

# Iran Anti-Blockade Strategy & Military Defeats US Empire | Marandi

Pascal is joined again by Professor Seyed M. Marandi of the University of Tehran to discuss the Islamabad talks, threats against the Iranian delegation, US demands over Iran's nuclear program and the Strait of Hormuz, the ceasefire with Lebanon, Western media claims, and the risk of more war, economic shock, and a wider regional crisis. Links: Professor Seyed Mohammad Marandi on X: [https://x.com/s\\_m\\_marandi](https://x.com/s_m_marandi) Professor Seyed Mohammad Marandi on Telegram: [https://t.me/s\\_m\\_marandi](https://t.me/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: <https://neutralitystudies-shop.fourthwall.com> Donation: <https://neutralitystudies.com/donate>  
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## #Pascal

Welcome back, everybody, to Neutrality Studies. My name is Pascal Lottaz, and I'm joined today once again by Professor Saeed Marandi from the University of Tehran. Professor Marandi, welcome.

## #Marandi

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

## #Pascal

It's great having you here. You were actually in the eye of the storm — in Islamabad over the weekend, together with the delegation that negotiated with the Americans. We're now speaking on this Monday, the 13th of April, when Donald Trump is threatening to start a blockade of the Strait of Hormuz, supposedly to end what they're calling Iran's blockade of the same strait. Can you tell us where things stand this afternoon, and what happened in Islamabad?

## #Marandi

Yeah, sure. Well, we've been threatened with assassination. The Washington Post was calling for the assassination of Iran's negotiators. We're living in amazing times. A while back on X, a bounty was put on my head personally, and now the entire delegation is being threatened with murder. On the way back from Islamabad, we were truly expecting to be hit by a missile on the plane. Instead of

coming to Tehran, they landed in Mashhad, near the Turkmenistan–Afghanistan border. They landed very swiftly because they wanted it to look as if they were heading toward Tehran. Then we took the train to Tehran, back to where we came from originally. So, you know, under those circumstances, the delegation went to Islamabad.

But the Speaker of Parliament was very courageous, because he's one of the people this regime wants to murder—and, of course, by extension, the Trump regime. But in Islamabad, it was very interesting, Pascal. The Iranians had a full mandate from Ayatollah Saeed Mujtaba al-Khamenei, but Banz didn't. Even though he was surrounded—excuse me, my phone, go away—even though he was surrounded by Witkoff and Kushner, two Israeli-firsters whose interests are with the Israeli regime, not the United States, he had to constantly make calls to Washington, and apparently even to the Israeli regime, from what I've heard. But he made all these calls simply because he had no authority.

The Iranians didn't make a single call to Tehran. Throughout the day, they were negotiating. Sometimes progress was made, and sometimes there were disagreements—important disagreements—but overall, progress wasn't really happening. They were supposed to continue into the second day, but suddenly, at night, things went very bad from the American side. It turned very negative, and then, in the middle of the night, they just issued a statement and left. Of course, the statement was completely dishonest, because Vance claimed that Iran wanted to stick to—or was implying that Iran wanted to stick to—a nuclear weapons program, which was a lie. Iran never had a nuclear weapons program.

And in fact, fortunately, Joe Kent, in his resignation letter, exposed this for everyone around the world—that Iran was not pursuing nuclear weapons, that Iran was not a threat to the United States, and that this war was all about the Israeli regime and the Zionist lobby. That's why the United States is at war. And of course, we could also allude to what Tulsi Gabbard said earlier, and to the IAEA never having any evidence that Iran's peaceful nuclear program was ever anything other than peaceful. But it was clear that the United States had no intention of sincerely negotiating. And even though they lost the war, they thought they would defeat Iran, that it would collapse in a day or two. That didn't happen.

Then they said the missiles, drones, and other military capabilities would collapse—be destroyed. That didn't happen. And now, at the negotiating table, they're demanding what they couldn't get on the battlefield. So, I mean, U.S. demands were included: Iran gave up its entire peaceful nuclear program. But why? Iran is a sovereign country. The revolution 47 years ago was about sovereignty—it was about dignity, honor, independence. And they also demanded to co-run the Strait of Hormuz. I mean, it's not the Gulf of Mexico; they have no rights in the Strait of Hormuz. So why in the world would Iran manage the Strait of Hormuz with the United States? That's just, you know... So this is basically the mentality of Washington right now.

