

Strategic SUICIDE: The Iran TRAP That Ends US Hegemony | Prof. Steven Starr

War Update with Prof. Steven Starr: The empire of violence is running out of ammunition. The pivot to strategic division of labor with the Europeans taking over the Ukraine war is not going fast enough, and the new war drains an atrophied US military corruption system. The days of the almighty Uncle Sam are over. And it's only gonna get worse. Links: Nuclear Famine: <https://nuclearfamine.org> 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> Timestamps: 00:00:00 Introduction 00:00:35 US bases hit and missiles drained 00:04:42 Gaza Lebanon and civilian toll 00:06:19 Oil blockade and global fallout 00:14:02 Religion and war politics 00:18:48 Iran escalation and nuclear risk 00:25:27 Russia drone attacks and Europe risk 00:29:06 Drone warfare and US military weakness 00:39:39 Next moves and wider war danger

#Pascal

Welcome back, everybody, to Neutrality Studies. My name is Pascal Lottaz, and I am joined today again by Professor Stephen Starr, who has been giving us updates on the war situation in Iran for the last couple of months, and he has prepared another presentation today. Stephen, welcome.

#Steven Starr

Well, hello, Pascal. Hello to you and your viewers, and thank you for having me back again.

#Pascal

Thank you very much for coming back and for always putting together these presentations, which I'm going to load on the screen right now. The U.S. and Israel have lost but will not admit defeat.

#Steven Starr

And the floor is yours. Yes, and I think the question we have to ask now is, will the Zionist ideologues in the U.S. and Israel choose to escalate? I honestly think that's the path they're going to take. Well, look at the situation now. The U.S. has basically been driven out of the Persian Gulf. Almost all its military bases have been destroyed or made inoperable. Thirteen to nineteen major bases are abandoned or destroyed, and they're noted on that map there with the red dots. The 5th Fleet Central Command in Bahrain was just hit so hard that there are less than a hundred staff members remaining there, and all the U.S. military bases in Syria have been abandoned. The troops

from these bases were moved into hotels, and the hotels have since been targeted by the Iranians, so it's really a... it's not what you would call an ideal situation for the U.S. military. Without these bases there, they have to go to Diego Garcia, a place that's far from the Persian Gulf that...

#Pascal

And even though—just one second—like, even though the weapons have been silent now for about three weeks as we speak on this April 28th, 29th, the situation is still that, right? These bases, they're not being restaffed at the moment, are they?

#Steven Starr

Well, I mean, you know, they didn't even provide bunkers at these bases for the soldiers to hide in. And clearly, their air defense systems didn't work. So they know that if they go back, the Iranians are likely to hit them. I was surprised that Iran agreed to the ceasefire, but I think that it's tenuous at best, and Israel certainly hasn't observed it. Iran comprehensively destroyed the U.S. radar systems in the Gulf. Thirty percent of all the U.S. Theater High Altitude Area Defense systems were destroyed—the THAAD systems. We have eight of those left. We've moved several of them from South Korea to the Middle East now.

I'm not sure. They are typically associated with THAAD, but they can be used with the Patriot systems. But right now we have less than 1,000 Patriot missiles and 100 THAAD missiles remaining in the U.S. arsenal. So the radar won't do much good if you don't have ammunition. The U.S. has fired 80% of all its Patriot missiles and 60% of all THAAD missiles during the last seven weeks. This chart here indicates the munitions for the THAAD and Patriot at the bottom. They're very expensive—\$15 million for a single THAAD missile and \$3.9 million for a Patriot.

These are being used to shoot down \$50,000 drones, so it's not very cost-effective. They typically fire two missiles for every one missile they're trying to intercept. If you look at the estimated pre-war inventory and the use in the Iran war, you can see that, you know, there's hardly any missiles left. And the U.S. manufactures only about 96 of these THAAD missile interceptors and 600 Patriot missile interceptors per year. So we can't exactly crank them out. It would take years just to build up what we've lost in the last seven weeks. So the question now is, do we want to continue using them with more attacks on Iran?

#Pascal

So just Iran—actually, the United States, within six weeks of war, fired more than two years' worth of Patriot missiles. And it's just mind-boggling. So it's not just all of the weapons that were in West Asia; it's 80% of all the Patriots that the United States...

#Steven Starr

And South Korea wasn't really happy about having the Patriots pulled out and sent to the Middle East. The Gulf states are not really happy with the United States either. You know, the promise has always been for the petrodollar that the U.S. would protect the Gulf states in exchange for the oil. And it hasn't really worked out like that, has it? You know, and Israel has continued its attacks on Lebanon and Gaza. The top picture shows what Gaza looks like. This is what the U.S. taxpayers have been paying for for the last few years, with even airlifting munitions to Israel continuously ever since the war began. Israel has been systematically blowing up schools in Lebanon. This is a video at the bottom of one that was destroyed recently—just a school compound, just blown up into bits and pieces. Yeah, I mean, this is not war.

There's no one hiding, and they're shooting at the Israeli soldiers. And Israel has excelled at killing journalists. They've killed something like 370 journalists in the last 15 years in Israel. This picture is of journalists and paramedics. Well, the picture above is just journalists, and every single one of them was killed by Israel in Lebanon. Israel will even call them on the phone and tell them they're going to kill them and their family. Some people flee the house just before they're murdered, just to try to save their family. And at the bottom, this shows people trying to be rescued by paramedics.

