

Iran Ready To Kill Ground Invasion; Next Oil Shock | Marandi

Professor Seyed Mohammad Marandi of Tehran University, updates us on the war from Teheran: He predicts that the Americans are actually going to do boots on the ground since they are that desperate and it will lead to mass-slaughter of the troops trying. The resolve of Iran seems unbroken and the capability to strike invading troops not just from the shore lines but from any place in Iran is a threat that only an enemy in panic would take. But it seems that's where we are in the war. Links: Professor Seyed Mohammad Marandi on X: https://x.com/s_m_marandi 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 00:02:28 Bombing toll and public morale 00:05:26 Ground invasion and Hormuz 00:14:14 Fake talks and strike threats 00:20:26 Red lines and Gulf retaliation 00:30:00 Oil shock and global fallout 00:35:30 Gulf states and US control 00:44:43 Bounty scandal and media silence

#Pascal

Welcome back, everybody, to Neutrality Studies. Today we're joined again by Professor Marandi from Tehran University. Professor, welcome back.

#Marandi

Thank you very much for inviting me on your show again. It's a great pleasure to be here.

#Pascal

Thank you for always taking the time to give us updates. I'd like to ask what's happened in the last week and a half since we last spoke. I mean, how is life in Tehran at the moment, and how are you interpreting the current state of the war now that we're basically finishing the fourth week?

#Marandi

Well, Tehran—and I can't say the same for the rest of the country—but Tehran is still not very crowded. About 30% of the people murdered by this American-Israeli coalition are from Tehran. So from the beginning of the war, a lot of people left the city. After the first day, when the Americans murdered those 168 elementary schoolgirls along with a couple dozen school staff and teachers, they closed the schools and universities. People were encouraged by the government, if they didn't have anything important to do here, to leave. And then, of course, it was Ramadan.

People were fasting, so Tehran was quiet. But it continues to be quiet now because we're in the Iranian New Year. Yeah, and the Iranian New Year is sort of like Christmas and New Year in the West. Schools are closed for a couple of weeks, offices for a week, but the second week is pretty quiet. People usually take their vacations during that time, so Tehran remains quiet. It'll stay that way for about ten more days, then businesses will have to open. So yes, it's quiet. When I drove across the city yesterday, the traffic was light. They still bomb, of course, but over the last two or three days, the bombing has decreased.

It's believed there are two reasons—one of two, or a combination of both. One is that they have a shortage of ammunition. The Americans and Israelis bomb cities and people so much that they run short of these weapons. The SEC and also the fighter jets get worn down, and of course, we all know jets need to be overhauled. So that could be one reason—probably is. The second reason is that they plan to attack Iran's territory and invade, so they may be trying to prepare themselves for that attack. I would imagine it's a combination of both. May I just ask—

#Pascal

Sorry, may I just ask, how many people are now— I mean, the Iranian numbers—how many people have been killed by this onslaught so far?

#Marandi

The government releases numbers regularly. I don't remember exactly, but I'd imagine the total is around 2,000 by now, or close to that—around 2,000, yeah. But just one final point: this isn't necessarily the case for other cities, because during the New Year, people leave Tehran and go to smaller towns or other big cities. So other places may actually be quite crowded. When the Americans, for example, bomb Esfahan—a very historical city with a long civilizational history—it's very crowded there right now. And people, you know, little children especially, are traumatized, of course, if they're not killed or wounded.

But these are the terrorists of our era—the pilots of the U.S. and Israeli Air Forces. They're the ones who bomb country after country from everywhere: Venezuela more recently, but also Libya, Syria, Iraq, Gaza, of course, and Yemen. So these are the terrorists of our era, and now it's Iran's turn. But the difference is that Iran is determined to beat them off, and it has the power to do so. I see among Iranians that their morale is very high and they're very confident. I was always expecting Iran to defeat this Western coalition in this war, but I never imagined—the morale among ordinary Iranians is even higher than I thought.