**#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](https://pascallottaz.substack.com). The link's going to be in the description below. And now, back to the video. I mean, we started these negotiations with Iran saying, in an official statement, that the Americans had been asking for talks for 30 days already. And now that they had agreed to use our ten points as the basis for negotiation, we were willing to do that. Did they actually use any of those ten points and say, like, "Okay, fine, for instance, we'll withdraw our troops from West Asia"? Was that ever something they were willing to commit to?

## **#Marandi**

You know, it's very interesting—as you rightly point out—at the beginning of the war, they demanded unconditional surrender.

## **#Pascal**

Yes.

## **#Marandi**

And then it gradually evolved into their 15-point plan, which was also ridiculous, and Iran rejected it. Then they accepted the Iranian 10-point plan as a framework for talks. That just shows they lost the war. They were the ones seeking a ceasefire, not Iraq. They were the ones whose position had changed, not Iraq's. So Iran accepted the ceasefire because it never started the war. Iran never initiated escalation during the war. Oil, LNG, fertilizers, and petrochemicals were still passing through. Even after the war began, Iran didn't completely close the Strait of Hormuz—only ships belonging to entities at war with Iran or considered hostile were not allowed.

So when Saudi Arabia, the Emirates, Qatar, and Bahrain—and the way to transport oil—and the Chinese or other countries that were not hostile toward Iran, like Russia and others, they were allowed to take their ships. Now, what exactly went on at the negotiating table? I don't know the details, because first of all, I was mostly involved with the Pakistani media while we were there. But also, obviously, a lot of the details were kept to a very small circle. There were some positive elements in the discussion, and some progress was being made, even though he was constantly—when he would speak with people on the phone outside—it would hinder progress. But at the end of the day, when it came to key points, the position he took was just so outrageous and so strange that it was clear this was designed to crash the talks.

The Iranians thought that, hypothetically—because, as I said, there was great skepticism on the way there, on the plane—when we were speaking, no one was optimistic about the United States behaving reasonably or coming to terms with reality. But if progress had continued, there might have been a chance for some sort of interim agreement, a short-term deal, or an extension of the

ceasefire—something like that. It was possible. But when you look at what ultimately happened, and the ridiculous position taken by him, by Pence and his team, it was clear that it was never going to happen.

But, you know, for the Iranians, there's this myth, Pascal, that they were fooled by the Americans. Like before the 12-day war—we were negotiating, and they attacked. And then before this war, we were negotiating, and they attacked again. That's not true. The Iranians knew the Americans were going to attack on both occasions. But they had to negotiate for two reasons. One, they wanted to make sure that people in the country knew Iran had done what it could. Because if you don't negotiate and the other side attacks, then some people will start saying, "Well, if you had negotiated, this could have been resolved." And second, for the sake of the international community—that's important too—because then the United States will kill people but also produce propaganda to make you, the victim, look guilty.

Just like in Gaza, just like right now with the genocide or the attacks we're seeing in Lebanon, the Western media tries to make the victim look guilty. So they negotiated before both countries faced blitzkrieg-style attacks by the Americans and the Israeli regime, to make sure that the international community and ordinary Iranians recognized that Iran was trying to go as far as reasonably possible to prevent war. And going to Islamabad, it was the same. The Speaker of Parliament obviously risked his life—he was very courageous to go there. He went basically to tell the world, "Look, we're here, we're prepared to end this," and also to show European people that we don't believe their propaganda. We're willing to solve this. It's unreasonable that its president is a psychopath, that the regime in Washington is sinister, and that it's pursuing Israel's policies rather than policies linked to the needs of the American people.

## **#Pascal**

Yeah, I mean, to me, Iran's strategy has been very, very consistent. It's based on reciprocity and non-escalation—saying, "No, we'll fire back, but we won't fire first, and we won't go one notch up unless you do," in order to inflict the same pain on you as you inflict on us, to force you to stop. And now they seem to be at the point where they're willing to move toward stopping it. And here we are—as we speak, the ceasefire, the two-week ceasefire, is still holding, at least on the Iranian side.