#Pascal

A double tap—to strike again the place where you already struck in order to kill the rescuers. Right.

#Steven Starr

So, you know, once the blockade and the war began—the blockade of the Strait of Hormuz—there was a lot of crude oil that was still at sea, refined petroleum products. They call it a floating supply of oil when it's on these ships. The tanker ships travel about the rate of speed of a bicycle, so it takes weeks for them to go from the Persian Gulf to make their way to all the different ports around the world. And you can see the jet fuel is really taking a dive. And if anybody's trying to buy plane tickets, they're already canceling lots of flights around the world because of this. But you can see the blue line is where the current totals are going compared to the previous averages. So the U.S. has proudly proclaimed to have bombed 13,000 targets in Iran.

So what was destroyed? We have 900 schools, and at least 30 universities and research centers have been damaged or destroyed by our bombing. And that's, you know, we're carpet bombing cities and civilian targets. More than 300 health and medical centers, including 50 hospitals, have been damaged and destroyed. And the image on the right shows the Manab Elementary School, which was destroyed, I believe, on the first or second day of the war. The U.S. fired two Tomahawk missiles at this. They tried to blame AI for this. You know, the targeting Hegseth eliminated human oversight of the targeting process and turned it over to AI, so perhaps that's plausible, although I think a lot of people don't believe that. They believe it was deliberate.

#Pascal

Hey, very brief intermission because I was recently banned from YouTube. And although I'm back, this can happen anytime again. So please consider subscribing not only here, but 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.

#Steven Starr

U.S. precision-guided munitions were used to hit thousands of dummy targets as well. You know, the Chinese and Russian decoy missile launchers and aircraft are equipped with heating elements to show up on radar. So, you know, I found an advertisement on Alibaba for an aircraft—you can order it online. And, you know, apparently the U.S. war planners were convinced that they had taken out all the Iranian missile launchers and their air force and everything else, but they were hitting these targets that were decoys. And finally, the U.S. and the mainstream media have been admitting that the Iranian missile cities have survived U.S. attacks. It wasn't long ago when U.S. officials were saying they were all obliterated. But even Pete Hegseth has said that Iran is digging out its missiles and launchers.

There was a CNN report that documented these satellite photographs to identify missile cities that had been hit and then reactivated. I put a little figure of a missile city there. We talked about it in an earlier interview with you about why these missile cities are impregnable. I mean, they're under 1,500 feet of granite and, you know, we can't take those out. And even the official guess now is that only one-third of Iran's missile arsenal has been destroyed. So they've got thousands of missiles and tens of thousands of drones remaining. And they're manufacturing these underground in their missile cities. So will the U.S. continue its blockade? We're building up our forces in the Gulf. You know, the three carrier battle groups are now in theater. And I read that the USS Eisenhower is preparing to be deployed as the fourth carrier, possibly. But this is a huge buildup.

#Pascal

So just a second, like, the buildup is going on. And I was wondering, where do they go? Where do these people go?

#Steven Starr

Well, that's a good question. They can't go back to the bases, can they?

#Pascal

Yeah, exactly. I mean, so where are these people stationed now?

#Steven Starr

Well, I believe there's a lot in Diego Garcia. There's maybe some in Cyprus. I honestly don't have totals on all the locations, but the carrier battle groups are 600 to 700 miles offshore from Iran. Yeah, that's part of the problem. How do you project power with an aircraft carrier if you have to stay 700 miles away from the target country? Iran is the size of Western Europe. So if you want to fly into Iran from a carrier that's 700 miles off the coast, you're going to have to refuel multiple times at least.

#Pascal

Because these jets only have a range of about 350 kilometers, right? Right.

#Steven Starr

Right. Well, I don't have the exact numbers for that either, but I know for a fact that if they're going to try to hit a target inside Iran, they're going to have to refuel before they get to Iran and probably on the way back too. So, you know, refueling is a process that makes a really big, fat target for air defense systems. You know, air defense systems struggle to hit missiles, but they certainly can hit airplanes. And the U.S. has already lost F-35s and F-22s, so Iran's air defenses have not been destroyed. Iran has stated that it will launch, quote, the largest missile strike in history, unquote.

That came from the Iranian embassy two days ago, three days ago. Um, and they have, in remarks, Iran went on record to say that if the U.S. hits its power facilities, power stations, and oil refineries, it'll attack all the other Gulf states that are associated with the United States—and that's most of them, really. You know, if Iran takes out the power stations in these countries, you can't run desalination plants without power. And right now, it's just about getting up to where it's going to be 50 degrees Celsius, 120 degrees Fahrenheit every day in these countries in the desert.

And, you know, if they destroy these plants, it would make the nations uninhabitable. And you can see on that chart Kuwait, Qatar, Oman, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain. I mean, all of them except the UAE have more than 50%, up to 90% dependence on desalination. Iran gets 3% of its water from desalination. You know, it's a mountainous country, and it's got a lot of rivers and sources of water. Israel gets 80% of its water from desalination. But yet Israel—well, yeah, I believe it was Israel or the U.S., I can't remember—one of the two already hit desalination plants in a froth. So, you know, it's crazy, really.

I mean, the people doing this targeting don't even have any strategic sense at all. So if this happens, the Gulf states would have to evacuate or millions would die in the desert heat. And probably many will in the process of evacuation if this occurs. The destruction of the Gulf states would cause a permanent loss of 20 percent of the world's oil and liquid natural gas, 49 percent of the urea fertilizer, and 30 percent of phosphate fertilizer. I mean, that's enormous. Everyone, all the farmers in North America, all around the world, depend on urea. I see the farmers in Missouri here—they drill it into the fields at the beginning of the summer.