#Pascal

So do you think the Americans could actually be crazy enough to seriously plan a ground invasion, even if it's just an island or two? I mean, those would be sitting ducks, wouldn't they? The way Iran

is still striking back at Israel and the United States—the bases and so on—do you think they're serious about this?

#Marandi

Yes, I think it's actually going to happen in the next few days. It's not far off. It's crazy, but Trump is desperate—he's lost the war and made a catastrophic mistake. He can't open the Strait of Hormuz, and he can't stop Iranian missile and drone strikes against the Israeli regime or against U.S. assets in the Persian Gulf region. So instead of walking away, declaring some fake victory, and accepting Iran's very legitimate demands, he's going to double down. And remember, when we look at Joe Kent's resignation letter, the reason we're in a war is not because of Iran's nuclear program, because Kent said American intelligence was clear that there was no plan by Iran to develop a nuclear weapon.

And, of course, Joe Kent is a Trump appointee. He also said very clearly that Iran was not a threat to the United States. But this war goes on—or rather, it started and continues—because of Zionism, the Zionist lobby in the United States, and the Israeli regime. So the whole war, from the very beginning, I think many of us—I've been saying it for years—knew this is how it would play out, and that the United States would fail. And it's happening as expected. That was madness from day one, so continued madness shouldn't be that surprising.

#Pascal

Hey, very brief intermission because I was recently banned from YouTube. And although I'm back, this could happen again anytime. So please consider subscribing not only here but also to my mailing list on Substack—that's pascallottaz.substack.com. The link's going to be in the description below. And now, back to the video. I mean, what could be the goal of the Americans if they actually try to bring troops into harm's way? Because there's no question that Iran will hit them, right? There's no question that those missiles and drones will fly straight into the troops and kill them, right? Or is there any other kind of logic you can see?

#Marandi

Well, you know, before the war there were discussions in Iran about what the greatest vulnerability of the United States might be. Some were saying it was the deaths of their troops. But I've always believed—and I've said this in different gatherings—that the Americans don't care about their troops. The Epstein class, the Zionist oligarchy, for them these troops are just tools to be used. Even the language used by Trump and Lindsey Graham, among others, clearly shows that the lives of these troops are not important. You know this better than I do, but American troops are usually from the poor. And the poor classes and communities in the United States have no influence. When their kids are killed, they just die and they're buried.

During Vietnam, for example, the United States had a conscript army. Except for those with very good connections who could avoid going, almost everyone had to serve. Their kids had to go. So when the body bags began to pile up and people started learning more about the reality of Vietnam—seeing through the propaganda about Ho Chi Minh and the resistance there—people began to protest. Those protesters were from the middle class, sometimes the upper middle class, and their voices could be heard more easily. These people, they were really just cannon fodder, as they say. And so, what can really stop the United States is a combination of things.

One is for Iran to fight back and strike at these troops who are themselves, I would imagine, mostly victims of the empire. But the second would be to keep the Strait of Hormuz closed, because the oil, gas, and petrochemicals coming from there belong to countries invested in this war. Kuwait, the Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Qatar—they all have American bases. They all facilitate the war. They've allowed the Americans from day one to use their airspace, their territory, to fire missiles. They are part of this war, and they're funding the Americans. At least Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the Emirates are funding the war.

So by stopping their oil and gas—for the most part, Iran allows some to go through—but by stopping this, what they're doing is putting real pressure on the United States. And what the United States wants, by taking these islands, is to open the Strait of Hormuz. But the problem is that Iran doesn't keep the strait closed by putting troops on the shoreline. That's 19th-century stuff, 20th-century stuff. They fire missiles and drones from hundreds of kilometers away. So if the Americans want to stop those missiles and drones, they'd have to go deep inside Iran—and that's impossible with five, ten, twenty, thirty, forty thousand troops. It seems completely foolish, but everything Trump has done so far is foolish.