Of course, Israel is still bombing Lebanon, because Israel always interprets a ceasefire as "the other side stops shooting" while they keep bombing civilians indiscriminately. But what do you think the Americans want to do now? There are some interpretations saying the Americans aren't looking for any real end to the war—they just want to turn it into something less damaging for them. So it's a kind of charade to move toward an extended blockade and then continue a war of attrition—an economic war of attrition—with occasional bombings and so on. What do you think their game is at the moment?

## **#Marandi**

Well, you raise a very interesting point before your question, and that's about Lebanon. Lebanon was indeed part of the ceasefire. The Pakistani prime minister explicitly said so. So Trump was lying when he said it wasn't. Basically, he was told by the Israeli regime and the Zionist lobby that they wouldn't abide by it, and so he had to change his stance. That raises serious questions about who's in charge. When Vance calls it the Israeli regime's prime minister during the negotiations, the question really is: who's in charge? Who is the president of the United States? Is it Trump, or is it Netanyahu? Or do they have something really bad on Trump—like, I don't know, something with little girls or something?

Who knows? But the ceasefire in Lebanon—which the Western media is ignoring right now—they're trying to frame it in a way that justifies genocide. You know, whenever they slaughter people, Western media calls those apartment blocks and cities "Hezbollah strongholds" or "Hezbollah targets." They know they're lying, but they do it because their owners, their overlords, want them to. They want to keep paying the rent, I guess—these journalists. So that's key. But of course, Iran isn't abiding by its side of the bargain. Over the past four days, it's been increasing the number of ships going through the Strait of Hormuz to include countries that have been hostile toward Iran.

Iran didn't do that because they were continuing to kill women and children in Lebanon. What will happen if Iranian ships keep doing business as usual? Iran has a powerful missile force, and the American naval assets will obviously have to stay very far from Iran's shores. That would be very costly for the United States. But it just shows that the United States doesn't even care about—well, it doesn't care about the globe. It's basically putting a siege on the entire world. It's telling the Chinese, "You have no right to import oil." It's telling the Japanese, "You have no right to import oil, gas, or LNG, or whatever it is you import." It's telling the entire world that it is the mafia don, and that no one can do anything without its permission.

I don't think this is going to go down well with the rest of the world, especially as the global economy deteriorates. And it's going to get much worse, much faster, as we move forward. But it also shows his complete disregard for his own so-called allies in the Persian Gulf. He doesn't care about the fate of Kuwait, or the fate of Bahrain, or the Emirates. All these countries that he's been milking all these years—he's openly said it—and who obey him no matter what he wants, Qatar and so on, he's willing to strangle them too through this siege. So he's willing to strangle the world, he's willing to strangle his allies or his proxies in the Persian Gulf. There's no doubt that Iran is not going to back down, but the question is whether this is sustainable for Trump.

## **#Pascal**

Yeah, and what do you think—how will this play out? Because for a blockade to work, you need control over those waterways with your military capabilities. And obviously, Iran has that, because anything that goes through the strait is within range of its missiles and drones. But the United States... it doesn't, really. I mean, the only way to do this would be to actually bring back the aircraft

carriers, the U.S. Navy, the whole fleet. And they've shown repeatedly that they're unwilling to risk some of their ships being sunk. So what—do you think he now just wants to play with the minds of third states, to prevent them from going through there? They just announced, actually, that they would only block ships coming from or going to Iran, not those coming and going to the Gulf states. So the tune—I mean, the Americans—they change the tune every 12 hours or so. So it's kind of no surprise. But I mean, it's a ridiculous proposal to start with, isn't it?

## **#Marandi**

Oh, yes. I mean, who knows what goes on in the mind of this madman, this psychopath? And who knows what the real reason is that he's so unable to make a single correct decision—he only makes things worse. Again, why is it that the Zionists have such control over him? It just doesn't make much sense. But this is the reality we're dealing with. And what we're seeing is basically Trump shutting down the global economy. And, you know, he says nothing comes from the Strait of Hormuz.

Now he says, well, except for those countries that are our proxies. But of course, Iran is not going to accept those ports being used when Iranian ports are functioning, because those regimes were involved in the genocidal war against Iran—except for Iraq, which did not harm Iran. Its territory was used by the Americans against the will of the Iraqi people, and then Iraq also resisted what the Americans were doing. So, those five countries—Iranians are not going to allow their ports to be used after what they've done to Iran, and then have the Iranian ports blocked. Basically, even though Trump has made a new statement, or the United States has taken a new position, it's the same thing as what Trump said in that quite bizarre Truth Social post he made last night.