And, you know, right now, 70% of all U.S. farmers report they can't afford all the fertilizer they need for this year's spring planting. In other words, the loss has already driven prices way up. But that's just prices. You know, it's going to become increasingly less available. So I'm going to look at what's going on here. And we can make fun of Iran about being a theocracy, but I think most of your viewers may have noticed that Donald Trump posted a picture of himself as Jesus Christ recently on his Truth Social. And that really worries me. I found a picture of him with big prayer sessions. All the CEOs touch Trump as they pray. And, you know, he just had a Bible reading session.

#Donald Trump

That was broadcast to the Museum of the Bible or something in Washington, D.C. Solomon finished the house of the Lord and the king's house and all that came into Solomon's heart to make in the house of the Lord.

#Steven Starr

And in his own house, he prospered. We're supposed to have a separation of church and state in the United States.

#Donald Trump

Solomon by night, and said to him, "I have heard your prayer."

#Steven Starr

He's reading what Solomon said. So he's Jesus and Solomon at this point. I won't make your listeners listen to the whole speech, but it was really disturbing to me to see this. I don't think there's any precedent for this.

#Pascal

I didn't know about this. Did we ever have another U.S. president do a Bible reading?

#Steven Starr

No, I don't think it ever happened before. And in the context of what's happening now with the whole White House full of Christian Zionists, including the U.S. Secretary of War, Pete Hegseth. You know, I found his book. I didn't realize he'd published it until recently — **American Crusade**. Look at his tattoos. You know, he's got the Jerusalem cross that was worn by the Crusaders. And he even has the motto "God wills it" tattooed on his arm. Okay. Okay.

#Pascal

Yeah, and that's the Secretary of War, of course, yes — a Christian Zionist evangelical nut, yeah.

#Steven Starr

And he has been conducting routine prayer meetings every month at the Pentagon. The people are invited to this. They take names. They keep track of who comes. And those that don't come and don't have an excuse tend to get fired. I mean, they're purging the military. They want Christian Zionists, religious fundamentalists in there. This is a speech that he gave recently that attracted a lot of attention. He thought it was really from the Bible, but it was a speech that came from the *Pulp Fiction* movie.

#Speaker 1

The path of the righteous man is beset on all sides by the iniquities of the selfish and the tyranny of evil men. Blessed is he who, in the name of camaraderie and duty, shepherds the lost through the valley of darkness. Blessed is he who, in the name of charity and goodwill, shepherds the weak through the valley of darkness. For he is truly his brother's keeper and the finder of lost children.

#Steven Starr

I found this disturbing in a variety of ways.

#Speaker 1

...with great vengeance...

#Pascal

That's just quite incredible, right? So this is not an actual... This is not from the Bible? No, he thought it was.

#Speaker 1

Apparently, to poison and destroy my brother. And you will know my call sign is Sandy One when I lay my vengeance upon thee.

#Steven Starr

Well, that's our Secretary of War. Now we have a new Secretary of the Navy, and he apparently believes in witchcraft. This is a little clip from an interview he just did.

#Speaker 2

Again, we can't let it turn out like this. There's a place in Monterey, California, called Lover's Point.

#Speaker 1

Yeah.

#Speaker 2

The original name was Lovers of Christ Point. But now it's become—they took out the Christ—it's Lovers Point. And really, Monterey is a very dark place now. A lot of witchcraft, and the Wiccan community has really taken over there. And we can't let that happen in Virginia. Virginia is...

#Pascal

He said that there's a lot of witchcraft.

#Steven Starr

Yeah, I mean, these are the people that are now staffing the Cabinet and the Pentagon. And this comes from Israel, and Netanyahu is driving a lot of it. The whole push for Greater Israel has been going on for some time. You have the picture of Netanyahu at the UN holding up a picture of the curse, which is Iran—a map of Iran—the blessing, Greater Israel. So all these people believe in Armageddon. You know, ironically, the Jews believe that the Christians will be destroyed, but the Christians believe they're going to ascend to heaven. And there have been hundreds of complaints from noncommissioned officers in the United States Army, complaining that they're getting lectures from their superior officers saying they shouldn't be afraid to die in the Battle of Armageddon. So it's... I really think we're in trouble in this respect.

This has been going on for too long and should never have happened. So what can Iran do? They have a blockade escalation option. If you look at the map here, the Red Sea—at the end of it is the Bab el-Mandeb Strait. Up at the other end is the Suez Canal. Well, the very large crude carriers, the large tankers, supertankers that carry the crude, they can't get through the Suez Canal, so they have to go in and out of that. Saudi Arabia has been using this pipeline to bypass the Strait of Hormuz. This is where the blockade is up here. And they've been routing a large percentage—millions of gallons, eight or nine million gallons of oil a day at least, I think—through the Bab el-Mandeb. And Iran can block that with the help of the Houthis in Yemen. And Iran can also hit this port here.

