

# Seyed M. Marandi: Strait of Hormuz: Iran Holds the Leverage

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## #Nima

What's going on between Iran and the United States? Because yesterday we had some reports from the Iranian media. Later on, we had news in Iran about that 14-point plan. And then we had the tweet from the Iranian foreign minister, Araghchi, saying no, that wasn't the case, that's not reflecting the reality of what's going on between Iran and the United States — which was retweeted by Donald Trump, confirming what Araghchi said. And what we know right now in the case of the Strait of Hormuz — last night there was some sort of firing. CENTCOM reported that they shot down two or three Iranian drones. It seems that the Strait is open as usual since day one, and they're trying to do their best. I think it's better to start with the Strait of Hormuz, because CENTCOM last night said the Strait is open. The day before they said the same thing. What is the situation in the Strait of Hormuz?

## #Seyed

Well, it's open for fish, I'm sure. But for ships, I'm not quite sure. And in fact, how Trump a few days ago said that they had this secret project where they helped ships get out of the Strait of Hormuz — that was all nonsense. They have not been able to sneak a single ship out of the Strait during this period. And if they could, if they were really serious, if it was true, all they'd have to do is just give the names of the ships, because the ships in the Persian Gulf are all known entities. They have names, they have captains, they have crews, they have cargo, they departed from a particular port, they are going to another port. It's clear which ship is where and where they're bound. So if the Americans have facilitated two ships, three ships, ten ships, a hundred ships, or two hundred ships, they all have names.

They could say, well, yes, such-and-such ship, which we've helped escape through the Strait of Hormuz, is now on its way to such-and-such port in such-and-such country. But they won't do that because they know it's fake. And last night, apparently, they again tried to encourage a ship, at least one, to go through, and the Iranians again blocked it. And by the way, every time the Americans shoot down a cheap drone, they spend maybe 30 or 40 times as much money as the Iranians do using those missiles. So nothing has changed. What I can say, though, is that the statements made

by the foreign minister on television last night are pretty accurate. I mean, they're accurate. Someone told me that he meant that in his tweet, he was referring to the Mehr News report.

He was speaking in general terms. And it wasn't necessarily to say that Mehr News or anyone else was wrong. But if you look at the comments that he made on television himself, even though he said, as we were discussing before the show, he said he's not going to talk about the details, he gave us some details. Those, as you could see, were pretty similar to what Mehr News had put out. So in general, I would say that what happened was that two, three weeks ago, we were pretty close to a deal. And we've discussed this before. We discussed what the Iranians would get and what the Americans wanted and that. So your viewers aren't as well versed as I, so I won't go into that. But then the Americans put in new demands. And the Iranians said, we're not touching this.

And then the Americans started trying to put pressure on Iran. Netanyahu threatened to bomb Dahiya, then he bombed Dahiya. We know what happened then. And Iran hit Israel hard. The Israeli regime retaliated. And I heard from someone—I think I was on another show—and the host told me that, I don't remember who, but the host told me that the Israelis hit Iran hard. They didn't hit Iran hard at all. But in any case, the fact that they refrained from bombing Dahiya again, I think, shows who had the upper hand in the exchange between Iran and Israel. But the Americans then also started attacking Iran at night on numerous occasions, which we all remember. And the Iranians would strike back very hard on each occasion. So then on, I think it was Wednesday—I'm very terrible at these things—I always forget these things.

But Wednesday, I'm pretty sure, the Qatari delegation came to Iran, and they informed the Iranians that those extra demands were withdrawn. So basically, we went back to where we were two, three weeks ago. In other words, the Americans tried to impose something new. The Iranians said no. The Americans applied pressure through the Zionist regime, through their assault on the Strait of Hormuz and on islands and on the Iranian mainland. And they got no results. But after the United States withdrew those demands, that was when Trump said he's going to hammer Iran and exit. He looked, he seemed drunk, and he was talking all sorts of nonsense. And then that night was the last attack.

