

Most DANGEROUS Phase Of Iran War Has Just Begun | Prof. S. M. Marandi

Professor Seyed Mohammad Marandi joins Pascal Lottaz to discuss the reported war around Iran, the Strait of Hormuz, attacks on US bases, and growing pressure on Gulf states. They examine the risks to energy, trade, food supplies, and the global economy, as well as Iran's ties with China and Russia. Marandi also argues that US policy is driven by failed assumptions and lacks a clear plan.

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#Pascal

Welcome back, everybody, to Neutrality Studies today for an update from Tehran with our friend and colleague, Professor Saeed Mohammad Marandi. Saeed, welcome back.

#Marandi

Thank you very much for having me. It's always a great pleasure being with you.

#Pascal

Thank you very much for giving us these updates. They are very important because last time we spoke, actually, we weren't quite certain if the United States was serious in really going into a third round of the war, basically. It seemed a little bit early for that one, but it seems they've decided to do that. You've been under bombardment again in Iran for the last, I think, now almost 10 days. Thank you very much.

#Marandi

Yes, this time around they have not touched the internet connection, and therefore we don't have the sort of problems that we had during the 40-day war during Ramadan. But in general, if you go about Tehran, everything is normal. They haven't yet bombed the city of Tehran, although a drone

was downed over the city a couple of nights ago. And the fighting, although it's been going on for, I think, around 12 days now, it is quite intense in different areas in the Persian Gulf region, on both sides of the Persian Gulf and in Jordan. But so far, except for anti-aircraft fire a couple of nights ago in Tehran, we haven't felt anything here. So people go around their daily lives. There is an apartment building being built next door to where I am. I don't know if your listeners can hear it, but it's just normal builders building their buildings. Right now, though, we are entering a very sensitive time, as you know.

Although Trump is never predictable, we can never say he's going to do anything for certain. Just like before, we felt that there's a high possibility that he would attack, but no one could say for certain because Trump is Trump. And now, since Trump has threatened to destroy Iranian territory, electrical power plants, and bridges, the war could escalate very suddenly and very badly for the global economy. But then again, we don't know if Trump will, as they say, TACO, or whether he will carry out these attacks, because he said that if Iran strikes any ships in the Strait of Hormuz, he'll start targeting bridges and power plants. But the Iranians have said that they will target any ships that disobey the Iranian naval commands.

And in accordance with Article 5 of the MOU between Iran and the United States, the Strait of Hormuz was to be under the control of Iran. And the reason, of course, is obvious. That is what prevents the United States from assaulting and destroying Iran: Iran's control over that key waterway. We all remember, and I'm just going over what we all know, that before this war, Iran had no intention of controlling the Strait of Hormuz. I, in my adult life, I don't remember anyone ever even speaking about such a scenario in public. Of course, in private, it's now become clear that if this war was waged against us, Iran would move to shut the Strait of Hormuz and control it.

But under normal circumstances, that wasn't the plan, and that wasn't anything that was discussed in the public sphere. So everything was normal back then. Then, when the war started, what prevented the United States from doing much greater harm was the fact that Iran took control of the Strait. That put enormous pressure on Trump and the U.S. economy. And that forced him to end the war and ultimately sign the MOU. So Iran is not going to allow the United States to undermine that leverage, because if that leverage is undermined, then the United States will bomb Iran day and night, destroy all of its electrical power plants, and know that it can get away with it.

#Pascal

So it seems to me that from Iran, we've heard a lot of comments, especially on Twitter from Mr. Arafati and others, that they consider the MOU as dead. It's gone, it's over, and that Iran will now work on implementing militarily what they were trying to do with the MOU diplomatically, which is expelling the United States completely from the region. And they won't entertain the thought of more negotiations again. Where are we on that end? Has Iran's patience now been used up and the

decision been made, okay, this is going to be a military solution? We'll keep pounding the American bases and whatnot, and in the end, we will degrade the ability of the United States to strike us in the first place. Is that where we are going?