The United Arab Emirates has a pipeline that empties out on the other side of the Strait of Hormuz. And they've been shipping oil out of that, too. So Iran's got options to escalate as far as the blockade goes. But I want to ask, will the U.S. accept Iranian terms and admit defeat, or will the U.S. and Israel resume attacks? I mean, think about it. None of the U.S. war aims have been achieved. In fact, I mean, the Strait of Hormuz was open before the U.S. and Israel attacked Iran, and it was a

war of aggression. It's an illegal war. And Iran controls this. We're complaining that Iran has no right to charge tolls. But, you know, what happens at the Suez Canal or the Panama Canal is everyone charges tolls in the straits that they control. So it's a joke. The Gulf states aren't happy about the tolls either.

And as I mentioned, 60 to 80 percent of the U.S. inventory of air defense missiles and precision-guided standoff munitions have been expended. And another attack will likely completely deplete these inventories. And, you know, we're gung-ho about attacking China, but we don't have any missiles left. So I think that's part of the argument in the Pentagon. They're not necessarily against attacking Iran, but they don't want to use up all the munitions. And Iran, as I said, has vowed to destroy the Gulf states and resume attacks on Israel if it's attacked again. And this will all result in a massive loss of life and lead to a terrible global depression.

This happens, you know, a permanent loss of all the oil and petrochemicals and fertilizers. It's almost unthinkable. So suppose we decided to run out of conventional weapons and start using tactical nuclear weapons against Iranian missile cities. It would create huge fallout. This is a video of an underground nuclear test. It was a 10-kiloton weapon. It was actually buried 900 feet deep, but it vented. But it gives you an idea of the type of fallout that might have come from a missile attack. If you hit dozens of missile cities with hundreds of tactical nuclear weapons, I mean, it would be a huge fallout.

But if Israel decides to strike Iranian cities, then you will have more than 10 million fatalities. This is a study that was done in 2013. And the scenario is with 22 Israeli thermonuclear weapons that are detonated in these Iranian cities. They had three scenarios with Tehran with different size weapons. I chose the 500-kiloton weapons. Tehran alone would have over 7 million people killed. So that's nuclear war. And people need to keep that in mind, you know, for any nuclear. I wanted to mention that because nuclear war is beyond the imagination of even people that study it. These are the fallout patterns just from the detonations over Tehran.

And the pink circles here show where the firestorms would take place. So, I mean, the whole area would be engulfed in a firestorm that no one would survive. Iran has enough highly enriched uranium to make 10 nuclear weapons. We know that because the International Atomic Energy Agency verified that they had 450 kilograms of 60% HEU, and it can be enriched to weapons-grade uranium in just a few days. And it probably already has. I mean, you know, the former Ayatollah, who we killed on the first day with our attack, had prevented Iran from getting nuclear weapons for 26 years. But his son survived.

These weapons would be like the atomic bombs that the U.S. dropped on Japan, at the same kind of force level. But they're still 15 kilotons, meaning 15,000 tons of TNT explosive equivalent. Those other weapons I showed with Tehran, those are 500,000 tons. It's not a secret how to make an atomic bomb. You don't have to test them. And Iran certainly has the technical skill to make nuclear warheads and mount them on their hypersonic missiles. They have underground facilities where

they're making missiles right now. And just three of these weapons would kill 300,000 to 400,000 people in Tel Aviv. So what are the current consequences of the U.S. and Israeli war on Iran? Well, as I mentioned, the floating supply of oil from the Gulf has ended. Oil prices will double soon as 20% of the global oil supply stops.

No matter what we do, if they stop the fighting tomorrow, there still won't be any oil available for a week because it takes a long time to ship it. The 20% loss of liquefied natural gas is causing severe shortages and industrial shutdowns in Asia, Southeast Asia, and Africa. There are all sorts of factories that are having problems with this, and there are fuel shortages. The poorer the country, the fewer reserves they typically have. The increased energy costs and the increase in transportation and manufacturing costs will drive up prices worldwide. I mean, even in the United States, we're noticing that our gas prices are more than \$4 a gallon for gasoline. Diesel is like \$5 to \$6 a gallon. If you're in California, it's a lot more than that. And the loss of the urea and phosphate fertilizers will decrease food production and increase food costs.

We're going to see much higher food prices, and this will lead to famine in some nations. Like I said, the poorer the nation, the more likely the famine will be to occur there. And we've had a 30% drop in helium production because that comes from liquefied natural gas. And the semiconductor industry depends on that. Taiwan's going to run out. If they can't make semiconductors, that will affect the U. S. stock market. Basically, I believe a global depression is going to result even if the war stops today. So that's the unfortunate result of this insane war that we've prosecuted. Yeah. I... I wouldn't stop here, but there's a lot of bad things going on in Ukraine and Russia right now. So I had a few more slides. This last month in March, the U.S. was directing these attacks from Ukraine. Russia was attacked with more than 7,300 drones in a month.

#Pascal

In one single month, 7,300 drones hit Russia, starting out from Ukraine, but of course, the drones are being manufactured in a consortium.

#Steven Starr

Right, but it has been noted that some of these drones were routed over the Baltics, Estonia, and Latvia. Russia is certainly, you know, they can see where they're coming from. Russia is able to shoot down a lot of these, but they've been hitting power stations, refineries, air bases, airports, just civilian targets. Can you imagine if Europe or the United States had 7,000 drones come in to hit our infrastructure here? What would we do? So, in other words, the Russian public is outraged about this. And there's more and more cry for, you know, drastic military action. And after the latest attacks, the Russian Ministry of Defense, like within the last week, published a target list of drone manufacturers in Europe.