And Iran hit back hard as well. And for the first time, they also hit Oman—for the first time since the war, since the 39 days of war. This is still the same war, but anyway, the Iranians hit back hard. But it appears to be pretty clear what happened, and that is that Trump withdrew those demands, but he didn't want to look weak. So he came in and said, I'm going to destroy Iran, so that after the attack, whatever deal potentially comes out, he'll say, I got it from a position of strength, and they are weak. The Iranians were weak. And that, of course, didn't work. The Iranian response was very tough. But in any case, the content of the deal is pretty clear.

I mean, if anyone wants to follow the news in Iran, the Fars News Agency, the Tasnim News Agency, they cover this stuff pretty well. And these two news agencies, Tasnim and Fars, both have English, but I follow Persian. I follow other news outlets too, but these two are, when it comes to these sorts of issues, pretty clear. So now we are where we are. It's not clear if there will be a deal,

but I would say for the first time that, in my opinion, the chances are better than 50%. Until now, I would never think that way, I think. Maybe there were times when I was more optimistic for a deal, but I think I never believed the chances were this high. But some things that Trump said, of course, are not true.

One is that everything is finished. No, there are still issues to be resolved. And, uh, as far as I understand, I actually didn't see Dr. Adolph's interview. You did, I think, but I didn't, because I was on live television for Al Mayadeen and I only had my cell phone in front of me. So as I was on television, I was constantly checking his interview, which was almost one hour. That program was one hour, so the whole time I was on TV, I only saw the summary. But there will not be a signing ceremony. This will be done through electronic signatures. The two sides won't gather, and I think that's the right thing to do. I don't see any necessity to be standing in the same room with these people.

## **#Nima**

What he said last night is that, in terms of the American attacks on Iran, he said the Trump administration tried to force zero enrichment on the Iranians. Then Iran said, no, that's not going to happen. Then they attacked Iran. That's right.

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Someone told me that in a Telegram channel, an English-language Telegram channel, that Dr. Adolph Chi was saying it in a way as if this was our fault. And again, I haven't watched it, but I called a friend who watched it and also a family member who watched it, and they said, no, that's not at all what he was implying. That it's Iran's sovereign right, and to bomb a country because they're unwilling to give up their sovereign right—there's nothing for the country to be blamed about. So no, whichever Telegram channel said that, it's wrong.

What he said is basically that the United States carried out an act of aggression because we were unwilling to forsake our sovereignty, which is, of course, the right thing to do. The Islamic Republic of Iran is the most fiercely independent country on this planet, with an extraordinarily resilient people. And I think by now everyone knows that. And like Hezbollah, people should learn more about the resistance and why they're so resilient and resistant. Why is it that, except for Hezbollah and Ansarullah and Iran and so on, we see nothing? We see no movement in our region.

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Yeah, I think the most important points that he mentioned—one of them was Lebanon—and we know Lebanon and the acts of resistance were, since day one, part of the first point in the 10-point plan, 14-point plan, and right now it's the same. And you mentioned how Iran, you know, issued some sort of ultimatum to Israel not to attack Dahia, which worked after all. Just to mention what

has happened between Iran and Lebanon, I think between Iran and Israel is so important, because Israel attacked Dahia. Then Iran responded to Israel in the northern part of Israel. Then we had an Israeli attack on Iran and Iranian retaliation from the north to the south of Israel. That's right. There was no retaliation after the Iranian attack—two attacks on Israel, one attack on Iran, on the part of the Israelis.

That was the reality. If you assume, I think the second attack by Iran, which we've seen some footage coming out of Israel, they hit some important targets in Israel. That's why they decided not to escalate it. Then you see the United States coming in, which, from what we've seen, from what we've heard from the Iranian foreign minister last night, he said that it was because the Trump administration wanted to force this term of zero enrichment on Iran. I think that could be some sort of reality. I don't know if that case of the Apache helicopter has anything to do with the American attack on Iran. But what I'm somehow sure about is that the Iranian attack, the second Iranian attack on Israel, was so hard that the United States decided to respond because Israel was not capable of responding to Iran.