#Pascal

But that's why it makes no sense to put these troops there, as if they could somehow be defended or actually open the strait. Because again, you said it correctly, right? Iran lets some ships through. Iran didn't categorically close it. Actually, the biggest problem is that the insurance companies don't give coverage to the ships anymore. So even if Iran said, "You can go," a lot of them would probably stay anchored. That's not the problem. So talking about the Strait of Hormuz, to me, seems—at the moment, when it comes from the Americans—like they're saying, "They must open, they must open." It seems like a straw man. It's a bit like the nuclear discussion, telling Iran, "You're not allowed to build a bomb."

And Iran says, "We don't want to build a bomb." Then they're told, "You have to sign that you won't do it." "Yes, yes, let's sign, let's have that." And then you do that, and it keeps coming. So I wonder what their strategy is when it comes to the Strait of Hormuz, because it seems to me like just another excuse to keep the onslaught, the warfare, going. But then, how do you see Iran

responding to this, and what about this negotiation—the exchange of fire? At the end of the day, these missiles flying are actually a form of negotiation, unfortunately. Where is that going, and what are we learning from the way these bombing negotiations are being done?

#Marandi

Well, right now we don't have negotiations. Trump came out and made this claim on Monday morning, right before the markets were going to open, saying that negotiations are taking place and we're going to have peace. And he delayed his threat to bomb Iran's critical infrastructure. He said he's going to obliterate Iran's electrical power plant, which is, of course, a crime against humanity.

#Pascal

And as we speak, on this March 26th—your morning, March 26th—they haven't been bombed, right? That actually didn't happen. The fields are fine at the moment, right?

#Marandi

Yes, at the moment, yes. Of course they do bomb. They bombed markets—they bombed the fish market in Isfahan. They bombed more hospitals, many hospitals. I don't know what they have against hospitals, but they've bombed a lot of them. I mean, I've seen multiple places in Tehran that they bombed that are just apartment blocks. And sometimes, for example, a couple of days ago, they murdered a professor at one of the prestigious universities in Tehran. They wiped out everyone in the building—they slaughtered everyone just to get him, I assume. So, this is how it is. But they haven't targeted that critical infrastructure.

And it's interesting—when he makes those threats, no one in the West says these are crimes against humanity. No one in the Western media or among leaders in Europe condemns it. Just like when he says he's starving the people of Cuba, no one condemns that either. None of the journalists in the United States or in Europe, or in the mainstream legacy media—Epstein media, controlled journalists—none of them condemn this. They're strangling Cuba; you'd think the world would be in an uproar and civil society in the West would be outraged. But you don't hear any of that. You don't hear it about Cuba, or Iran, or Lebanon, or Gaza, or Yemen, or anywhere else—anywhere the empire is targeting.

So, going back to the main issue, we shouldn't expect rationalism or rationality from the United States, because it's non-existent. So, Trump—what he did on Monday morning was say, "Okay, I'm not going to bomb Iran's critical infrastructure for the next five days. I'll delay it for five days." And that was basically for a couple of reasons. One was to bring down the price of oil and the market. He was successful in that regard. And, of course, the five days would mean until Friday night, when the

markets close. We're close to that right now. Then he'll have the weekend, and many believe he may actually strike on the weekend if the weather allows it—meaning strike the islands, attack the islands, or Iran's mainland.

So the second reason is that Iran made a very, very severe threat and said that if you strike our critical infrastructure, we're going to destroy the critical infrastructure on the other side of the Persian Gulf, because they're complicit in this war, they're assisting you, and we will retaliate. And of course, the targets on the other side of the Persian Gulf are very easy for Iran to strike. These families—they have oil and gas; they don't have anything else. You strike that critical infrastructure, and there's really nothing left in those countries. And that will destroy the global economy. It will destroy the U.S. economy. So Trump did back off. It doesn't mean he's going to back off for good, but he decided to delay it for five days. That ends—today is Thursday morning—that ends tomorrow night. And then we have to see what he does next.

#Pascal

You know, when I said the—there's another thing. Sorry, Pascal. Just one more thing.