#Marandi

Yes, for the time being, the Iranians are not interested in negotiations at all. And they are focused on destroying U.S. assets across the region, but now increasingly in Jordan and to the west of Saudi Arabia. Under heavy daily strikes, 24 hours a day, U.S. bases in Kuwait and Bahrain in particular are—the Americans have been forced to withdraw many of their assets, especially those that deal with the air campaign, and take them to Jordan and bases in Saudi Arabia to the west of the country. And then, I think probably to the U.S. surprise, the Iranians have begun striking those bases deep inside Saudi Arabia and in Jordan with devastating results. And we're seeing many of the satellite images of the bases being badly damaged.

So the United States is now even thinking about going further away from Iran's border. So right now Iran is not interested. And ultimately, when there is an opportunity to bring about an end to the fighting, I think that the Iranian demands are going to be different from the MOU. They will probably demand certain things in advance. And I would assume that their demands would expand. And among them would definitely be the siege on Yemen—that must come to an end—and the situation in Gaza. Even though these two were in the MOU, they weren't named directly. They were alluded to. But in future, Iran, whatever happens to bring about an end to the fighting, the Iranian demands will be substantially different and broader. And Iran will be more demanding than during the MOU negotiations. Yeah.

#Pascal

Hey, just a very quick note. The best way to support this channel is by signing up for my free Substack. You can also help with a paid subscription there, or you can get some of our new merch on neutralitystudies.com. Links below. See you there. I mean, the way that this entire process is going, it seems to me that the war, or warfare, is just widening. It's just spreading. Yemen is now reportedly blocking their strait. I was mispronouncing, but I'll... And the Saudis now got apparently an agreement with the Americans that they can enrich uranium, which is bizarre at this moment. And the bases, the U.S. bases that are now hit in Jordan. And we've got now news that Jordanian public society is actually demanding that Jordan abolish its agreement with the United States for stationing troops. At the same time, Israel is still working its warfare with Lebanon. So, I mean, it seems to be gradually morphing into an old West Asian kind of war theater. How are you seeing that, especially about Yemen and Jordan?

#Marandi

Oh, absolutely. Yemen has struck two Saudi tankers. And, of course, tankers are not going through the Bab el-Mandeb. And this, as we all know, comes as the Strait of Hormuz is closed. And thus the price of oil is going up. And, you know, one of the things that we are always focused on is the price of oil. But all sorts of other products that come from the Persian Gulf, the petrochemicals, which of course include helium alongside them, and even refined oil—all of these are now, their shortages are growing. And even agriculture across the world is going to be badly affected next year because of the shortages in this part of the world. So a lot of the harm that's coming people's way across the world is not quite visible yet to us.

In other words, the long-term impact is growing, and it's very broad and extensive. But we're only focused on the oil shortage, which itself is extremely important, because heavy crude is used for diesel, and diesel is what makes the global economy turn. Light crude cannot replace diesel, or heavy crude, and so this is extraordinarily bad for the global economy. And if things continue as they are, I think we're heading for a global economic depression if this lasts for long. Or, if the United States carries out its threat to strike Iranian critical infrastructure, Iran will destroy the critical infrastructure of those countries that are assisting the United States, meaning Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Qatar, the Emirates, and perhaps Oman because of their recent actions.

And so if that happens, these countries will fall apart because they're just deserts for the most part, and they only have oil and gas. So 30 million people, perhaps more, will have to evacuate these countries. And Iran doesn't want to do this. Iran didn't start the war. Iran didn't escalate. But these countries are partners in crime. They're partners in this war. So if that happens, then the shortages will be permanent, and I think it will create an enormous shock in the market, which will almost immediately lead us to a global economic meltdown and an economic depression worse than the 1930s. Whatever happens, Pascal, it's going to get worse. But in some scenarios, it gets worse more slowly. In some scenarios, it gets worse very swiftly. In some scenarios, it can be reversed after a few years. In some scenarios, it will take maybe decades.

