

And there was this moment last weekend—I think on Saturday—when your president, Pezeshkian, actually apologized to the neighboring Gulf states and said, "Look, we wouldn't attack you if it weren't for what's happening because of the United States." So what is the policy right now? I mean, in a sense, what else is Iran supposed to target besides the U.S. military assets in those countries? And recently, the U.S. also increased its bombings—hitting desalination plants and other purely civilian infrastructure. The oil fields were also targeted around Tehran, and I've seen your posts the other day about the acid rain, the oil rain, coming down from the sky. I mean, this is apocalyptic. And now

Iran strikes back at oil fields in Bahrain and so on. What options does Iran have at the moment to compel the United States and Israel to stop their bombing campaign?

#Seyed M. Marandi

Well, Iran isn't officially closing the Strait of Hormuz, but it has effectively closed it. This is to put pressure on the United States. We saw how desperate Trump was to bring down the price of oil, because yesterday he basically lied and said the war is coming to an end, implying that the Strait of Hormuz would reopen and things would go back to normal—and the price of oil went down. But then the Iranians said this war isn't ending anytime soon. They're not going to accept a ceasefire. Obviously, Iran can't accept a ceasefire, because if it does, we'll just have what happened eight or nine months ago happen again in the future. They'll just prepare for another war, and this will be an endless cycle.

So the Iranians are saying, we have to finish this once and for all and make them pay a price so that they never try again to invade or attack Iran. Sort of like Saddam Hussein—when he invaded Iran and the Iranians expelled him from their territory, they continued the war. Why? Because they knew he was an aggressive person. They thought they had to weaken him so much that he would never attack Iran again. And the war lasted eight years. What was the result? Saddam never invaded Iran again. Instead, he went for Kuwait—something much smaller, something he thought would be easier to take. And now the Iranians are saying, no, this war is going to continue. And of course, they've kept the Strait of Hormuz closed, so the price of oil is gradually going to go back up because no oil is getting through or leaving the Persian Gulf.

So this is one means. The second, of course, is Iran's missile and drone strikes—and we see that they continue. The Americans and the Netanyahu regime have been saying they've destroyed Iran's missile and drone capability, but the reality is that Iran has been firing more in the last couple of days than ever before, and with greater intensity and effect. So obviously, Iran is capable. And Iran has said, we're more than capable. Iran says we're prepared to go for a very long war. And the reason isn't that we want a long war; it's because this is the only way to make sure this doesn't happen again. It has to end now—47 years of death and destruction and sanctions and intimidation and terrorism. You know, this is where we say, enough is enough.

#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. What would ending the war for Iran mean? What would be the outcome under which Iran would say, "OK, we won. This is done. We're done with it"?

#Seyed M. Marandi

That's a very good question. It's something I sometimes think about. I know they have some models in the Supreme National Security Council about how this would end, or under what conditions it would end. But I think it depends on how it ends and what sort of negotiations take place. I don't think the Iranians will tolerate the kind of U.S. presence we've had in the past in this region, and I think they'll make that clear to neighboring countries. I also think the Iranians are going to demand a new form of relationship with their neighbors. They're not going to accept the former status quo, and they'll expect compensation for the death and destruction.

Lots of people are dying, and lots of private property—including public property, too—is being destroyed, and it will continue to be destroyed. And of course, people—little children, women, men—are traumatized by the scenes and by their neighborhoods being devastated. This is far more intense than the 12-Day War. American capabilities are far beyond those of the Israeli regime. And of course, the capabilities of the Israeli regime are American and Western. The regime itself is small, weak, and incapable of doing anything on its own. So I think the model for future relations will change.

Iran won't allow these countries in the Persian Gulf, or any of its neighbors—including Azerbaijan or the northern part of Iraq, which has been semi-autonomous—to function the way they have in the past. So a lot of things will change. But I also think this is going to be a catastrophic defeat for Trump. It will end his presidency because it did not go as planned, as we expected. I mean, if you've been following—and I'm sure you have—what I've been saying has effectively turned out to be correct. They will not have a quick win. I've been saying this for a couple of years now.