And the map shows in red where they're located. It includes Germany, the United Kingdom, Latvia, Denmark, Poland, Italy, Spain, the Netherlands, Lithuania, Finland, the Czech Republic, Turkey, and Israel. These are targets. This is a target list. It's a clear threat. I don't think the Russians will start out with nuclear weapons, but they'll probably use a Russian missile or something like that to hit these places. And then we have a whole different situation. A lot of people have been critical of Putin because he's classified so many attacks on Russia as terrorist attacks. But really, it's a war situation. You can only pretend for so long, I think. So it's not a good thing. And Finland, I'm really worried about.

Well, if you look at it, there are 51 new U.S. military bases in Finland, Sweden, Norway, and Denmark. That's a lot of military bases. The map there is of Finland. There are 17 bases in Sweden, 15 bases in Finland, 15 bases in Norway, and 4 bases in Denmark. And Finland has just moved to allow U.S. nuclear weapons on Finnish military bases. So if you're Russia and you're getting hit with thousands of drones every week, and you see these 51 new military bases springing up, and Finland's announcing that the U.S. can base nuclear weapons there, they're trying to hide behind a fig leaf, saying, well, we won't have nuclear weapons in peacetime. Anyway, so that's the end of my horrifying scenario with what's going on.

#Pascal

Well, yeah, well, thank you very much for that overview. And, you know, these two theaters, they are linked. And we've just seen a couple of days ago, I think two days ago, on Monday or Tuesday, the foreign minister of Iran, Mr. Araghchi, actually visiting Moscow and meeting with Vladimir Putin and Sergei Lavrov for discussions, right? I mean, it's clear that they are exchanging on the military level, that they're exchanging on the political level, and that this issue of drone warfare is obviously one that connects them.

We know that the Russians have actually learned from the Iranians when it comes to their Shahed drones—how to manufacture them and use them. We know that the Iranians are not just strong with their missiles, but with their drone capabilities, like threatening especially the sea lanes, right? I mean, the reason they're able to close the Strait of Hormuz is mainly because of their drone capabilities. What do you make of that, this new type of warfare, and then also, you know, just the fact that the United States seems to have bet on the wrong horse, which is these Patriot and THAAD missile systems that are now proven to run aground, basically.

#Steven Starr

Corruption is endemic in the United States, and it's pretty much destroyed the country, I believe. And the defense industry is the best example of that, probably, if you had to pick out one—although Congress comes in a close second, I think. You know, the weapons are supposed to be manufactured for defense, but most weapon designs these days have more to do with the profit

margin for the company that's manufacturing them. For example, the F-35 is an incredibly expensive plane. They tried to make it do everything, and it doesn't do anything very well. It can't even be flown in a thunderstorm. Only like 30% of them are in any kind of shape to fly at any given time. You know, that's a pretty good example. There are the ships that we try to build—a lot of them have been turned down after they embarked on building them, and then all of a sudden they're not going to use them.

You know, China makes 290 ships for every one the United States builds. Right. But so, in other words, we stuck with our World War II approach of projecting power with carrier battle groups. But we ignored the fact that these carriers are completely vulnerable to hypersonic missiles and drone swarms. And on top of that, our air defense systems really are 20th-century systems that they've tried to upgrade, whereas Russia has the S-300, S-400, S-500 systems that are all far superior to the American systems. But you can see what happened to the Gulf bases—the U.S. bases were decimated because our air defense systems don't work. So we've got carriers that can get hit by missiles that we can't defend against with our air defense systems. And Iran, on the other hand, planned for this—they've been preparing for this war for at least 30 years, probably 40 years.

#Pascal

What we just saw unfolding in the six weeks of war was, on the one hand, the carnage that you pointed out—the destruction of schools and infrastructure and parks and whatnot. So a full-out war on the civilian population, of course, in order to break their spirit, which is also not the first time that the US or the West is doing that. I mean, the Second World War, the firebombings of the German cities—Dresden and so on—and the firebombings of Tokyo were aimed at such a goal of breaking the will of the other population, of course, in complete contravention to all laws of war, humanitarian international law. But the one thing that this war actually showed to me is that the United States, apparently short of nuclear weapons, doesn't have conventional capabilities to fight these wars anymore. I mean, against a real enemy, not against guerrillas who fight back from the mountains, but against a state—a proper state actor.

#Steven Starr

Well, that's right. Iran pursued missile and drone technology, and they built these missile cities. They can't be hit with, you know, our conventional weapons, and then they excavate the entrances and keep bringing the missiles out. It's a totally different approach. You know, they didn't build a big air force or navy. They knew that would be vulnerable. But instead, they've—and Iran is a highly technical country. They have very good science there. They have hypersonic missiles that we haven't even been able to develop.

We don't even have a working prototype of a hypersonic in the United States. So, in other words, the U.S. had to hit civilian targets because it couldn't destroy the military targets. It did hit a lot of dummies and decoys, as I mentioned, but, uh, you know, the idea that you can, uh, terrorize the

civilian population into making it surrender—that hasn't worked out very well in Ukraine, or didn't work out very well in Germany, did it? I mean, that's just a fallacy that maybe people in the Air Force might believe, but historically it's shown that it doesn't work. You've got to have an innovative country.

#Pascal

Yeah, and also your presentation, even with the pictures of the decoys, shows quite well that the entire strategy of Iran was actually to create the ability to absorb these shocks, right? Being hit by the United States was part and parcel of the war preparation.