#Marandi

Because he said, "We're negotiating," but there are no negotiations. That's fake. He sent a proposal through Pakistan to Iran—that's not negotiations. We've been doing that with the Americans for decades, through different countries. Sometimes it's Oman; sometimes it can be any country. So there were no negotiations. But when the Iranians received it, they saw it wasn't worth discussing. They put out their own conditions in public yesterday, which are basically what I talked about earlier on your show. I said there must be full reparations, and the facts on the ground have to change so that, in the future, no one can attack Iran or Iran's allies in the region.

They have to be part of any package in the future. And so what? These were Iran's conditions. Iran's sovereignty has to be respected. But also, what Trump may do—and again, I'm speculating—is say that after the five days, we were negotiating and almost got there, but they refused to take the final step. So we're going to intensify the war. I'm guessing that after the five days, he'll say, "We tried. We almost got there. We gave them great—provided them with great opportunities—but they refused. They're evil." You know, the sort of thing that Trump does. And then he'll launch the ground defenses.

#Pascal

But are we seeing now, after four weeks, some form of regularity or red lines in terms of what's being bombed and what's not being bombed? I mean, unfortunately, I think the Israelis actually attacked Iranian—not just oil facilities, but even the nuclear power plants—and Iran shot back at Dimona. But so far, we haven't had a nuclear catastrophe yet, luckily. Are you seeing any kind of

movement in the sense that the other side—the Americans, the Israelis—are backing off a bit? Or does it seem that Iran was able to draw a line in the sand? Is there something you can discern?

#Marandi

I think they're becoming more desperate, so they're doing riskier things. For example, striking a nuclear power plant—if they actually hit it, and the missile goes astray and does that—it could cause contamination throughout the Persian Gulf region. That would contaminate oil, contaminate gas. So the Israelis themselves could destroy the oil market permanently because of contamination. But it is a reckless regime. And of course, the regime in Washington is obedient to the Zionists. The Israelis don't care all that much about anything except themselves. I mean, this war is driving up the price of oil. Right now, we're moving toward a global crisis. LNG—you're in Japan, you know it's a big deal right now in your country.

And fertilizer. But they don't care. They don't care about the Indian economy, or the Brazilian economy, or the Chinese economy. They want the Americans to do their bidding because they have aspirations to take over the region. Hamas may. And so the Iranians, knowing that the Israelis have no red lines, retaliated and hit Dimona, and hit buildings affiliated with their nuclear program—research centers and so on—to send them a message. And the missiles are very precise. So the Israelis recognize that if they push further, then the Iranians will push further. The only way to keep this regime at bay is to make it feel this sort of fear. But they did strike, and this, I think, is an important point. I just don't know how long this will last.

Last week, you'll recall, they struck Iran's key natural gas field—the South Pars field. The Iranians had said beforehand that if you strike us, we're going to strike you back much harder. And Iran did. They destroyed key assets in Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the Emirates. That caused Trump to back off. He said, "I didn't know about this. Israel will not do it again." That shows Iran's retaliations have an impact. They haven't struck critical infrastructure since then, but that doesn't mean it won't happen again. Nothing Trump says is ever certain. That's why we can't negotiate with Trump. That's why a peace deal or a ceasefire just doesn't work. That's why Iran is saying no to any ceasefire.

Because Trump will say one thing today and do something else tomorrow. We were negotiating once—he bombed us. He was conspiring against us eight, nine months ago, launched the war. We negotiated again, and he launched this war. And then, of course, the JCPOA itself, which was signed by the United States—he tore it up. So his signature has no value to us. It would just be a worthless piece of paper. So for Iran, what needs to happen is that facts on the ground have to change. And that basically means these tiny Arab dictatorships in the Persian Gulf—either they have to be removed and have the people run the country, or, if they remain, they can no longer be a platform for invading Iran and murdering Iranian schoolchildren again in the future. That era will definitely come to an end.

