

Brink of Escalation: Failing War & Desperate Moves | Prof. Steven Starr

The Iran War is going horribly. If Donald Trump knows this or not and which type of information he is being fed we don't know. But the idea of sending ground troops to occupy islands in front of Iran is either utter disregard for reality or a desperate move to somehow turn the tide of the war around. Here to discuss this is Prof. Steven Starr, an Emeritus Professor of the University of Missouri and Associate of the Nuclear Age Peace Foundation. Prof. Starr's Homepage: <https://nuclearfamine.org/about-steven-starr/> Support us on Substack: <https://pascallottaz.substack.com> Or on our shop with a donation: <https://neutralitystudies-shop.fourthwall.com>

#Pascal

Welcome back, everybody. This is Pascal Lottaz from Neutrality Studies, and I'm joined again today by a retired professor from the University of Missouri and an associate at the Nuclear Age Peace Foundation, Professor Stephen Starr. Steve, welcome back. Well, it's great to be back. It's wonderful having you, because you prepared another presentation for us. Let me show that right here. Yes, it's on the screen now. You're going to give us an update on what is happening with the war against Iran. Please, take it away.

#Steven Starr

Okay, thank you. Well, as everyone knows, we've got a war raging, and it's really a concern to me that the war is being guided by fundamentalist Zionist Christians in the White House. It's more of a crusade than a war, at some level. In the last four weeks, the U.S. has made more than 10,000 military strikes in Iran. They've hit 190 medical centers, and 80,000 civilian structures have been damaged. Twelve hospitals have also been destroyed in Iran. So this is not just an attack on Iranian military facilities. Let's see here... can I get this? There we go.

#Pascal

And in this picture, you were showing us the— I mean, you were showing us your Secretary of War, right? And his insignia. And Alex, Donald Trump...

#Steven Starr

Trump was having a session in the Oval Office, and Hedges has a Crusaders tattoo on his chest.

#Pascal

Yeah, literally, the Secretary of War of the United States has a Crusaders tattoo on his chest. This is not a joke, not some kind of irony or anything like that. This is just reality.

#Steven Starr

That's right, and it's frightening to me. We complain about Iran being a theocracy, but it seems like we have the same thing going on in the White House right now.

#Presenter

We do.

#Steven Starr

So, contrary to what you may be hearing in the mainstream media, the United States is not winning the war—Iran is. Iranian attacks have forced the U.S. to withdraw from thirteen military bases around the Gulf. We only have one operational base left in northern Iraq. Missile and drone attacks have done this, and it seems the U.S. didn't even prepare for them. I heard today that the Pentagon is in a hurry, trying to send concrete shelters—bunkers—to the Middle East. Along with the destruction of these bases, Iran has comprehensively destroyed U.S. and Israeli radar systems, which has blinded U.S. and Israeli air defense systems to long-range missile attacks. Israel now has only a one-minute warning for any attacks that hit its cities or military bases.

Um, in addition to that, the U.S. and Israel are running out of interceptor air defense missiles. They don't work very well, but if they run out of them, then they won't work at all, obviously. And the THAAD radar and Patriot missiles—they've been shipped out of South Korea, which I'm sure South Korea wasn't happy about—to be sent to the Middle East to replace those that were destroyed. But they can't replace the high-altitude UHF radar system that was destroyed in Qatar, and that's required for the initial identification of high-altitude objects coming in—warheads. So these THAAD and Patriot missiles are still not going to be very effective. What's going on? Why, you know, even though they've had 80,000 strikes or 10,000 strikes, you know, look at why.

Iran has built a whole series of underground missile cities all across the country. Their country is about the size of Western Europe, and the U.S. clearly doesn't know where these are or how to knock them out. And why is that? Because they're buried in granite—granite that's about twenty-five times harder than concrete. You know, this is a diagram of one of the missile cities, and it's 500 meters deep, or about 1,500 feet, inside the mountain. It's got multiple exits, an internal railway system, and the missiles are transported through tunnels. They pop up to the surface, they're launched, and the blast doors close. And, you know, they don't have time to identify and hit those targets.

#Pascal

Where do we get this information from?

#Steven Starr

Iran provided some of this. In fact, this video here shows footage from that underground missile city.

#Steven Starr

These tunnels go for miles. This isn't some simple setup...

#Steven Starr

The structure down there—they've been preparing for this war for 30 years. They anticipated it, and that's why they knew they couldn't compete with our air force, so they built missiles and drones. And we're apparently unprepared for that. What is this? Is this real, or is this AI-generated? I mean, is this—you know, I believe it's real.