#Pascal

In the last discussion we had, we kind of came to the point, or to the conclusion, that from now on, Iran wouldn't just treat the Strait of Hormuz as, like, a binary on and off. It's not a switch anymore. It's more like a faucet, where Iran then decides, okay, which ships can go through, especially the ones that actually announce themselves and ask for permission to pass. There's now a Strait Authority that Iran set up. Is that still active at the moment? Because Iran then has this issue, right?

On the one hand, a complete blockade and impact on the world price of crude is something that works as leverage. On the other hand, Iran, I suppose, would rather want not to damage the economies of its own friends, right? Especially the Chinese economy. But there's other countries as

well. I know that Iran and Japan have a passable relationship, actually, and at least in the past, they haven't had bad blood. So is it still possible for some ships to go through? And is Iran there using—what approach is Iran using for this?

#Marandi

Well, I can't say for certain what is happening right now in the Strait of Hormuz. I haven't been asking. But I've heard from two or three different people that a number of ships have been passing through daily through the Iranian corridor. And the American corridor is shut down. And last night, another ship was struck because it was trying to— the Americans and the Saudis and the Emiratis and the Kuwaitis were trying to get three ships through the American corridor. And Iran struck one of them, and the other two retreated. So that path is closed. But a limited number of ships are going through the Iranian-designated corridor. Now, I don't know whose ships they are. I heard that yesterday there were roughly 10 ships, or the day before, probably more or less the same.

I don't know who they belong to. But yes, Iran is not trying to hurt those countries that are peaceful towards Iran. But we have to keep in mind that most of these ships belong or are linked to the Saudis, the Emiratis, the Kuwaitis, the Bahrainis, and the Qataris. And these are the countries—and now Oman, which has increasingly been forced by the Americans to take an anti-Iranian stance—these six countries are effectively helping the Americans wage war against our own country. So there's no reason why Iran should be lenient towards them when they're behaving this way towards us. But Iran has no issues with China or Japan or others. But then again, the situation is so tense.

I mean, the fighting in the Persian Gulf region, in the Strait of Hormuz region, the missiles that are going back and forth, they make it dangerous anyway. So even the Iranian corridor doesn't have a lot of ships that want to pass through because of shipping companies being worried about safety, because insurance companies are demanding too much money from the shipping companies. There are a host of different reasons that are now affecting the flow of ships, and apparently the crisis for fertilizer is particularly bad. And this is something that I think was said in one of the statements by the Iranian armed forces, that the Americans should end this war because the global fertilizer crisis is getting beyond containment.

#Pascal

And so what about the relationship with the Gulf states? I mean, on the one hand, we've seen that some of them, especially Saudi Arabia, sent a delegation to the funeral of Ayatollah Khamenei. On the other hand, they're still part of the coalition that enables these attacks. Is there any movement on this, something that we on our side are not seeing? Are there negotiations, diplomatic exchange between the Gulf states and Iran? Is anything moving? Because it seems to me that the Gulf states should get more and more interested and actually into panic, like trying to end this U.S.-Israeli attack—attacks on Iran—but so far they're not moving, or at least I don't see much of it.

#Marandi

I can't say for certain. I don't have information that I could state to you as fact. But in general, during this period, these four or five months now, messages have always been going back and forth between Iran and these different family dictatorships in the Persian Gulf. And sometimes delegations do go back and forth. But the problem, of course, is that they refuse to change course. Sometimes, in general, sometimes the situation gets better, sometimes the situation gets worse. Right now, for example, Iran is not targeting the Emirates or Qatar as much as it's targeting Kuwait and Bahrain.

But sometimes it's linked to the fact that certain negotiations have made progress. Sometimes it's linked to the fact that U.S. forces in those areas are a particular threat. So things are constantly changing and evolving. But right now, Iran is targeting American forces wherever they are. And even if it's Oman, where Iran has had better relations, the Iranians are not going to allow Americans to be a threat to Iran from Oman either. I would say that we're probably in the most dangerous phase of the war. And when I mean the dangerous phase, I don't mean the last 12 or 13 days or so. I mean the entire war.