I said that Iran will shut down the Strait of Hormuz, and they won't be able to reopen it. Iran has the missile and drone capabilities to sustain a long war. And I'm no genius—if the United States had competent analysts, if they had gone through the facts and the information that exists, and if they had been listening not just to me but to many others who've been saying the same thing on your show and on other shows, we wouldn't have had this war. But the fact is, the West is ruled by ignorant and arrogant people. It's not just Trump—it's administration after administration: Obama, Biden, Bush. It doesn't matter. This is an empire that is arrogant.

It is not only void of any morality whatsoever, as we've seen through the Epstein files, but also, in its arrogance, it refuses to comprehend—or is incapable of comprehending—the other. It sees the other as weak, as vulnerable, as broken. It believes its own propaganda about the other—that it's popular, that it's about to implode. So when they contemplate attacking, they say to themselves, "Well, we can deal with them easily. We can destroy them easily." But I think now, when facing Iran, they've hit a brick wall. Iran is not Venezuela. Iran is not Iraq. It's not Syria. It's not Libya. It's not Afghanistan. It's not even Vietnam. And so I think this is going to break the U.S. empire.

#Pascal

One of the scariest insights for me from last week is just how many evangelical nutjobs there are in the current U.S. government, including the Minister of War, Pete Hegseth. And down in the armed services, you know, they're getting a lot of complaints from troops that their commanding officers are giving them this evangelical kind of "we're doing this to bring about Armageddon" stuff. So this, to me, changes the picture. If a lot of the people responsible for this war are actually Christian Zionists, and they want the war for its own sake—to bring about the end times—then the whole scenario gets even more complicated. Is this something that you and your colleagues, and the people in Iran's planning staff, have on your radar—that this could be a holy war to some of these nutjobs?

#Seyed M. Marandi

Well, yes. The one thing you and your audience should always keep in mind is that Iran knows a lot about the United States. Right? It understands its military, its politics, its culture. Our second language at university is, of course, English, but many Iranians travel to the United States. Many of our academics have studied abroad or spent their sabbaticals abroad. And in addition to all that, the United States has occupied Iraq and Afghanistan for many, many years—and these are Iran's neighbors. Iran knows what the United States did in Iraq and what it did in Afghanistan.

I would just add—to what you described, what you said—I would add that, besides being nutjobs, they're utterly evil. These people are basically telling us that Christ supports genocide, that it's fine to carry out genocide. We see this from what the U.S. ambassador to the Israeli regime said—a Christian Zionist. He said that if the Israeli regime takes the whole region, that's fine. He said they are the most moral army in the world, after what they did to Gaza and Lebanon, where they carpet-bomb regularly. You know, the Dahiya doctrine—that means flattening the city of Beirut. That is their doctrine.

They kill everyone to bring down the nation, to bring them to their knees. In Gaza, I think they called it "mowing the lawn" or "mowing the grass," which means just killing people. They've been doing that for many years—long before October 7th. So this is a genocidal society, a genocidal regime, and Christian Zionists support it. It's utterly evil. And then, for example, the U.S. Secretary of War—the way he talks about Iranians is, of course, awful. Utterly. You know, a monster would speak like that, which is what he is. So the Iranians recognize exactly what is happening and how politics are playing out in the United States.

And it makes them even more determined, because when you have the real policy of the United States—the unofficial policy, the unspoken truth—being said by the U.S. ambassador to Japan, that if the Israeli regime takes the whole region, that's fine. And of course, they're "the most moral army in the world." So when they take the region, obviously they can do whatever they want to whoever

they want. That makes this an existential war. What's frustrating for many people in Iran, Iraq, Yemen, and Lebanon is that the Erdoğan regime is still sitting indifferently to what's happening and, in a sense, even helping the Israeli and American camp.

Despite the fact that these threats are now out in the open—what the American ambassador said is out there—what Sisi is doing is basically business as usual. Turkey is transporting oil, Jordan is continuing to do business and assisting with the war on Iran, the Saudis and the regimes in the Persian Gulf—all of them continue to be proxies or allies of the United States and, in effect, on the side of the Israeli regime. This is despite the fact that you have these crazy nutjobs, void of any morality, who talk about taking the entire region and who consider the genocide in Gaza to be the work of "the most moral army in the world."