#Pascal

Can you play the audio again? Was that Arabic, or was that—yeah, I mean, I think it's...

#Steven Starr

I mean, they do this to inform their own people too.

#Pascal

Wait, isn't this Hebrew?

#Steven Starr

So anyway, I think—hopefully—your viewers get the picture. What have these missiles been doing? I mean, they destroyed 30 to 40 percent of the Gulf's refining capacity. It's been damaged or it's offline. Eleven million barrels per day of refining capacity have been lost, and 20 percent of global liquefied natural gas production has also been lost. You know, 70 percent of the LNG capacity in Qatar was lost from the Iranian strikes, and it'll take three to five years to restore that production. This is a structural issue now. The global strategic petroleum reserves only cover about 20 days of lost oil flow from the Gulf. And you can't speed up tankers—they can only cross the ocean so fast. But once the ones that are en route arrive, there'll be no more.

But it's just under the oil price. Well, we went from \$60 to \$70 a barrel to—I think today it was over \$100, or around \$100 a barrel. And it's going to be, you know, well over \$100, maybe up to \$200 a

barrel. Right. And that builds inflation into everything, because fuel costs are built into every manufacturing or agricultural activity. This will impact food production, because about 30% of the urea comes out of the Gulf—and that's what they use for nitrogen fertilizers in our fields here in Missouri and all around the world. And like I said, this is structural, multi-year damage. This cannot be fixed quickly. So this is what has already happened through this insane war. This shows Tehran after Israel hit a refinery there in Iran. That's what it looked like.

#Pascal

Because this was oil raining down over Tehran after it evaporated into the sky, right? It's absolutely an ecological catastrophe—what the U.S.–Israeli coalition is doing to Iran.

#Steven Starr

That's right. You know, in the other presentation I did, we showed oil running through the drains and on fire in a city. So Iran hit back.

#Steven Starr

This is a gigantic oil refinery in Saudi Arabia. They also hit the world's largest oil refinery in the United Arab Emirates.

#Presenter

Wow.

#Steven Starr

And then the U.S. struck Iran's South Pars gas field. That's the largest gas field in the world.

#Pascal

Is this the South Pars gas field attack?

#Steven Starr

Yeah.

#Presenter

Oh, Jesus.

#Steven Starr

So then Iran struck back, and they hit Qatar's gas field. That was when about 70% of the capacity was destroyed there. We're not seeing this in our news, as far as I can tell. I had to search the Internet to find these videos—but these are not AI videos. This is a real thing. This is slaughter, yeah. Meanwhile, the U.S. is conducting massive bombing raids on Iranian cities—they're carpet-bombing their cities. And if the reports are true, there are two Marine battalions and about a thousand U.S. airborne troops en route to the Middle East, and apparently some are supposed to arrive tonight or tomorrow. Have you heard anything? They added another 10,000 troops. And if they invade, they'll be massacred.

This is not going to be—it's really insane. I mean, every military expert I've listened to has just gone up and talked about how this might be like Gallipoli in World War I. If the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia support this U.S. invasion, Iran has promised to destroy their oil refineries and liquefied natural gas production. I mean, it would wipe out all the petroleum products coming out of the Gulf. And I think if it goes that far, they'll also hit the desalination plants. Israel and the Gulf states are highly dependent on those for water. They couldn't support their populations if this continues. So... I mean, I hope to God this doesn't transpire.

#Pascal

This is one of the problems that only Israel and the Gulf states face, because Iran doesn't depend on desalination.

#Steven Starr

Yeah, only about four percent of their water comes from desalination.

#Pascal

Israel depends on it for how much of its water?

#Steven Starr

Eighty percent. Eighty percent. And the others are like seventy, eighty, ninety percent. They become uninhabitable—I mean, they're in the desert there.

#Pascal

For the Gulf states, that would immediately mean the death of tens of thousands of people if they can't be evacuated or if water can't be brought in. Armageddon is...

#Steven Starr

Um, so where are we? You know, this diagram shows—the large solid red line shows where the traffic was, the normal shipping lanes—but it's being routed between two islands. That's Keshm Island and Larak Island. I don't know if I'm pronouncing that exactly right, but you can see there's a narrow—it's like a toll gate they've created, basically. You know, Iran never charged anything for boats to go through the straits. Well, now that's changed. I mean, they charge to go through the Suez Canal, the Panama Canal, so this is not something unheard of in the world. Yeah.