#Steven Starr

That's right. Alistair Cook was emphasizing that these decoys even have heating units to make them heat up for thermal signatures on radar. And when I found an advertisement for one on Alibaba, I thought, how is it that the U.S. doesn't understand that this is the case? I mean, it's ludicrous. You know, I think what's happened is that they've staffed even the intelligence agencies with so many people who are more worried about their jobs. They don't want to give information to the people above them that they don't want to hear. And it goes all the way up to Trump thinking we're winning the war. But it is very dangerous. It's delusional, and it leads to terrible decisions. I guess Trump was convinced that he could win the war in a few days, in a weekend. They would kill the Ayatollah, and they would surrender, and they would throw roses in front of our feet as we came to liberate them.

#Pascal

But in that case, the fact that they didn't surrender, according to the Iranians, when they announced that they agreed to a two-week ceasefire, they actually said that the Americans at that point—that was day number 40 of the war—had been begging for 30 days already, for a month, for a ceasefire. Right. That's what they were claiming. But the more we look at the numbers, the more it seems that people must have started panicking also in the Pentagon, realizing that they're burning through so much of their inventory that they would literally just run out of it. They would just be unable to throw more missiles at Iran. Right.

#Steven Starr

Well, I agree. And, you know, some people have been highly critical of Iran for even agreeing to the ceasefire, but I can't judge that on my end. We haven't heard anything about Israel because they've got prison sentences for anybody that even posts a video online anymore. But Israel has been hammered. You know, their air defense systems don't work. Once they took out the American radar

systems in the Gulf, their warning time in Israel went down to one minute or less for missile attacks. And people have been living in shelters every night there. I think it's more likely to have a political revolt in Israel than in Iran.

But Netanyahu is worried about going to jail. We've got that, and we've got Trump worried about the midterms. It's a very bad combination because neither one of those leaders is likely to back off, because they're afraid it's going to cost them their political career. And I see the military buildup continuing in the Middle East, the U.S., and I don't see any indication that they're going to accept defeat in Iran. The proposals the United States continues to make are ludicrous. Oh, we'll split the tolls with Iran for the Strait of Hormuz. You can give us all your nuclear material. It's delusional, and Iran is not going to agree to that.

#Pascal

No, at the same time, though, you can see how Iran obviously has an interest in not being hit anymore. I mean, for obvious reasons. And on the other hand, they do not oppose a diplomatic process, even discussing the nuclear program, right? They're not saying we're not discussing it. They're just saying no to the idea that they just ship off all of their uranium. Yeah.

#Steven Starr

Well, if you recall, the day before the war began, you know, they had agreed. The ambassador from Oman was exuberant. He said, you know, they've agreed to hand over their highly enriched uranium and have American inspectors and about anything you could. It was like well beyond what was expected of them in terms of meeting those sorts of demands. So that gives a lie to the idea that we want this war to prevent Iran from having a nuclear weapon. We could have done that without the war. They already offered to do that. And we had the JCPOA, the agreement that prevented that, that Trump tore up to begin with. So I don't know. If I'm Iranian, and I've had my negotiators attacked twice during negotiations, I'd be reluctant to send them out a third time.

#Pascal

Yeah, of course, of course. And that's also what I know from Professor Marandi, who told me he was on the airplane, and he said, we were willing to die. We knew that they might shoot us down. It was a real option, but we were willing to take that because that's just part and parcel of how we run this organization. We're not running away from danger, right?

#Steven Starr

Well, he's a great man. You know, I love listening to him talk. And I, you know, I pale in comparison to some of the people like him and Ambassador Freeman in terms of eloquence and knowledge. But, you know, I'm not sure I could be as brave as he would be under those circumstances.

#Pascal

It's difficult to be brave like that when you know that you could die. But the question still is, like, what is the overall strategy of the United States, right? This is, of course, also what Iran has to guess. But if the buildup in the Middle East is actually real, then what is a possible scenario? I mean, several things have surprised us in this war already, right? Maybe not so much that it started, but the way it did — that it was decapitation strikes, that Ayatollah Khamenei was taken out on the first day, second day. That was a surprise. That Donald Trump then did a counter-blockade.

I didn't see that coming. Blockade, blockade. But what could be a potential next military level? Because in a sense, we're just down — like, the war is not over. The kinetic phase, the first kinetic phase, might be over. There might be a second kinetic phase. The war is going on with the blockade and the counter-blockade. And at the moment, it seems to me the Iranian strategy is just to hold their ground and say, like, no, we can do this longer than you. What could be the next military place where the United States could do anything potentially? Do you have any creative kind of ideas?

#Steven Starr

Well, I would say, first of all, that if a blockade was such a good idea, they should have begun with that. But I think Iran is in a very difficult situation because they're facing two nuclear weapon states. Israel has been committing genocide for years now. I don't see them having any hesitation about using nuclear weapons on Iran if they think they can get away with it, or if they have the Samson option. In terms of a viable military alternative, there really isn't any. Trump has backed himself into a corner. The blockade was sort of the last resort to make it a face-saving device. I mean, eventually, he either has to admit defeat, which I don't think he's capable of doing. I think he's a malignant narcissist.

And I saw one psychologist give a pretty good presentation about how he believes he's got frontotemporal dementia going on, which greatly reduces his ability to control his emotions. And he also believes whatever he thinks. So that's the kind of person we have in charge in the U.S. Now, whether or not he's given the nuclear codes or he's been able to be followed by a nuclear briefcase, I don't know. I mean, all the other presidents have. But I think that we will, in short order, if we start another massive air attack, they're going to be faced with running out of munitions and having to use tactical nuclear weapons. There's, you know, Brian Berletic talks about the paper **Path to Persia** that was published some years ago, that there's a chapter called "Let Bibi Do It."