#Pascal

Are you expecting the U.S. to try to put boots on the ground in one way or another—either directly, with U.S. troops going into Iran, or indirectly, through Kurdish or Azerbaijani forces in the north? Is that something you think will happen in the next phase?

#Seyed M. Marandi

I think it's possible that the U.S. will put troops on the ground, but not in very large numbers, because they don't have that kind of capability anymore. This is not the United States of 30 years ago. And the allies of the United States—in Europe and in our region—are not the allies of 30 years ago. When the United States invaded Iraq, in both wars—the first and the second—the countries in the Persian Gulf region paid for it. Back then, the United States was the hyperpower, and the rest of the world was in a state of weakness. The U.S. basically forced the world to go along with it during the first war, and in the second war, some could oppose it. But that's not the case anymore.

And Iran is not Iraq either. So the Arab regimes right now—they're not exporting oil or gas, and that money, of course, is not going to the stock market. The price of oil is going to go up. They don't have the kind of funding today that they had back then. And the United States is a much-diminished superpower—still a dangerous, very dangerous force, obviously—but it's not what it was before. So it can't bring in a million soldiers. If it wants to wage a war with Iran, it would have to bring perhaps a million and a half people, and that's just not doable. So they may bring in some special forces or something to carry out strikes here and there, but it won't change the nature of the war. With regard to Azerbaijan, the leader, Ayatollah Khamenei—the new leader—his family name is Khamenei, which means "from Khameneh." Khameneh is an Azeri city.

Marandi is from Marand, which is an Azeri city. The Iranian Azeri population is much larger than the Azeri population to the north, in the Republic of Azerbaijan. And Iranians—ordinary Iranians and ordinary Azeris—many of them believe that that is Iranian territory. So Iran would never, of course, move in that direction, because we have not changed since the Islamic Revolution. Iran has never

initiated any war; we've been the victims of three wars. Saddam Hussein's war, which the West imposed upon us, and near the end of that war, the United States entered and fought against us. They started attacking us in the Persian Gulf region, and they shot down an airliner, destroyed naval ships and oil installations. And then the 12-day war, and now this war. But if the Republic of Baku—if Aliyev, who is, you know, the country basically has a family dictatorship in charge of it...

If he makes any move against Iran, that will be the end of his reign. And inside his country, many people are very close to Iran, and many are in prison. So I don't see a situation where he'd be foolish enough to make such a move. In Iraqi Kurdistan, if there is such a move, the Iranians have already warned them. Right now they're striking the bases of these terrorists, but they've warned the semi-autonomous Kurdish government in Erbil that if anything happens on our border with northern Iraq, they will destroy them. And the Iraqi resistance, along with the Iranians, can easily do that. So I find it hard to believe that the Americans can push them. It may happen, but that they can push them to do anything really foolish. But if it does, it will actually be to their own detriment.

#Pascal

I see. The other news we're hearing right now is that apparently one of the aircraft carrier groups is on its way to the Persian Gulf. So they're bringing it, for the first time, really close to Turkey and Iran—apparently with the intent of opening the Strait of Hormuz by force. Do you think Iran would actually attack those naval assets? And is there a chance Iran might try to sink even an aircraft carrier?

#Seyed M. Marandi

Yes, I think that if they get close, the Iranians will be able to strike them much more effectively. I don't believe they'll be able to open the Strait of Hormuz—they just don't have that capability. Iran's missile and drone forces have been very effective. And contrary to the propaganda, all we have to do is look at the images coming from across the Persian Gulf, and the few images allowed out of occupied Palestine, to see that Iran's capabilities haven't diminished. Iran has no shortage of missiles, no shortage of drones. It has many underground bases that haven't even been used yet. Right now, Iran is using older, well-known bases.

It's not using most of its bases, and Iran is just beginning to deploy its newer technology. Until about 36 hours ago, almost all of Iran's attacks had been carried out with older-generation drones and missiles. So Iran is more than capable of doing serious damage to the U.S. Navy, and they'll make sure no oil or gas comes out of the Persian Gulf. But any intensification of the war could lead to tankers being destroyed and key oil and gas infrastructure being hit, and that would have a very different kind of effect—because right now, no oil or gas are leaving the Persian Gulf.