And they haven't mined the Strait as far as I know, although someone has suggested they could actually put mines on the bottom of the Strait there. I don't know. But will the Marines attempt to take these two islands? No. Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates have been using pipelines to ship oil outside the Strait of Hormuz. You can see in the middle there, there's a green pipeline, and that's where the bulk of the oil is coming from. The UAE's got a pipeline down here, and the Saudi pipeline offloads at Yanbu on the Red Sea. This oil has replaced about 40% of the oil that formerly came through the Persian Gulf, so it has reduced the dependency. You know, up above there, at the top of the Red Sea, is where the Suez Canal is.

#Presenter

Mm-hmm.

#Pascal

But this is something that could be destroyed—something Iran could target if they wanted to.

#Steven Starr

Yes, and in addition to that, if you look at the bottom of the Red Sea, that's where Yemen and the Houthis are. And if they decide to block off that strait, the very large crude carriers won't be able to get through, because they can't go through the Suez Canal. They have to exit the Red Sea by passing Yemen.

#Pascal

Right.

#Steven Starr

And I'm sure this will happen if the hostilities continue. So, where are the possible sites for a U.S. ground invasion of Iran? You know, we've talked about Karg Island—that's where Iran offloads almost all of its oil into the Persian Gulf. The U.S. has hit the military bases there, but they haven't targeted the oil refineries. You can see that up there, the red circle. We were looking at the Strait of Hormuz a minute ago, with Larak Island and Qeshm Island. There's also a port city called Chabahar

that's been mentioned as a place where the Marines might try to land. And there are also some small islands.

Ambassador Freeman has brought this up a couple of times. I greatly respect him. So, they're called the Lesser Tunb Islands, I believe, and they're in the center here. I'm not sure what value they would have, but all these islands are within range of Iranian artillery, missiles, and drones. If you look at the topographical map of the coastline—look at it—it's completely mountainous. Can you imagine trying to land a force on this? You'd be looking up at the cliffs, and all these cliffs overlook the islands. I mean, modern artillery can reach many miles; you don't need a missile to target these islands. And if anybody landed on them, they'd just be afraid of being massacred.

The U.S. has twice attacked the Iranian nuclear power plant at Bushehr. Now, this is a commercial nuclear power plant, unlike the one at Dimona that Israel has. This one has probably at least ten times, maybe a hundred times, more nuclear material. It's got seventy-one tons of fissile material in the reactor, and it also has two hundred ten tons of highly radioactive uranium fuel rods. They call it spent fuel. And these spent fuel pools have some of the highest concentrations of radioactivity on the planet. After the U.S. attacked, the Iranian hypersonic missiles retaliated—they struck right next to Israel's Dimona reactor.

#Presenter

Whoa, whoa, whoa!

#Steven Starr

They didn't hit the reactor itself, but they could have. They have the capability, and they're very accurate. It's basically a warning.

#Pascal

So they made sure not to hit it, but they struck right next to it.

#Steven Starr

Right. They could hit it if they wanted to. A ballistic missile would wreck that. What will the U.S. and Israel do if they face a huge defeat by Iran? If we land troops there and they get massacred? I think, to prevent a catastrophic defeat, the U.S. or Israel might choose to use nuclear weapons against Iran. I mean, they're both nuclear powers. Israel has probably 300 or 400 nuclear weapons. They have Tomahawk missiles with nuclear warheads on five diesel submarines. You know, we have to ask—what will Russia do?

Would they intervene if a nuclear attack were launched against Iran? Because Iran's right on the Russian border. And worst of all, I think the most likely possibility is that if Israel used nuclear

weapons on Iran, Iran would build and use nuclear weapons against Israel. Dr. Theodore Postol has done some really good presentations on this. I used some of his slides—he gave me permission to share them. He created one that shows three Iranian atomic bombs. They could produce about nine or ten of these fifteen-kiloton weapons with the highly enriched uranium we know they have.

#Pascal

And this would kill three to four hundred thousand people.

#Steven Starr

Now, this diagram shows a nuclear fireball at the instant of detonation. The fireballs are so hot—they're like a piece of the sun coming to Earth. The surface of the fireball is hotter than the surface of the sun, much hotter than any conventional explosive. This picture is from Hiroshima. There was someone beneath the fireball there—they were vaporized, leaving only a shadow on the sidewalk. This image is from a few seconds after the detonation. It shows the mushroom clouds rising, and the intense heat from these fireballs creating a massive nuclear firestorm.