#Pascal

Two questions. First, about the Gulf states—we heard yesterday some quite reconciliatory talk, I think from Qatar, where the spokesperson said, “We’ve been neighbors, we will be neighbors, and there will be a way out of this,” and so on. Do you think that’s a step in the right direction? How do you think these Gulf states could act to convince Iran to stop the bombing? Like, if they said, “Okay, this American thing has to end.” And second, are there some high-value targets left in Israel that Iran is not attacking in order to keep them as a threat—like, say, a desalination plant or something further up the escalation ladder that’s still under threat? Well, actually, Iran has shown a lot of restraint so far.

#Marandi

First of all, as we all know, Iran was the victim of this war of aggression. It only retaliates when it’s struck first, and it warns the other side not to do it again. When it retaliates against critical infrastructure in the Persian Gulf region, it warns people to evacuate those areas—that’s not what happens to Iran. So it warns them beforehand. Iran and the axis of resistance could escalate much further. Iran could destroy all the oil and gas assets in the Persian Gulf, and the war would be over. But we don’t want to destroy the global economy, we don’t want to destroy the region’s economy, and we don’t want to destroy our own economy. So Iran is restrained—and the same is true for the axis of resistance.

Yemen said it’s going to engage in the war, but so far that front has been quiet. In Iraq, the resistance is striking U.S. targets, but they could go much further. So, the axis in general is reacting to what the other side is doing. I would assume—and I’m certain—that when the United States attacks Iran with ground troops, Iran will definitely escalate in a big way. It has already said that any country allowing or facilitating those troops will have its key infrastructure destroyed. The Iranians haven’t declared which country that is, but they’ve said that once the United States attacks, that country’s key infrastructure will be destroyed.

So Iran is trying to prove that it only escalates after the other side escalates, and it issues threats so the other side doesn’t escalate further. Yes, there’s critical infrastructure in Israel and in the region that the Iranians don’t want to touch, because Iran doesn’t want to take the region there. But I think, as things stand, that’s the direction we’re moving in. I think ultimately, if Trump pushes, the Iranians will destroy the key oil and gas infrastructure and electrical power plants on the other side of the Persian Gulf. With regard to Qatar, it can be interpreted in different ways. I think Qatar also wants Iran to focus on bombing Saudi Arabia and the Emirates more than Qatar. But Qatar is also deeply involved in this war—CENTCOM is based in Qatar.

The drones that killed General Soleimani flew from Qatar, and Qatar, of course, funded ISIS and al-Qaeda at the behest of the United States and other terror groups. I mean, the Saudis did the same, and others did too, but Qatar was a central force and kept doing so when others stopped. In any case, traditionally speaking—over the last decade and a half or two—Iran’s relationship with Qatar

has always been better than with the Saudis or the Emiratis. So it can be seen in different ways. I can't say for certain what lies behind it, but it may be a combination of all these things. They would rather Iran prioritize striking Saudi Arabia and the other countries rather than Qatar, because Iran hit the LNG facilities very hard after the Israelis attacked. And that, as I said, was what forced Trump to back down.

#Pascal

It seems to me that the Gulf states are being thrown under the bus. They're being sacrificed by the United States and by Israel, because if they get hit, it doesn't hurt them that much. There's this theory out there that Donald Trump actually wants to hurt the Gulf region, and that the oil going down and the LNG going down from there is actually good for the United States and its exports, because they're energy independent and will come out economically as the winners of this whole thing. In that sense, Iran would be doing a favor to the United States. How do you interpret that argument?

#Marandi

Yes, that's an argument that's been made since the beginning of the war, and even before the war. But, you know, I think it's true on one level—not for the Israeli regime, but for the United States—because the oligarchs and those who own the oil business and the oil sector, who are oligarchs for the most part, will make a killing. I mean, literally too. But American consumers and the middle class, or what's left of the middle class, will suffer immensely. They're already paying a price, and the U.S. economy is doing quite poorly. As guests on your own show have discussed before—you've had some very good programs on this topic—people talk about the internal dynamics of U.S. society and the economy.