And the proposal is to let Israel begin with nuclear attacks so the U.S. can disavow it. But I don't know. I mean, I think that's why the Iranians agreed to the ceasefire, because they're worried if they push everything to the point where Israel is on the brink of collapse and utter destruction, then they will use nuclear weapons. They don't want to get to that point. But I don't see it. I wish I could tell you a good solution, but I don't think there is any. Listen to Larry Johnson and some of these people that are really, more than Scott Ritter, that know about military stuff more than I do, and

none of them have any proposals for the U.S. to pull a brilliant victory out of this, to have Trump win his midterm elections.

#Pascal

No, it's not about victory. It's more about, in the lunatic world of these fundamental Christian Zionists and the world within which Donald Trump lives, what would be a potential target, even if it is absolutely dumb and stupid? Like, you know, again, trying to go after Qeshm Island, trying to stage some form of ground invasion in order to say, we did it, we choked them. In their stupid world, the blockade is part of choking. They literally use that word, "We're choking Iran." I think Scott Besant actually used that expression. It's like, no, guys, that's just dumb. You're just choking the world economy. Iran's going to take a hit, but the others are going to take a hit significantly more. Yes, the United States is not going to take that big a hit. Actually, the oil prices are going up and energy prices are going up, so it's actually not bad for the U.S. It's not a smart strategy for winning a war. It's a strategy for damaging everybody.

#Steven Starr

Well, that's right. You know, if the idea is to really go after China ultimately, then destroying all the oil and petrochemicals coming out of the Persian Gulf would certainly hurt China. You know, we took control of Venezuela—at least, I don't know exactly how much control we have over it—but we went there first. China was getting a lot of oil from them, and now we're at the Persian Gulf, so... there's that narrative. We struggle to make sense out of this because that's our instinct. But when you're talking about religious fanatics that believe in Armageddon, some of these people are just hoping for the final battle because Jesus Christ is going to come back and they're going to ascend to heaven.

#Speaker 2

That's it.

#Steven Starr

So I, you know, I don't know. I can't give you a simple reason why we're doing this, but I don't think there's a great strategy behind it. I don't think there ever has been, because if there was, we wouldn't have started the war in the first place.

#Pascal

Yeah, which, of course, then puts the other side into even more difficulties, because if there is no strategy, how are you going to devise a counter-strategy, right? Because if these acts are completely random, then, well, you do need a very strong fundament, although I must say they do have that with their mosaic defense and with their eye-for-an-eye strategy. The strategy is like, whatever you

struck on our side, we will prove to you that we can strike something of equal value on your side. And if you drop a nuclear bomb, then we don't need nuclear bombs.

We can cause equivalent damage with what we've got. So in a sense, Iran tries, I think, to make sure that—or make it clear that—they have so-called second-strike capabilities in the conventional realm. And if that sunk in, then that might explain why the United States is trying to get out. And even Israel, to some extent, would want to wind it down. But the Russia factor—do you see that the Russians, too, are now getting nervous about, well, the drone warfare? And you pointed that out in your presentation, right? That at some point they might not be willing to take it anymore.

#Steven Starr

Right. You're talking about the Ukraine war in that sense. I do think there's a political struggle going on in the Kremlin at this point. Everything, you know, I mean, I have to guess. I try to get all the information, and we don't have any context in the White House and the Kremlin, but it seems to me that the General Staff, the Russian military, is not happy at all with the fact that the Ukraine war has gone on as long as it has. And the incredible barrage of drones that are going into Russia now—I don't think that's politically sustainable for Putin.

I don't think he can survive if he doesn't do something about it. You can't just call it terrorism and try to turn the other cheek. You know, a large percentage of Russian oil refineries have been hit, and it's decreased their oil production. They have extremely high interest rates in Russia, and the central bank has been heavily criticized. It's like 20% interest rates for ordinary people. It doesn't hurt the military oligarchs. You know, they've got their military-industrial complex there, too, and they may be making a lot of money, and some of the people on the war itself. So they're not the good guys, so to speak. I mean, every country has got to struggle with these sorts of problems with military production and monopolies. But although I tend to think that the corruption in the United States is worse.

But I don't live in Russia, so some of the Russians might argue with me. Anyway, I don't mean to wander off. I do think that they're reaching a point in the Ukraine conflict where, if they're going to have an offensive, this is going to be the year where they go to Odessa and they go to the Dnieper River. The weather—Ukraine's got incredible mud in the spring and the fall. You can't drive down the road, so once that dries up, then an offensive can take place. I suspect this is the offensive that people like McGregor and others have been predicting for years now. But I think that it's going to have to happen. Something like that's going to have to occur. Putin's been hoping for some negotiated settlement for a long time, but 7,000 drones going into Russia right now on a monthly basis—I don't see how it's possible.

#Pascal

Yeah, and 7,000 drones manufactured for the most part outside of Ukraine, right?

#Steven Starr

Yeah, right. Well, the New York Times published that article a while back about how the U.S. generals at Wiesbaden were running the war. I mean, all these drones have to use U.S. intelligence and satellite information for targeting. We're—it's the United States hitting Russia. This is not—and that's common knowledge in Russia, I don't think—yeah, it's so, you can't hide behind the fig leaf that this is Ukraine and it's terrorism. But when your country's under attack like that, I really think that something dramatic is going to happen, and whether it's going to be the U.S. using—I mean, Russia using Russian missiles to hit the drone factories across Europe or what, but something like that's going to occur pretty soon.