It ignites countless fires all around the area—about 30 square kilometers. And this firestorm is deadly to anything alive there. Within tens of minutes, the air temperature in the fire zone rises above the boiling point of water. The updrafts reach hundreds of miles an hour, creating winds powerful enough to uproot trees three feet in diameter. They're just enormous. So no one in this fire zone would survive. It would be the same in Iran as it would be in Israel.

#Pascal

I think it's important to say here that Professor Postel says that, from what we know about Iran and how much enriched uranium they have, we must assume they could put that into action within a couple of weeks. I mean, that was his assessment already last year. It would be irresponsible to assume they don't already have a couple of nuclear warheads. That was his argument.

#Steven Starr

That's right. He believes nine or ten. They had about 430 kilograms of 60% highly enriched uranium, and that's enough. It only takes several days to go from 60% to 90% enrichment, which is weapons grade. Yeah. These fission bombs are not particularly difficult to produce. They don't have to test them to know they'll work. Iran is completely capable of creating these warheads. So this image shows where the fire zone would be, and everything combustible in the zone will burn in about six to ten hours. This is an image of Hiroshima a few months after the atomic bomb destroyed the city.

The U.S. actually created firestorms in Germany and Japan during World War II with conventional bombing—thousands of bombers creating enormous fires. This is a picture of Hamburg afterward

that shows abandoned fire trucks in the street. It was so hot in the city that you couldn't even take a tracked vehicle in for days; even the asphalt was melting. Everything was so hot you couldn't enter it. After the bomb, of course, there's going to be radioactive fallout. In Hiroshima, there was an area of black rain, and Dr. Postel believes there would be a similar phenomenon here in Tel Aviv. That's highly radioactive. So, you know, probably around 100,000 people died from the fallout in Japan.

And radiation is a terrible way to die from acute exposure. So, I believe any further escalation of this war will lead to disaster for everyone. An all-out war will result if the U.S. attacks Iranian energy infrastructure or sends troops into Iran. The U.S. might consider using nuclear weapons to prevent a massive defeat in the Persian Gulf. I think Trump would. I mean, if he's faced with U.S. troops being slaughtered and ships being sunk, do you think he'll just retreat? I don't believe that's Trump's style. And if Israeli cities are being blasted to bits by Iranian missiles, at some point, I believe they will—what they call the Samson option.

I believe they would. Samson, you know, pulled down the temple on them and destroyed everyone with him. If the energy infrastructure and desalination plants in Israel and the Gulf States are destroyed, it'll make the region uninhabitable. And as I said, I believe Israel is likely to attack Iran with nuclear weapons if it decides its existence is at stake. So stop the war now. That's why I say, if there's someone sane who can intervene in this process and convince Trump not to send troops into Iran—don't attack. If we go ahead with this ground attack, it's going to result in a catastrophe.

#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 will be in the description below. And now, back to the video. Thank you for this overview. This is very, very important, just to be aware of where we're standing now. But what—so what is the mood at the moment in the United States? I mean, you're in Missouri. In your neighborhood, when you talk to people, what do they say about this? What do we know about the statistics on it? I mean, we know that CPAC, the Conservative Political Action Committee, just had their meeting this weekend, and they were apparently discussing whether this war was a good thing or a bad thing. Where does the U.S. stand on the war?

#Steven Starr

Well, I believe most normal people—the ones struggling to feed their families and take care of their own lives—are not in favor of endless war. I think that's the reason why Trump was elected, actually. He pledged to end foreign wars. And look at what he's done, you know? So, I mean, I don't know if I can speak for the United States or not. What I see is that the politicians are all for it. But

we have AIPAC here. I mean, every congressman has a representative from AIPAC in their office. That's why, when Netanyahu comes and gives a speech, he gets a standing ovation. It's because we've got the best Congress that money can buy. I mean, I don't think Trump really—well, I don't know.

I can't speak for Trump. I honestly question his sanity at this point, but I think he's panicking—that's what I see. His rants and stuff are becoming more and more disconnected from reality, almost. But what information is he getting? He's surrounded himself with these Christian Zionists who've handpicked the people reporting to them. A lot of them are yes-men. I listen to Ray McGovern and Larry Johnson talk about all the bad intel that goes up to the White House because they've structured the analysts to be yes-men. And Trump apparently doesn't like to read, so he watches highlights of bombing runs that are shown to him in his briefings. So he may be convinced that the U.S. is winning the war.