They're not going well. And I think, with the divide that exists in the United States, this is terrible news for the country. If this war continues, and the shortage of oil, natural gas, fertilizers, and petrochemicals keeps growing—and it will, it's growing by the minute—then that will have a severely negative effect on the United States. Those oligarchs will make a lot of money, but ordinary Americans will feel the pain and suffering. It's like the U.S. Armed Forces, where the soldiers are all from the working class. It's not going to affect the billionaires, whose kids have never fired a gun before, unless it's for hunting or for pleasure.

#Pascal

Yeah, which then raises the question, right? Whether this strategy can actually put the squeeze on the people who make the decisions to continue the war. And secondly, does Iran somehow try to mitigate the economic impact on China and its partners, including India and Russia? Can you see any strategies to safeguard their access to oil and LNG?

#Marandi

Well, Iran continues to export oil to its friends, and Iran's oil on the sea in tankers is being sold. Those tankers will all be emptied relatively soon. Iran also facilitates the movement of some tankers through the Strait of Hormuz—like Bangladesh, which is vulnerable. I think they helped them get a tanker through. But as you said, some of the tankers, or rather the oil and gas resources, are owned by countries that have been involved in this war. Iraq, on the other hand, for example, has not. And I think a number of tankers have left the Persian Gulf heading toward markets in South Asia and East Asia. So Iran—again, Iran doesn't want this war.

Iran allowed a couple of LNG tankers belonging to India to leave. In return, India released three tankers full of oil that they had been holding—literally hostage—at the behest of Trump. So, I mean, there were some small deals like that that also took place. But at the end of the day, if these countries in the Persian Gulf region, instead of facilitating death and destruction, just told the Americans to leave—that they could no longer use their airspace or territory—and simply maintained ordinary business relations with them, this war would not continue. It would be over, because the Americans cannot wage war on Iran without the countries on the other side of the Persian Gulf.

#Pascal

If the Emirates, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and Kuwait all said, "Americans, go home—we hereby expel you and publicly tell you to leave," do you think that would have the potential to actually end the war?

#Marandi

If they tell the American troops to leave—they're not just ordinary Americans, they're the troops—yes, of course, Iran would still demand reparations for all the damage that's been done so far. But that would be a huge step toward ending this whole thing. Iran's conflict with these countries, except for the issue of reparations, would be over.

#Pascal

So, do you think the strategy now is more about convincing the Americans and Israelis to stop it, or about convincing the Gulf states to expel the Americans? Which one do you think is more important in the strategy? The countries in the Persian Gulf are proxies.

#Marandi

And they don't have the ability to—I mean, they've forsaken, they've forfeited—the ability to make their own decisions years ago. When the United States brought its bases into the region, its influence wasn't just on the bases; it gained control of everything. And I think, living in Japan, you

appreciate that quite well. The U.S. presence in Japan isn't just limited to a few military bases where soldiers train. No, it's a network of influence spread throughout the country, where basically Japan becomes—even despite all its wealth—a proxy of the United States.

And we saw how, when Japan was on the rise, the United States basically forced Japan to give up its economic prosperity for the sake of the United States, because of its enormous influence over the country. And now, as Japan is entering a deeper crisis, the United States will not allow Japan to use all the tools at its disposal to deal with this crisis, again because of its enormous influence in the country.

#Pascal

This is one of the points where I'm not entirely sure. I mean, Japan maintained—yes, Japan is an ally, or if you want to put it, a vassal of the U.S.—but one that still reaps considerable benefits from it. And sometimes, in critical moments in the 1980s that you mentioned, Japan was able to pretend to be giving in while still gaining significant benefits from how things were done. The structural influence on the actual political process in Japan is not as large as one might think. So that's why I wonder.

I mean, Japan, I'm pretty sure, would have the ability—at some point has had the ability—to oppose certain things. Ms. Takahashi actually did that a little bit when she went to the United States recently, saying Japan cannot send ships: "Sorry, we have an Article 9 peace constitution, and we cannot, so sorry." Although she herself would like to change that, she used it as a pretext to say, "No, we can't do anything." So there is agency, of course. So I wonder if the agency in the Gulf states is not there.