Because, Pascal, the Americans know that they cannot defeat Iran militarily. They've already experienced that during the first 40 days. They know that they cannot defeat Iran in siege warfare. They saw that in the subsequent couple of months that led to the MOU being signed. So now, after they've restarted the war, they've been trying to focus on taking the Strait, and that's failed too. And we see the price of energy going through the roof. And as I said, all the other commodities are rising as well, but they're not in the headlines. So the only option really left for the Americans is to continue with what's happening now.

And so the price of oil will gradually rise, especially with the Bab al-Mandab and the Red Sea as it is now. And the shortages will increase, and the global economy will fall into recession, and then perhaps it will continue and fall into depression. That is one scenario. And at some point, the Americans give up. But in any case, that would be one trajectory. The second would be the United States says, okay, this hasn't worked, so the only thing left to do is to escalate. And the escalation can take two different directions. One is a land operation, which I don't see as succeeding at all. Iran doesn't control the Strait of Hormuz through the mountaintops around the Strait.

We're not in the 20th century anymore. This is the 21st century. The missiles that are being fired at Jordan are being fired from a thousand kilometers away. So Iran can definitely control the Strait of Hormuz from anywhere in the country. They don't need the hills or the mountains or the shore alongside the Strait. So if the U.S. carries out a land attack, it will fail. And then there will be counteroffensives, and Iranian ground troops are all prepared, and they're equipped with rockets and their own drones. And so that would be a failure. The second would be to start targeting Iranian critical infrastructure, as Trump has once again threatened.

He made this threat before, during the 12-day war. He did, and Netanyahu began to carry it out a couple of times, and the Iranians hit back very hard. The most famous example was when they struck the Iranian South Pars gas field, and then the Iranians retaliated severely. And one of the places that they struck was the Qatari gas field, which did enormous damage. And Trump posted to Truth Social, saying, "This is not going to happen again. I'm not going to let Iranian critical infrastructure be destroyed," because he understood the consequences. And so whenever the United States or the Israelis carried out an attack, the Iranians carried out a much bigger attack.

So it was managed and contained. This time around, though, this could be the last option. Okay, let's just go for it. Let's start targeting Iranian, let's say, electrical power plants. Well, then the Iranians are going to do the same to Saudi Arabia, to Kuwait, the Emirates, Bahrain, Qatar. And these countries, Asghar, they're very different from Iran. Not only are they very hot and humid, and we're in the height of summer, that aside, but they only have a few power plants, and they're all alongside the shore. They're larger power plants than in Iran. Iran has power plants spread out across the country.

So if Americans want to start bombing Iranian power plants, it will not be easy to destroy them because they'd have to carry out airstrikes day and night all over the country, risk airplanes. But all Iran has to do is target a handful of very huge power plants, centralized power plants, and it would be over. So for the Iranians, it's easier to destroy—to carry out retaliation—which Iran doesn't want to do. This is just deterrence. The Iranians did not start the war, they didn't start the escalation, and they're not threatening to escalate. They're only saying that if you carry out these attacks, we'll respond.

#Pascal

Why is Iran mainly threatening the Gulf states and not Israel? In this latest round, we've seen how Iran did not—at least I haven't read about strikes against Israel. And it seems to me that, you know, Israel is this kind of very—is very dear to the United States, at least let's put it like that, right? So why is it that the strategy, the retaliation strategy, is against the Gulf states? I understand that they're enablers, of course. But, you know, one of the key reasons why the United States in the end went to war is because Netanyahu convinced Trump that this is the right course of action. So why is it that in the current phase, Israel is kind of just left there, like sitting on the side?