I mean, it really is disconcerting to think that the president is getting completely false information and believes he can send in troops, win the war, and make Iran stand down—when Iran has a million-man standing army. And what are 10,000 troops? You know, in World War I they had the Battle of Gallipoli. There were about 489,000 Allied troops—British, French, Australians, New Zealanders—who landed on the shores. They were being overlooked by cliffs because the British tried to go through the Dardanelles, and it was mined, their ships were sunk, so they decided to try an invasion. Sounds familiar, right? And they lost 125,000 killed and wounded and finally had to retreat. We're going to send 10,000 men in? Do you think that's going to do any good? They didn't have missiles back then.

#Pascal

I wonder if this can be true. I mean, the whole talk—one possible interpretation is, of course, that this whole ground invasion stuff is just a dilemma, right? In order to also set us up against them, right? So that the commentary...

#Steven Starr

This would be the Western audiences who only get fed propaganda through the mainstream media. Because the Iranians aren't going to be worried about it. I mean, they're saying, "Yeah, bring it. Bring them on in."

#Pascal

They are. They are. I had Professor Marandi on my channel, and he said, "Look, we're prepared for this. I mean, we're prepared to kill them all—no problem. If you really want to do that, then send them over. Sure, we'll take care of it."

#Steven Starr

I don't want to see American servicemen butchered over there. But what are we continuing? We've been carpet-bombing their cities. We began this war of aggression by killing their Ayatollah and his family. And the new Ayatollah is the son of the one we killed. He lost his daughter and his wife. I don't think he's in the mood. I think he's likely to say, "Yeah, go ahead and build those nuclear weapons," because his father had blocked it for 26 years—and that's the man we killed.

#Pascal

Yeah, and what you showed us, you know, those underground cities—whether those pictures are the real ones or not—I mean, this is also what Professor Marandi talks about, that they have these kinds of underground cities. And it took the United States a very daring operation just to bomb one of them, right? And we know that this one strike wasn't able to actually destroy the nuclear fuel that was there. So this is just something that's out of reach for the United States.

#Steven Starr

Well, those facilities you're talking about, Natanz and Fordow, they're actually not missile cities. But they are nuclear facilities where they refine uranium. They have cascades of centrifuges. But it's similar in the sense that Iran is made of granite, and granite is 25 times stronger than concrete. That's why—well, right. You know, I don't know. I'm just some guy in Missouri trying to figure out what's going on.

#Pascal

Yeah, but we're all just trying to guess where this is going, because we're mainly trying to figure out what kind of information the White House has, and at what point Congress might finally get its act together and say, "Wait a minute, we're responsible here." Are you hearing anything about this?

#Steven Starr

Well, let me just say, I don't know for sure, but I've done a lot of research. These videos of the missile cities and the pictures have been out for years—they weren't all just manufactured last week by AI. What I don't understand is why this wasn't considered. Why would American soldiers be left on bases without even adequate shelters?

#Pascal

Is it maybe one of the most shocking insights that they don't have shelters in the Gulf states where they're stationed?

#Steven Starr

In other words, it's a picture of utter incompetence—from the top to the bottom—and the U.S. is hardly in a position to attack anyone. Iran is like a fortress state. I mean, that's the last place anyone should want to attack, because the Iranians will not surrender; they'll fight to the last man at this point. Anyway, I didn't mean to avoid your previous question, but the information is out there if you want it. There are videos on Iranian drilling machines—yes, yes, yes—there's a lot of stuff. It's not that hard to figure out that Iran knew they were going to face this war again, and that's why they were preparing for it. They did it very scientifically and methodically.

#Pascal

No, they did. And we know they're prepared—they've said they're prepared. They've said they've got that, and they've now proven they're able to shoot. I mean, are you—because I lost count—did you stay on top of how the fire exchange is going? About how many missiles are being traded each day, and if we're seeing a change in those numbers?

#Steven Starr

Yes. You know, at the beginning of the war, there was a large exchange on both sides, and that was primarily to try to identify and destroy air defense systems. Iran was pretty effective at destroying the radar, which blinded a lot of U.S. and Israeli forces. But the exchanges have died down considerably. Now, you can get numbers from CENTCOM—the U.S. military figures—and they show a progressive decrease. But what's happening now is that the strikes appear to be increasing again. Iran used older missiles at first, and the ones being brought out now are newer. They use different launchers and have much larger warheads—one- to two-ton warheads, apparently. At least one ton.

I mean, two thousand pounds of high explosive is a massive amount of destruction, and they can target these very precisely. Israel has got incredible restrictions—if you post any video on the internet, you're going to be put in prison in Israel. So that's really why we're not seeing any videos coming out of there. But I did see a video of a mayor of a city in the West Bank saying, "You've got to stop this. We can't survive this. We have no defense," because Hezbollah is hitting them with missiles too. So I think Israel is besieged right now. And this war was supposed to be a short war. I mean, the fools in the White House apparently believed they could, in one weekend, kill the Ayatollah, have regime change, and all the Iranians were going to revolt and we'd all live happily ever after. I mean, now the goal is to open the Strait of Hormuz. Well, it was open before the war, right?