#Pascal

I mean, the interesting thing until now, four years into this horrible slaughter when it comes to Ukraine, is, of course, that the Russians have been willing to go along with the fantasy that this is a war between Russia and Ukraine, right? Or like, actually, the Russians don't call it a war. The Russians call it a special military operation. So their fantasy is it's just a military operation in Ukraine. And the West is framing it as a war between Ukraine and Russia, when in fact what it is, of course, is a joint coalition war of the entire larger political West against Russia, including the intelligence, including targeting, including logistics, including manufacturing of all of these implements of war that are then unloaded also on Russia. But the interesting thing is that the fiction is one that on both sides still kind of tries to contain it in the fiction. It's contained inside Ukraine, right?

#Steven Starr

I'm not sure what the motivation is for that, although I think the fear of nuclear war plays a certain role, at least in Russia. But, you know, the Russians, a lot of people now claim that Russia has lost its nuclear deterrent because it can't deter attacks on Russian territory. So you have people like Sergei Karaganov that are openly, you know, you see his articles in RT calling for nuclear strikes against Europe or at least, you know, some kind of demonstration like that. And that really concerns me. I tried to write that off a while ago. I thought, well, that'll never happen.

But I think in particular, and, you know, people in the West that seem to want to get rid of Putin, they have no idea. Who do they think they're going to replace him with? Santa Claus? I mean, we're going to get somebody in there like Medvedev that's going to be ready to push the button, and we certainly don't need that. But I just don't understand the warmonger mentality and the idea that the U.S. has to maintain hegemony when our conventional capabilities are way behind Russia's and China's, and, you know, our industrial base is gone. You know, we can't even replace those sad radar systems without rare earths from China. We can't.

#Pascal

It's a joke, you know. Yeah, but in this sense, like what we are seeing from, like, let's call it the global resistance of the Russians, the Iranians, the Chinese. I mean, also without having a grand strategic plan, it's just like you need to let the United States wear itself down. They are demilitarizing for the others, right? I mean, they just emptied out all of their, as you said, 80% of their Patriot missile systems. So it's like, yeah, that's a significant demilitarization for the moment being.

#Steven Starr

When they may be happy to let it continue. I mean, if China's looking at this with glee, it's probably because it's going to preclude any sort of U.S. attack on China vis-à-vis Taiwan or whatever, because we won't have the conventional munitions to do it. And we can't make them. We don't have the ability to make them. The Russians crank these things out on a production line, and all our missiles are handmade. And we can't compete.

And there was a Royal United Services Institute article, I think the first year of 2022, the war, that came out and said that the U.S. and NATO couldn't compete with Russia. It's a rise of industrial warfare, and we couldn't compete with them. It's obvious to anybody that bothers to read anything. But if you have a president that only likes to watch little clips of bombings, or he won't read a brief, he won't go to briefings, I mean, we got a real problem in the United States because we got a leader that seems to even be out of his mind to me at this point. I think we've had two presidents now with dementia.

#Pascal

Yeah, like in succession, in succession. But just one question, like what I don't understand is, why is the United States not massively, massively readjusting its entire military production toward drones? I mean, instead of producing all of these THAADs and Patriots, I mean, obviously you should be producing drones—hundreds of thousands, if not millions of drones. Why is nobody talking about that, or are they, and we're just not hearing it?

#Steven Starr

Well, I'll make a guess, but I think, you know, the United States has been deindustrialized to the extent where we've lost a skilled workforce, and all our munitions are, you know, kind of exotic, handmade. They do have, you know, artillery plants and things they're building up, but maybe partially because it's not profitable enough. They want to maintain expensive munitions, but I think we may have lost the capability to—you can't—you know, Russia was probably preparing for the war in Ukraine for seven years before it happened. You know, they planned ahead. But we—I think we lack the ability to do a lot of this at this point in the United States. You know, there are good scientists and everything here, but our industrial base is kaput, you know. And a lot of the STEM

people that are coming from the university are from China. When I was teaching at the university, I was kind of astounded in the statistics department that 90 percent of the students were from China, for example.

#Pascal

So we are going back home.

#Steven Starr

Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. And leaving us alone here.

#Pascal

Good or bad, I mean, whatever it is, it's great that you're giving us these updates, Stephen. That was, again, a very good overview. People who want to follow you or get on your mailing list—where should they sign up?

#Steven Starr

You know, I need to—I'm still in the 20th century. I've got a website called nuclearfamine.org, one word, nuclear famine, and you can read a lot of my things there. But I don't have a mailing list. I'm just happy to be able to present on your show, and—I don't know. I'm sort of an old man at this point, and I'm worried. I want to see the world survive. We live in a beautiful place. We could use all our knowledge to make this a wonderful world. I don't understand why people want to fight wars all the time.

#Pascal

And I'm absolutely certain that 98% of the world population agree with you. We all want this world to remain a beautiful place also for this and the next generations to come. Unfortunately, there are people working against that out of stupidity or out of good reason, or some Christian fundamentalist mentality. But we'll get into that again. I will link to your page, nuclearfamine.org. People can look you up there, and we will have you back on this show. Stephen Starr, thank you. Thank you. Take care now. You too. Bye-bye. Bye.