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What came out of this is that if there's any one-on-one war between Iran and the Israeli regime, it won't last 12 days like last time. The Israelis will be on their knees pretty quickly. And they know that. The Iranians know that. But also the Americans are not in a position to fight. We saw during these last few nights, every time a conflict arose, Iran was very heavy-handed in its response. And the Americans are running out of time. They are truly running out of time. The crisis is about to hit. And we are very close. And people are, you know, those who are pessimistic say it's going to be in June. Those who are optimistic say it's by the end of July. And even if there is an agreement, there will still be a crisis, and it will affect the world for a very, very long time.

So Trump needs a deal, and Trump's military is not nearly as capable as he would like us to believe, and Iran has shown that. If Iran downed the helicopter, that again shows weakness on behalf of the United States. But what we do know is that the Iranians never took credit for downing the helicopter, and they always do when they strike American planes or drones or targets anywhere. So perhaps it was a mechanical failure. Perhaps it was hit by a drone, because there are Iranian drones monitoring the Strait of Hormuz. It's Iranian territorial water, after all. So that helicopter may have had an accident with a drone. We don't know. But at the end of the day, Trump did use it as an excuse to show his strength because of his retreat at the negotiating table. But that didn't work either. The Iranian response was very hard-hitting. And from my understanding, important U.S. assets were destroyed.

## **#Nima**

The case of Lebanon, Professor Marandi, what can we learn? Because last night, the Iranian foreign minister said, after all, Israel has to withdraw totally from Lebanon. This is the final goal. And I don't

know how far they can reach that conclusion during the talks or in the aftermath of the talks. Because last time we had Israel attacking Nabatieh in the southern part of Lebanon. And they're attacking, destroying, but the attack is not getting to Beirut so far from what we've seen. They're bombing homes.

## **#Seyed**

They're bombing cities because on the battlefield they're not doing well. They're not doing well on the battlefield, and because of that, they're getting revenge on people. We've discussed this before. So when you say Nabatieh, it's a city. I've been to Nabatieh more than once. It's a beautiful city, large population in the context of a country like Lebanon. And what they're doing is just bombing the city and bringing about death and destruction out of anger and hatred, rage because of the fact that they're losing. Of course, even if they were winning, they'd do it too because they're just ruthless monsters. But it is because of their anger and rage. But the Iranians have said very clearly there will be no deal if the regime does not withdraw, if it doesn't go back to where it was three months ago.

For this period, at the end of the day, it has to leave Lebanon completely. But it has to go back to before this war began. And there are, I think, five points where they're occupying. They have to withdraw completely, and they will no longer be allowed to bomb Lebanon. And if they don't do that, there's no deal. If the Americans don't release the Iranian assets, there's no deal. If the Americans don't lift the siege, there's no deal. If the Americans don't lift the sanctions on Iranian energy exports, there's no deal. So what leverage does Iran have? It has its missiles. It has its drones. It has its military capability that we've seen used in the last couple of weeks. And it has, of course, control over the Strait of Hormuz. And the Americans are in deep trouble.

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The Strait of Hormuz was mentioned last night. The Iranian foreign minister said that we're not going to, because the toll system would be against international law. So we have something else. We have a fee to be charged — I don't know, an environmental fee or an administrative fee, whatever.

## **#Seyed**

They're going to take money. That's the point. You can call it a toll, you can call it a fee, yeah, because, I mean, since a toll is not acceptable in accordance with international law, they'll take a fee. You know, that's how it works. But also, they'll have control. In other words, Israeli ships won't be getting through, American naval ships won't be getting through. Iranians will prevent that sort of thing. So it will be controlled to make sure that the enemy doesn't militarize the Persian Gulf again, and to make it very costly for it to bring anything to those bases, because since they won't be able to use their ships, everything will have to be brought in by plane. And that makes the cost much, much greater and much more problematic to sustain it. It will be much more problematic to sustain

it. So they will have control, and they will get their reparations through environmental fees or insurance fees or security fees, or a combination of all these fees. Yeah, the world has changed.