But if there is an end to the war—an acceptable end—where Iran's conditions are met and the Strait of Hormuz is opened, that oil can get through. The markets will, of course—it will take time for them

to recover, especially gas, because it’s not like you just turn it on and things go back to normal. But if that infrastructure is destroyed, if those ships are destroyed, then opening the Strait of Hormuz doesn’t mean much. And we’ll see the lifestyles of people across the world, especially in the West, which is a region very dependent on financial institutions more than anyone else.

It's a financialized regime, and they’re in a very difficult situation. If this war continues for long, or if there’s permanent damage or destruction to the energy sector, that will bring down their economies. So the smart thing would be for the United States to accept defeat. Of course, Trump will never announce defeat—he’ll announce some sort of ridiculous victory. But in reality, what Iran is going to do is ensure that it inflicts a strategic defeat on the United States, and that Iran, for decades to come, is never again threatened. So this war will continue until Iran feels that its future security is assured.

#Pascal

For the states in the Gulf—I mean, one of the things we're seeing right now is that Oman is very safe because it has basically been playing the role of a neutral country. It doesn’t have any U.S. military installations. And if the Gulf monarchies started declaring their neutrality, saying, “From henceforth, we are not going to host U.S. military bases anymore; we are declaring permanent neutrality,” would that be something Iran would view as desirable? Or is that something Iran wants?

#Seyed M. Marandi

Of course. I mean, if we had that situation, they wouldn't be facing this situation today. They brought this upon themselves. They are complicit in this war. They’ve helped slaughter Iranians and destroy Iranian property and assets. So the only people to blame are those who’ve cooperated with the United States to bring us to this point. But if there is change, yes, relations can go back to normal. Of course, there’s the issue of compensation, which has to be dealt with. But let me give you a good example: when Saddam Hussein invaded Iran, these regimes in the Persian Gulf gave him hundreds of billions of dollars—back then, when the dollar was worth a lot more. And of course, the West gave him chemical weapons. I survived two chemical weapon attacks. Many didn’t. Many continued to suffer and slowly died.

In Iraq, many thousands of people were slaughtered in single attacks by these chemical weapons—like in the small city of Halabja. This is what the West did to the Iraqi people and the Iranian people. But despite that, when Saddam invaded Kuwait, Iran condemned it, and gradually the relationship between Iran and these Arab countries normalized. We did not seek eternal animosity, even though they had Iranian blood on their hands. For Iran, peace and stability in this region are of utmost importance. So we forgave them before, and we will forgive them again. However, this time around, the relationship will have to change. The United States can no longer have this sort of presence. They will have to compensate, and Iran will have to feel that its future security is assured.

#Pascal

So, just because I'm not aware—has Iran ever stated its demands so far for ending the war, or is that still something for the future?

#Seyed M. Marandi

Yes, there are demands, but they're not always directed. They're not directed at any particular entity. The issue of compensation, for example, has been stated. But who compensates? It doesn't matter to us. If Japan wants to compensate, or Kuwait, or the United States—that's not the issue. They've murdered many people. They've destroyed the lives of many. And through aggression—through an unprovoked, illegal, and immoral war—to support ethno-supremacism, to support a genocide in Gaza. I mean, this is evil upon evil upon evil. So there will have to be compensation. And what I said is also what they've said as well: that Iran, in the future… That's why they're saying they won't accept a ceasefire. They've said this very clearly—no ceasefire. There's no ceasefire on the horizon as we speak.

#Pascal

Even if the Americans said— even if Donald Trump said, "Ceasefire now, I'm offering a complete ceasefire, no shots fired anymore"—Iran, you say, would continue?

#Seyed M. Marandi

Yes, that's not enough.

#Pascal

What do you think is the United States' capacity to keep wreaking havoc on your cities? Do you think that's going to decrease over time, or are you expecting the bombing campaigns to continue for many more weeks or months?

#Seyed M. Marandi

Well, we have the capability to continue this war for a long time. Our missile and drone capacities are enormous. We have countless underground cities, and our factories that produce them are underground too. Our stockpiles are full, so we can go on for a very long time. We don't want the war to continue that long—we want it to end now. But the conditions for ending the war are what matter. We want people not to feel threatened six months from now, or a year, or two, or five years from now. So, from what I understand, the war on the side of the United States is not sustainable.