#Marandi

Well, I think it's a bit more complicated than that. First of all, this is about the Strait of Hormuz. I mean, the battle is over the Strait of Hormuz. And Iran must win this battle. It is existential. And so the focus is on this. If the Israeli regime attacks Iran, Iran will start hammering it day and night. But for the time being, Iran wants to focus on victory against the United States. Victory against the United States is a victory over the Israeli regime anyway. But there's also a couple of other things.

One is that the Iranians are making it much more dangerous for the Israeli regime, not only by weakening the United States, but also by destroying the lines of defense that the United States has created for the Israelis, meaning the layers of radar systems and anti-drone and missile systems that existed in the Persian Gulf and deep in Saudi Arabia and Jordan, in northern Iraq.

All of these are being destroyed. And the only place left, really, is Turkey, where the radar systems are used to protect the Israelis. But other than that, to the central and south, they're all being destroyed. And this is a particular use for Iranian drones. Iranian missiles, of course, have a very high success rate, as we're seeing in the last... Iranian missiles are becoming increasingly precise and evasive. And so we see... I mean, I think the Americans are quite stunned because of the way in which they're being hammered across the board. So the Iranians are much more effective now, or significantly more effective now, than even during the 40-day war. So once those defenses are destroyed, Iranian drones can no longer be easily intercepted.

They can go all the way to Palestine and bomb the Israelis. But also, there's a final issue too. Well, let's say two issues. One is that Iran does not initiate any war. It never has, and it doesn't intend to. These countries are attacking Iran. Their territory is being used to bomb Iran. So if the Israeli regime initiates a conflict, a war, Iran will hit them very hard. But the bigger issue is also that there is a crisis going on in Israel. And the internal strife is becoming very dangerous. And some of them are even talking of civil war in the Hebrew press. In any case, the divisions are very high, and Netanyahu is in bad shape. If Iran initiates conflict, it could change the internal dynamics in a way which we don't want now because of the upcoming elections.

Not that Netanyahu's rivals are any better than him. It's a choice between genocidal maniacs. But a weakened Netanyahu, a broken Netanyahu, because of all that has happened over the last three years, is a good thing. Again, his successor may not be any better, but his defeat is symbolic. So the Iranians do not want to disturb the internal fighting that's going on inside Palestine for the time being. And if they start something against Iran, then Iran can hit them very hard. And that could ultimately be blamed on Netanyahu. So Iran would rather they start. And while they are waiting to see what happens, as I said, they're destroying and dismantling all of those radar systems and all of those air defense systems. And of course, at the same time, fighting the battle for the Strait.

#Pascal

Do you have any—and that's very interesting, actually—I mean, this aspect of: do not disturb your enemy while the enemy is in deep trouble already. Anyhow, right, you don't want to accidentally unite the country against the common enemy. That's, yeah, very sophisticated. But on the other hand, do we see more cooperation now, or do you have any information about cooperation with China and Russia now? As we talked before in the beginning, I think especially China was very pessimistic about the chances of Iran.

And Iran, I think, really surprised China by its own abilities and so on. And, of course, Iran is part and parcel of the BRICS states. Do you have any information on how Iran's foreign policy is now continuing, or bilateral relations, multilateral relations, are continuing while being at war? It seems that this is a new status quo, at least for the time being, that Iran is now learning to live with and continue with the other parts of life, despite the fact that it's constantly being bombarded, and kind of just deal with it.

#Marandi

Iran's relationship with the Chinese and the Russians continues to be very good. The Russians and the Iranians are coordinating at all sorts of levels. As neighbors, I mean, it's easy for ordinary trade to take place between Iran and Russia even under siege, because the Russians don't use the Persian Gulf or the Strait of Hormuz to trade with Iran. So their trade goes right through the North-South Corridor, the Caspian Sea, or through the Caucasus, or through Central Asia. In the case of the Chinese, trade is more difficult now because of the siege and the fact that the Chinese use, and the Iranians use, the sea lanes for trade, for a lot of their trade. But trade between the two countries is increasing through Central Asia and even through Afghanistan and Pakistan.