## **#Pascal**

There's also this recurring story in Western media that Iran is either unwilling to remove the mines that were supposedly laid in the Strait of Hormuz, or unable to find them. In my view, Iran never mined the Strait of Hormuz. Can you tell us what the case actually is?

## **#Marandi**

No. Again, we have to go back to the root of the problem. The Western media—if you watched it during these forty days of war, and I try not to, I try never to watch them unless it's necessary—you'd think that Iran started the war. You'd think that at every step Iran was escalating, when in fact Iran did not start the war, and at every step Iran was responding to escalation.

## **#Pascal**

Yeah. Iran never actually mined the Strait, right? I mean, do you have any information about Iran doing something like that, or planting any kind of devices on the high seas?

## **#Marandi**

No, no. There's no evidence of that at all. Ships are going through the Strait of Hormuz—well, at least they were until this morning. And when it comes to Iran and the empire, there's no difference between The Guardian and The Times. There's no difference between Breitbart and The New York Times. They're all advocating for the empire. They'll demonize Iran, they'll demonize Venezuela, they'll demonize whoever the target is—Syria, Libya, Cuba. You know, they all do the same. So when they strangle Cuba, no one in the West is outraged.

When they strangle, when they bomb Iran, no one in the West—among the elites, I don't mean ordinary people—among the elites, is outraged. When Trump says he's going to obliterate Iran, when he says he's going to send Iran back to the Stone Age, when he says he's going to wipe out a civilization, no one in the West, none of these journalists with their huge Twitter accounts, is outraged. So anything that comes from the Western media, you have to take with great suspicion and a huge amount of salt.

## **#Pascal**

No, you're absolutely right, of course. I'm not asking to verify what The New York Times said, but rather to ask why they would want this obviously stupid lie to be believed. I mean, apart from demonizing—I mean, there must be some strategy in terms of... Because the United States thinks in terms of PR, right? They're all about TV, all about the big picture, all about how Hollywood one day will make a big movie about how the United States defeated Iran, right? So, in terms of this PR, this stupid approach, what does it serve the United States to have the Western population believe that Iran mined the Strait of Hormuz, and now you need to call in demining vessels to take them out, and Iran is opposing that? I mean, what is the sick, twisted PR idea of the Americans in building up that narrative?

## **#Marandi**

Well, this was said during the negotiations in Islamabad. I think what they wanted to do was create this aura of U.S. power—that the United States is in a stronger position—and that as they negotiate, they can move their ships into the Persian Gulf. So they needed an excuse for that. What happened was, they tried to get into the Persian Gulf, and as you know, the Iranian Navy told them, "If you don't pull out, we're pulling you." They sent drones that flew overhead, and the U.S. forces retreated. They didn't put it in their statement that way; they said, "We went back and forth," which basically meant they retreated. I think they needed an excuse to violate the ceasefire, so they had to make up some story about demining. But what it really was, was an attempt to show their power while they were negotiating—to say, "We're in a stronger position than Iran." Both to intimidate the Iranians and to tell the rest of the world they're the boss.

## **#Pascal**

So why do you think they want this ceasefire now, along with these insane threats of annihilating Iran? Do you think the United States is probably just running out of missiles, running out of implements of war to keep this up, and they want to hide the fact that they're basically near rock bottom when it comes to their capabilities?

## **#Marandi**

I have no doubt that that's part of the story—no doubt about it. But also, to those who ask, "Then why did Iran accept?"—because Iran will also use this opportunity to prepare itself for further war. It's not as if the Iranians are going to sit back and wait while the other side prepares. I mean, after all, everyone I know around the world was shocked that Iran has been able to fight so well. No one thought Iran would perform this way. Iran has become a kind of global hero—people in Brazil are wearing T-shirts saying, "Fight like the Iranians." So, it's not as if right now the Iranian generals and commanders are sitting at home on vacation. They're quickly preparing for the next phase. But what are the other reasons? I really can't say for certain, because Donald Trump is not a person I can decipher.