This level of intensity in attacking Iran—remember, the logistics alone—not just the issue of ammunition shortages and low production in the United States, plus the Ukraine war and U.S. military commitments around the world. That's not the only issue. The U.S. economy is going to be hit even more as the price of oil stays high and goes higher. The United States may be self-sufficient, but that doesn't help the consumer much. Whether it's ordinary people or businesses that use a lot of energy, they're going to be hit very hard.

And as we speak, I'm sure it's already having a gradual impact. So there's that. And then there's the whole issue of logistics. For them, everything has to be transported from across the world to fight this war. This is our home. The production, the missile bases are already here. The production is indigenous, so we will continue. And most importantly, Pascal, most importantly, this is a fight for survival. For the West, this is an evil war of choice—and for their proxies too. So when you look at all this, I think it's not really sustainable for the United States. It doesn't mean it will end tomorrow, or next week, or next month, but it's not sustainable.

#Pascal

If we think again about diplomacy—you know, the United States has abused diplomacy very, very badly, many times—basically pretending they're still interested in talks while already preparing to strike. And they strike, sometimes in very nasty ways. But if diplomacy is needed, or will be needed to some extent to end this, what kind of intermediaries do you think would be acceptable to Iran to work on the diplomatic front? Do you think the Russians could help, or the Chinese could help? Who do you think would be the right diplomatic service provider of last resort?

#Seyed M. Marandi

Well, the regime in Washington is basically a Zionist regime. I mean, it's "Israel first," and therefore, by nature, we can call it Zionist. These two Zionist regimes are the most immoral entities on this planet. And it's not just that they murder, kill, and carry out genocide—they also have absolutely no respect for their own agreements. They lie, they cheat, and they steal, as the former head of the U. S. CIA once said—himself an evangelical Christian, Pompeo. We've already had agreements with the United States in the past, and under Obama they did not abide by the nuclear deal. Under Trump, they just tore it up. And of course, we had negotiations with Trump twice, and on both occasions he was secretly planning to launch a war. So a piece of paper is worthless to us, and any agreement with the United States for a ceasefire is not acceptable. The facts on the ground will have to change.

#Pascal

The facts on the ground will have to change.

#Seyed M. Marandi

Now, who gets involved and how—that's a matter that can be discussed, obviously, and will probably be discussed. But the United States will cheat Russia too. They'll cheat the Chinese too. They'll cheat anyone. They have no morality, that regime. And of course, the Israeli regime—well, they have two ceasefires, in Gaza and in Lebanon, that they violate every single day. They kill people every single day despite those ceasefires. So these are not entities we're going to trust. And I don't think a piece of paper—there's no doubt a piece of paper—is going to work. If the facts on the ground change, if what's going on in the Persian Gulf and in West Asia changes, then that will be important.

But the biggest change that will take place—and this is the key point—the biggest change will be that the United States, that regime, will be taught a lesson. A strategic defeat will be imposed upon it, and the world will see it. For example, what we're seeing today in this war is that much of the world thought it would be over quickly. Now it's been ten days, and the Iranians are hitting harder today than they were before. And he keeps talking all sorts of nonsense—one hour he's saying the war is about to end, the next hour he's saying, "I'm going to destroy all of Iran." He's a crude monster; he sounds like one of the fanatics in the Netanyahu regime. But he keeps changing, and I think that shows his desperation.

But his arrogance won't allow him to shift his position. So, the United States—politically and morally, of course—but at the same time, militarily, Iran is showing the world that this is not that hyper-power you thought it was, the one that can just come in, destroy, and move on. The era of the Iraqs, the Afghanistans, the Libyas, the Syrians, and Venezuela—that era is coming to an end. And Iran will make sure the world recognizes this, and that the American people recognize it too. So, while the facts on the ground have to change, this also has to be recognized by the elites in the United States—that we can never do this again. The price is simply too high. Exactly what we did to Saddam Hussein.

#Pascal

Wow. Okay, you gave me a lot of information. Thank you very much, Professor Marandi. This was, again, a tour de force. I wish you nothing but the best, and please stay safe. I know Tehran is currently not a safe place. Please stay healthy, and again, thank you very much for your time today.

#Seyed M. Marandi

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