#Pascal

Yeah, exactly. It was open, it was free, it was safe, and it was fine. But, you know, if the analysis is that AIPAC is one of the drivers of this war, and the wishes of Tel Aviv are basically the commands in Washington—let's just suppose that's true—then the question is not how to convince the United States, but how to convince Tel Aviv to order Washington to stand down. And if we suppose that,

then the Iranians have said the only way they'd be willing to stop shooting is if the U.S. completely withdraws from West Asia. All the bases must be gone.

They must pay reparations, or the Gulf states must pay reparations. And the Iranian allies—Hezbollah and so on—have to be part of the political outcome of the deal. Or it's genocide of the Palestinians. And stop the genocide. Stop the genocide, of course. All of this, to me, still seems like something that's basically embedded in Zionism itself, right? Right. Actually, it attacks the core of the Zionist political ideology. Therefore, I guess the Israelis have maneuvered themselves into a corner from which there's now no way out. So I don't see how Iran or Tel Aviv could convince the other to stop. Therefore, this will probably continue.

#Steven Starr

I completely agree with you. I mean, this is an existential struggle for both states at this point. But it's only existential for Israel because they made enemies of all their neighbors and committed genocide against the Palestinians. And they initiated an aggressive war against Iran—not for the first time, actually. You know, we had that attack in June of last year, and Iran showed at that time that its missiles could penetrate the so-called Iron Dome. I've got—well, I had videos of that. I think I showed one on your show before. And yeah. Now, why did that not get through to Washington? I mean, what the hell are those people doing there? Are they...

#Pascal

Last June or July, during the Twelve-Day War, I mean, it was utterly clear.

#Presenter

Iran made it crystal clear.

#Pascal

Our missiles can penetrate your stupid dome thing and your David Sling thing, and we can get at your throat if we want to—but we don't want to. So stop making us want to. And then look at what they did. I mean, now you've made us want to actually strike you where it really hurts, even at the cost of very high losses at home. So, in a sense, one of the possible outcomes of this, I believe at this point, is regime change in Tel Aviv, because you'd need a political change—a fundamental political change.

#Steven Starr

Or hope for it. Um, you know, there are other views on this that say the whole plan has been to destroy the Gulf and wreck the Strait of Hormuz. Brian Berletic and others believe that. They don't

say it's Israel; they say it's the United States driving this. The U.S. at this point is more or less self-sufficient in petroleum, although fracking is utterly short-term. Those wells are going to dry up post-haste. But, you know, the people in Washington—maybe they believe that if they can burn down the rest of the world, then, you know, when everybody runs out of gas and oil, we won't. Like after World War II, you know, all the nations were laid waste by the war except the United States, because we had the two oceans protecting us. And we were number one for a long time.

#Pascal

I asked this yesterday—I asked Chas Freeman about it. The video's been out for a couple of hours, and he says he doesn't believe that interpretation at all. He thinks it's a rationalization of the outcome we're seeing. But the motives behind it—he doesn't see it as some kind of grand strategic 4D chess move, more as the result of a very unhealthy process of trying to deal with Iran. And of course, the idea is: deal with them first, then go against Russia, and finally the "final boss," China—right? That video game mentality. But yeah, he also made the point that there are actually benefits coming out of this for China. For instance, its entire renewable energy sector, which is the largest in the world, is going to get a huge boom from this.

#Steven Starr

Russia's doing well with oil prices too.

#Pascal

Russia's doing well with oil prices. I mean, there are other knock-on effects—other people benefiting from this.

#Steven Starr

Someone pointed out that we had sanctions against Russia and Iran, but Trump lifted them so they could buy oil.

#Pascal

The sanctions on Iranian oil are currently lifted.

#Presenter

Yeah.

#Steven Starr

It's like Alice through the looking glass—Alice in Wonderland stuff. It really is. That's why nothing makes sense. You'd send 10,000 troops to invade Iran—I mean, nothing makes sense. We're watching this all progress like a bad science fiction movie, and it's hard. You know, it's very frustrating for people who want to see peace on Earth.