So they're trying to compensate for the limitations caused. Now, Iran was also very smart in that when it signed the MOU, it immediately had tens of millions of barrels of oil ready in tankers that were stuck in the Persian Gulf. And they exported those to their Asian markets, mostly China. And immediately they brought in supplies into the country during that three weeks when the window was open. Because the Iranians knew ultimately the Americans would most probably go back to war. So a lot of Iran's needs have been met, and it is prepared for a very long war. And we don't know if the war is going to last for a year or two years or two months or three months. But the escalation is rapidly increasing, as we all see.

And now we finally do see Yemen entering the fray. And partially it is because of the Saudi regime's own stupidity. I mean, I find it quite stunning that at the time when the Strait of Hormuz is closed, Iran sent a passenger plane to pick up a delegation in Yemen and also to bring injured Yemeni people to Iran because their hospitals don't have some of the equipment that exists in Iran. And then, when they went back to— and I met some of the people in the Yemeni delegation— when they were going back to Yemen, the Saudis bombed the airport. And that outraged Iran because this was a civilian airline with men and women in the crew, an ordinary crew. But it was an act of war against Yemen.

And that was, I think, the straw that broke the camel's back. So now Yemen has imposed its own siege on Saudi Arabia because the Saudis have imposed a siege on Yemen for many years. And so this has led to, as we all see, a more rapid escalation. So this could intensify. This could act as a catalyst to speed things up in the war because the price of energy will more rapidly increase. Saudi Arabia will be in grave danger because it is, you know, these six countries, these six U.S. proxies in

the Persian Gulf, they are totally dependent on oil and gas. They don't have a diverse economy. Iran is a country which is almost self-sufficient in its agriculture. In some aspects, it exports agricultural goods, and it imports. On the whole, it's more or less self-sufficient, let's say. And if it wasn't for the sanctions, Iran would definitely be more than just self-sufficient.

But Saudi Arabia and the others, they have oil, or in the case of Qatar, gas. And they're high spenders too. The Iranians, because of the sanctions over many years, they've developed their own local industries. If you go into an Iranian supermarket, especially in central Tehran or southern Tehran, all the goods are Iranian. You won't see all that many foreign products. In the rich neighborhoods, where people would like to have their Kellogg's cornflakes or their Western chocolates, you'll see some of that. But still, in the north of Tehran, 95% of the goods are still Iranian. But this is not the case in these countries. They're very dependent. So if the Strait of Hormuz is shut, and then the Bab al-Mandab is shut, and Saudi ships are being hit in the Red Sea, and also they can't move around in the Persian Gulf, then how long do they last?

#Pascal

May I just ask you, like, how do you interpret this phase now of the war? I mean, you might say that this has been the plan all along. You know, the MOU, that's why Donald Trump signed it. He knew that this was just a piece of paper and it's worthless. So whatever's signed, it doesn't really matter. Just need a break and then continue. So this is part and parcel of the strategy, actually. Or you can say that this is the United States actually failing then to get to implement this corridor and getting angry at this. Some people that I talk to, Larry Johnson and so on, they keep saying, look, there is no strategy. We have no strategy. This is, as social scientists would say, path dependence. Now you do what you have to do because you did what you did the days and months before, right? But there is no overarching strategy.

There is no theory of victory for the United States, especially now that it has tried all of these things and, short of a ground invasion, basically tried out almost everything. And they are just sucked into basically a forever war until the machinery runs out of steam. Others are saying, like, no, it's still part and parcel of a strategy, especially a strategy—and some draw a very broad picture, say, like, it's actually aimed against China. They want to hurt China and make sure that through closing the Strait of Hormuz, you can put pressure on China very much, although China is showing a remarkable resilience, actually winding down its oil imports and being completely, utterly fine. That's also really fascinating. How are you interpreting what this stage is, or what the war at the moment actually means?