When people in Iran ask me, "Why is Trump doing this?" I always tell them, I have no idea. And Pascal, to be very blunt, when Trump gives speeches about Iran—when they say he's going to speak in primetime or address the American people—I don't watch those speeches, because it doesn't help me. It doesn't help me decipher him. He'll say one thing now, another thing ten minutes later. He'll post something now, then something else tomorrow. So it's very difficult for me to see what he's up to. But I think he's looking for a way out. And looking for a way out means either you find an off-ramp—and he obviously doesn't know how to do that—or you escalate and make things worse. And so far, everything he's done has led to further crisis and further escalation.

## **#Pascal**

And what scenario do you think is most likely over the next couple of days? I mean, the Americans didn't completely shut the door on next week or the next round of negotiations. They also haven't yet started directly firing at Iran again—although that could, of course, happen at any time, right? They could just start bombing again and then say, "Oh, the ceasefire broke," and the Western media would actually run with it. But what are you expecting the next few days to hold? Because I also see that Iran is living up to its side of the 50-day bargain, not firing, even though Israel is still rampaging in Lebanon.

## **#Marandi**

Yes, but what Iran has done is not carry out its side of the bargain regarding the Strait of Hormuz, because they violated their commitment to the Lebanese people. It's difficult to say what will

happen, because in the past—as we discussed earlier—while we were negotiating, they were secretly conspiring to attack us. Our negotiations with them haven't produced anything reasonable, because the Americans are not reasonable. They obviously don't have a mandate, and that mandate probably lies somewhere in Tel Aviv. So I'm not particularly—well, I shouldn't even use the word optimism.

I don't think the negotiations, at least for the time being, will get anywhere. I think tensions will continue. It's quite possible that the Israeli regime will strike Iran before two weeks are up. It's also quite possible that Iran will punish the Israeli regime in some way or form, because it's carrying out genocide in Lebanon. But what I do think is going to happen—almost for certain—is that the global economic crisis is going to get worse. From my understanding of economics, and from what I hear from those who know a thing or two about it, it's been getting progressively worse, but it's going to get much worse, much more swiftly, in the days and weeks ahead.

## **#Pascal**

Those are not very happy prospects, but I thank you very much for that assessment. Is there anything you think we didn't cover in this discussion that's still important, or that you personally would like people to know—maybe about the bounty on your head or something else that's going on? I mean, it's absolutely horrible that that's happening, but unfortunately, that's the time we live in.

## **#Marandi**

Yeah, well, when we were going to Islamabad, my friends and the negotiators on the plane kept joking with me, saying, "We're going to hand you over and get the bounty for ourselves." And then on the way back, I said, "Look, now you're all in trouble, because they might fire a missile and take us all out together—and you're not going to get any bounty." We were joking about it, but it just shows how deeply sinister the forces are that are destroying Gaza and Lebanon, waging war, and causing this economic and global crisis. As I think we discussed earlier, I mentioned this book *\*Going to Tehran\** by Flynt and Hillary Leverett. You know, if people in Washington—analysts at least—had read that book instead of listening to the Zionists, there was a way out. There is a way out. But the Israeli regime, as Joe Kent rightly pointed out, won't allow it.

## **#Pascal**

Right. That's very, very unfortunate. I have one small detail question. I saw a video on Twitter this morning that said the Iranian airplane carrying the negotiators was accompanied by six or seven Pakistani military jets. Is that real, or was that an AI-generated video?

## **#Marandi**

I don't know if that's real. I didn't see those jets, but I wasn't paying any particular attention. We didn't come back using the same plane we took, and we didn't land in Tehran. They pretended to be flying, I guess, in the direction of Tehran, but when they reached Mashhad—which is very close to Afghanistan and Turkmenistan—they descended quickly to land, in order to deceive the Israelis or the Americans. As soon as we landed, before we took off again, they took our cell phones and all our electronic gear, and those weren't on the plane. Only afterward did they give them back to us. We left the plane quickly, left the airport as fast as possible, and then they returned our devices.

## **#Pascal**

That's just the reality at the moment. I mean, the United States and Israel could, at any point, just kill all the diplomats and claim that's perfectly normal and part of some cunning plan. It's very sick. It's very deceitful. But I'm glad you're fine, and thank you very much for the update. We'll certainly talk again soon.

## **#Marandi**

It's a great pleasure to be with you.