#Pascal

Yeah, it's extremely frustrating. But at the same time, what we're seeing now is that, for the first time, the United States seems to be running into a real kind of brick wall—the first time since hitting the North Korean brick wall. But even in North Korea, you know, the North Koreans were basically forced to fight guerrilla warfare in the jungles and so on—an asymmetric war. But this is a symmetric war, and this is the first time since the Second World War that the United States has had to fight a symmetric war.

#Steven Starr

You know, Dr. Postol—yeah, well, Dr. Postol has been trying to make the point for a couple of decades now that the U.S. air defense systems are a fraud. We saw they were ineffective in Ukraine, and now we see they certainly weren't able to protect the U.S. bases, were they? Yeah, not at all. I mean, they've laid waste—they've driven the United States out of every military base around the Gulf. And that message hasn't gotten through to the American public, I don't think.

#Pascal

No, but it seems like they really believe that, right?

#Steven Starr

Yeah, that's propaganda.

#Pascal

No, but if you don't build bunkers for your troops that close to one of your main adversaries, it means you actually trust that your systems have got this, right? But they really believed it. And now we've learned that something once firmly believed in the military is actually turning out to be a fiction.

#Steven Starr

That's an excellent point. I hadn't thought of that, but apparently that was the case. And there are probably hundreds of Americans dead right now. They're going to cover everything up. We see this in every war. Even in World War I and World War II, the American government lied to its people

about casualties that were being incurred in some of the different battles—the Battle of the Bulge, for example. Those were horrendous American losses, but we never heard about it here. And I think a lot of American servicemen have already been killed and wounded, but nothing compared to what's going to happen if they send troops in to invade the islands or the mainland.

#Pascal

So we have, basically, at this point—as we speak on the 28th of March my time, the evening of the 27th your time—the situation where we're waiting to see whether these two massive escalations, or actually three, could happen, right? The first one would be going after desalination plants—or, let's put it this way, Israel going after something in Iran so critical that Iran would decide to strike the desalination plants. Then there's the troop invasion, the ground invasion—that's the other massive escalation. And the third one would, of course, be the nuclear escalation. That's not to say this is a hierarchy, but these are probably the three largest things that could still potentially happen, each of which could kill thousands, tens of thousands, or even hundreds of thousands.

#Steven Starr

But Iran warned that it would go after the refineries in the Gulf if the attacks on its infrastructure continued. For example, if the U.S. took out Karg Island—because that's where they offload all their oil into the Persian Gulf—that could be, you know, something Israel might go after if they wanted to provoke a full-scale attack.

#Pascal

That's true. That's true. I mean, that's the problem. Israel has the United States basically by the crown jewels, right? Because they can hit something in Iran that then forces Iran to strike something very valuable to the U.S. And the U.S. will just be hurt—just be hurt.

#Steven Starr

That shows you how foolish American leadership has been to maneuver itself into this sort of situation. I mean, in a sane world, we wouldn't even come close to something like this. But I—you know, people have said over and over, when it comes down to choosing between U.S. and Israeli interests, the U.S. seems to always choose the Israeli interests in these kinds of situations. But I don't think it's in Israel's interest to have any further escalation in this war, because if they don't back down, then they're going to use the Samson option, and it'll be a biblical Armageddon scenario. I hope not, but I don't see anything stopping it right now.

#Pascal

No, that's the problem. I mean, Mr. Netanyahu is still giving press conferences and talking about how well everything is going. I don't know. I've seen, recently again, press conferences from different angles. I think that was just wishful thinking—that we hoped he was gone.

#Steven Starr

And that, when you're hoping somebody would drop dead. But I think there are a lot of people in a couple of different countries wishing that right now.

#Pascal

Let me put it this way: I don't wish death on anyone, but there are some people who, if they lived a little less violently, it wouldn't hurt. They need to retire, at least. Retire—retirement. Just retirement, preferably in prison, but it could also be in their mansion. I don't care. Just retire and stop killing people. But the Israelis are still trying to portray that this is going well, although one of the logical deductions you can make is that people are spending every night in shelters right now. If you have to put people in prison just for making videos of what's happening around them, you know things aren't going very well. But it seems they're under control. I mean, the military apparently has internal control over the population—or the population is still on board with this.

#Steven Starr

Well, technology allows governments to surveil and control their populations very effectively these days. And, you know, I worry about that in the future. I don't like all these damn drones. I worry one might be sent out to visit me. But we have to worry about AI and all this military technology. I mean, we have the capacity to make the Earth a paradise—to eliminate hunger, poverty, to explore the universe. I mean, I sound like an episode of Star Trek, right? But we do. We've finally reached a point in human history where we have the ability to make life great for everyone. But instead, all the money's going into killing and war because it's profitable and about control. If we can't escape this mindset, we're going to doom ourselves. It's completely possible to avoid war and destruction if we choose to.