#Marandi

No, well, I agree. I mean, I'm not saying that Japan is a complete proxy of the United States. Japan is, after all, an enormous country with a long heritage and a strong economy. After the World Wars, it rebuilt itself. But still, the influence of the United States is not just limited to the bases. That influence goes far beyond them. Those bases are part of a network. And here it's the same, but these regimes are much weaker and more vulnerable. They're family dictatorships, and their policies run against the views of the people in their own countries. In the Emirates, for example, which is the most pro-Zionist regime—my friends who live in the Emirates are all exclusively Western, all of them. I don't speak to Iranians in the Emirates at all because I don't want to get anyone into trouble.

So the people I do speak to—because, you know, white Westerners have more security, their status is much higher—my friends in the Emirates say openly that, yes, the Emiratis, in private conversations, are very unhappy with their relationship with the Israeli regime and so on. But these regimes are police states. There is full control, and the West backs them. We saw, for example, the revolution that was taking place in Bahrain—it was crushed with the support of the West and, of

course, the other dictatorships in the Persian Gulf region. And if you look at public opinion in any of these countries, they're all against the expansion, the Israeli regime, Zionism, and the current expansionist policies of the regime. But, as I said, these countries gave up their sovereignty a long, long time ago.

So I don't see them being able to make such a move. I mean, for example—the small size of these countries and their small populations, of course, have an impact. So, for example, I was invited once by the Korean government, and I had a meeting with—well, we were sort of a civil society delegation. I was invited as the head of the delegation and was allowed to choose my companions. There were four of us, and we went to meet the head in the foreign ministry—the head of, if I'm not mistaken, West Asia and Africa. That's how it was structured, I think. In Korea? In South Korea, yes. South Korea, okay. And so, when we sat and spoke, before the conversation began—it was in the foreign ministry—he said, "I have to say one thing first, because it was the last day of our visit."

I spoke at a couple of universities, and we had question-and-answer sessions. Then he said—he was a pretty high-ranking official—he said, "Before we start, I have to say, look, we're not a sovereign country. We don't make our own decisions." And so Japan, of course, with more than double Korea's population, despite the U.S. presence, gets a bit more room to maneuver. South Korea, obviously less. Then Bahrain—these are all family dictatorships—Bahrain, Qatar, a population of, what, 400,000? The Emirates, a population of 1.2 million, 3 million? They forfeited their sovereignty a long time ago. With such small populations, completely dependent on oil and gas, wasting trillions of dollars on useless weapons they'll never use, they can't make their own decisions.

#Pascal

Right, right. Now, I'm asking because the structural influence of the United States in the political process varies from country to country. I mean, Ukraine is under a completely different type of U.S.-controlled regime—foreign-controlled, you know, by all the influence in different parts of society—than Japan is, than Germany is, and than the U.S. over the Gulf states. So my question would be, how far does it go? But if I listen to you, you'd say it's very high in those Gulf states—the structural power that the United States is able to exert over their political process.

#Marandi

And they may dislike each other—which they do. I mean, the conflict between Saudi Arabia and the Emirates has grown a lot over the past year, and we saw it play out in South Yemen, for example. And of course, Qatar, the Saudis, and the Emiratis dislike each other. But when it comes to U.S. influence, the U.S. calls the shots, really.

#Pascal

Right. Okay. In that case, I mean, again, we're still in the fourth week, and it seems we just have to wait and see what's going to happen. Is there anything, toward the end of this interview, that you'd still like to point out or share with us? Or did we cover most of the important things? Well, something somewhat personal, actually. Oh yes—the bounty on your head! I'm sorry, I forgot to ask about that. I saw that.

#Marandi

Yes, it's not something that deters me, but I think it's important for people to know how the West is really functioning. So, on Twitter, I have a bounty on my head—there's a verified account, which also has a paid partnership. They put a bounty on my head. They're crowdfunding to gather one million dollars. It's an Israeli-Ukrainian entity—shady. No one can tell me exactly who they are. I would imagine it's Mossad, but they are crowdfunding; they want to raise a million dollars to kidnap me, which of course would probably lead to torture and murder. But the point is that thousands, many thousands, possibly tens of thousands of people have complained, and Twitter refuses to remove it.