#Pascal

Yeah, and you know, I keep thinking a lot of the very optimistic pictures of the future actually come out of the United States. I mean, Star Trek is a prime example. The way Star Trek's society works is very utopian. It's like food out of thin air and everybody basically lives without poverty. There are still hierarchies, but you don't do things for money. You're already at peace at home. You can go out, explore, see the universe. It's a utopian vision of the future.

#Steven Starr

You see the cities where there are not only different races from Earth but from all over the galaxy. And, you know, I mean, we did reach a point here where people were seemingly against racism as a culture. We elected a Black president, and I was pretty hopeful way back then, thinking, wow, we've really come a long way. White farmers in Iowa would vote for a Black man for president—that was a change. But now people don't seem to realize that hating Russians is racism, you know? It's just like World War II, with the "Krauts" or whatever—people we've made peace with, although they seem to be our vassals now. But yeah, I don't know. If you use technology to brainwash people instead of educate them, you end up with big problems.

#Pascal

You do, you do. And we are in the middle of very big problems. But maybe, just to close this off, Steve, what are the things you're looking out for when you try to make sense of this war? Where are you going to do your research?

#Steven Starr

Well, I come to your podcast. I also go to Larry Johnson and, oh gosh, Nima—I think he's great—and The Duran. Both the guys on there, Alex and Alexander, have their own podcast. I mean, I have to go to that alternative media. I still take everything with a grain of salt, because—well, I hope so. And Judge Napolitano, of course—he's got people that... And, you know, I haven't talked about what's going on in Ukraine, but there's still the British now, with their Navy, intercepting Russian ships in the Baltic along with the Baltic states. Estonia made it illegal. So there's a lot of bad things going on. Drones are still hitting Russia, and the United States is controlling those attacks from Germany. We say the Ukrainians are doing it, but we provide all the targeting information and probably the material. So that's out there too. I mean, we're really in trouble in a lot of ways right now, because we've got warmongers running the show.

#Presenter

We do.

#Steven Starr

We do. But you just have to step away from all that. Anyway, I didn't mean to digress. I like to go to different podcasts.

#Pascal

No, it's just—you know—we're also at the point where social media is still a lifeline to a sane discussion about the insanity that's going on.

#Steven Starr

And it can go viral too, you know. So everyone watching this should send the link to their friends and family.

#Pascal

Yeah. Like and subscribe. But no, the point is that we have no other choice but to try to make sense of this ourselves, right? Because we cannot trust CNN or BBC or MSNBC—all of these outlets—and the New York Times and so on. We have to read them to understand what they're saying and how they want to portray the world. But then we need to have the same discussion among ourselves to figure out what's actually going on. And I just want to make this point: there are differences of interpretation between people like Brian Berletic and, uh, Jess Freeman, but that doesn't mean one or the other wants to deceive. It just means we have different interpretations, and we need to discuss them to figure out which one is most likely—or which combination of them is most likely. Um, yeah.

#Steven Starr

Well, I've been trained as a scientist. You know, I ran a clinical laboratory science program for 11 years before I taught my class on nuclear weapons. And, uh, I believe in the scientific method—you need discussion and experimentation. But you shouldn't be told what to select; that should be a free choice. And, you know, if you believe in the human species enough, you can believe that we'll select the right thing to do. Yeah, so hopefully that'll happen someday.

#Pascal

And just as a point for all our listeners—you know, the act of your own thinking, nobody can replace that. We all have to keep looking and searching. And that's why I'm very grateful to you, Stephen, for sharing your insights and analysis with us. Um, for people who want to follow you, where should they go?

#Steven Starr

Well, I have a website—uh, nuclearfamine.org, "nuclear famine" all one word. And I don't, um... you know, I basically do my presentations on podcasts like yours now. I don't really have any monetary aspect to it, but I appreciate the chance to speak here. It's very gratifying to me.

#Pascal

Well, thank you very much for sharing on this podcast. We all appreciate it. We'll have you back again because, unfortunately, we can't expect the war to end soon. But let's hope—let's hope maybe a miracle happens. Maybe Donald Trump wakes up, declares victory, and goes home.

#Steven Starr

He might be scared enough that, if he's actually told what kind of defeat he's facing, maybe he will. I hope he does.

#Pascal

I hope at some point he watches our podcast. Well, Stephen, thank you—thank you very much for your time today.

#Steven Starr

Okay, thank you.