No Western journalists—and of course I know many Western journalists, and many of them follow me, either with their main accounts or their secondary ones—none of them have contacted me. None of them have made an issue about this. CNN, which knows me quite well; the BBC, they know me very well; Sky News, they know me very well—and the list goes on. The Guardian, The Independent, they all know me. The Times of London, they all know me. None of them will say a thing about it. None. Of course, no investigation, no politician will say anything about it. And this is, in my opinion, a big deal—not because of me. I'll do what I have to do. And if I'm kidnapped or killed, the threat of being kidnapped or killed is not going to change how I do things.

I mean, when I see these young kids on the streets of Tehran at demonstrations—supporting the armed forces and the leader, condemning the Israeli regime, supporting Palestinians—and then the U.S. and Israelis fire missiles at them, and they literally do, right? As I think we discussed earlier, I'm not sure, but I was at one of those rallies and a woman was killed. People were unfazed. They didn't move. These young men and women stood their ground. If they stand their ground, I can't do anything else but stand my ground. What's important is for people to recognize that social media in the West are tools of empire.

And they can be used for the most outrageous things. Right now, they've just bombed Tehran. I don't know if you heard, but I've had many of my tweets removed. I was removed from Instagram years ago—I don't have an account there. I was removed from Facebook years ago—I don't have an account there either. But I've had many tweets on Twitter that were taken down, or I was forced to remove them. For example, I posted a picture of dead kids in Gaza, and above it I wrote "Western civilization." They deleted it and told me, "If you don't remove this, you'll lose access to your account."

So I have to remove tweets that aren't threats—they're just saying they're killing kids. And then they can raise money to kidnap, torture, and probably kill me, and it's not going to be removed. There's no investigation, no interest from the Western media. So when I say—because sometimes people ask, "Why do you say the Epstein class?"—when I say the Epstein class, it's because it's a certain class of people, utterly corrupt, without any moral boundaries, who own not just these governments but the media too. They're in full control.

#Pascal

Yeah, they do. And the tweet you're talking about—the people who put that out, who do the crowdfunding—they even pay Twitter to distribute it further, right? It's a paid kind of Twitter advertisement on X. And that's being allowed. And again, they want to put a bounty on your head. The tweet is there, the account is there—it's just quite stunning. It's been up for a week now.

#Marandi

I joke with my family. I say, look, the people who are going to turn me in are in this building, or in this gathering. But it's very distressing for my family—it's very distressing for my loved ones and for my friends. But the issue isn't me. I'm raising this so people understand who Elon Musk is, what The Guardian is, what The New York Times is, what The Washington Post is, what CNN is. It's not one monolithic set of media outlets—they're not identical. They're just like Qatar and the Emirates; they don't like each other, but at the end of the day, they're controlled by the same class, the same oligarchy, the same Zionist oligarchy that calls the shots. And they have their own differences, obviously, among themselves, but they have very similar interests too.

#Pascal

Yes, they do. And look, I'm very sorry that this is happening to you, and that people are trying to do crowdfunding to put a bounty on your head, which is disgusting in and of itself. The fact that this is being distributed is, again, also very disgusting. It shows very clearly the double standards, the hypocrisy, and so on and so forth, of this entire process that we're in. And until the West—well, it's really quite a monster, I mean, doing this and allowing this, and then also running it through civil society. But unfortunately, that's where we are. Uh, Professor Marandi, for people who want to follow you, they should go first and foremost to your Twitter—or your X account. I'll try to link it below here. Also, we will talk again. I thank you for all the updates you're giving and the analysis. Anything to add?

#Marandi

No, I just want to thank you for all the excellent work you're doing.

#Pascal

Thank you, and thank you for reporting from Tehran for us, Professor Marandi. See you next time.
Bye for now.