#Marandi

I'm sure the United States has an eye on China, and it has an eye on Russia too. I mean, if Iran was defeated, it would be very bad news for China and Russia. But I don't think there is any strategy. I think that this is a total mess. And I think perhaps one of the biggest issues—I mean, a lot of people

have been focusing on the U.S. military and how it is much less capable than has been assumed—but I think another aspect that has been less discussed is U.S. intelligence, or Western intelligence, or Israeli regime intelligence. And they miscalculated everything from beginning to end. If you go back to what they were saying at the beginning of the war, how they wiped out all of Iran's drones and missiles and bases, and Iran has nothing.

And you look at the situation now, obviously they had no idea what they were talking about. And these were not like pundits. This was like the Secretary of War. It wasn't just Trump, the guy who always talks nonsense. It was the Secretary of War and other key officials. It was the Pentagon constantly putting out statements or talking about how everything in Iran had been destroyed. And yet here we are five months later, and the Iranians are striking them day and night. And then, of course, the issue of Iran's internal stability and the legitimacy of the state. If we are to believe the narratives that come out of Western think tanks, Western media, and Western governments as being sincere, they completely misread Iran. They have no understanding of the country.

The funerals have shown that the popularity of the Islamic Republic among the population far outweighs that of what we have in the West. And the depth of that popularity—I mean, the fact that you have, like, what, 15, 16 million people in Tehran on the streets for a funeral, what does that say? In the summer heat in Tehran, it's like 35 degrees. And then just getting there is a burden. It took me three hours to get there. Then you walk for hours, and then it took me a couple of hours to get back. I had to go to sleep. And then you have millions of people who are struggling. Factories have been bombed. Hospitals, schools have been bombed. There's a siege. There's sanctions. Infrastructure has been targeted. So a lot of people, they're facing inflation. Some have lost their jobs.

Some have probably worked. I mean, definitely many have worked in places that have been damaged. So why did they participate? Because they wanted to show their support for the Islamic Republic, their respects for Ayatollah Khamenei. And that crowd in Tehran, in the holy city of Qom, in the holy city of Mashhad, and in Iraq—for the first time, Western media was dumbfounded. They were just stunned, because they're always trying to say that the regime, as they love to call it, is unpopular, despised, hated. It's falling apart. All you have to do is push it; it falls like a house of cards. So all of these calculations were wrong. And so the U.S. intelligence, most probably, and Israeli regime intelligence, they are not up to the job.

Just like the U.S. military is incompetent and incapable, their intelligence agencies are incompetent and incapable. And I think that is a big part of the story too, that they just misread the situation. And when things began to fall apart, it became clear that they had no strategy because initially their strategy was very—it could be written down in a paragraph, you know: bomb the regime, as they love to call it. The regime collapses. The country breaks up into different pieces. We install different people. They fight among each other. And at least Israel is happy and it can expand and take over

territory in surrounding countries. And the problem is resolved. Since that didn't work, then there is no strategy. They just move forward and try different things out and make things worse and worse for themselves and for the entire globe.

And I think I've said this before on your show, and I don't know if you read that book, *Going to Tehran*. They were predicting this. Very good book. It deals with a lot of the myths by Clinton and Hillary Leverett. And maybe you can invite Hillary. They predicted this. They said that the course that the United States is taking is ultimately going to lead to warfare. And these were people who worked in the White House. Of course, there are other good books like Alastair Crooke's *Resistance* and so on. But these two people were saying that this course of action is ultimately going to lead to war. And here we are. And they kept saying to themselves that Iran is weak, it is vulnerable, it is falling apart. So it'll be a walk in the park.

#Pascal

Yeah, but, you know, one of the misconceptions is, of course, that when we say, like, "Oh no, it's going to lead to war," then everybody will say, like, "Oh no, we don't want that." Unfortunately, there's a lot of people that are like, "Yeah, that's what we want. This is our problem-solving strategy. We go to war, we kill them, problem solved," right? That's how the United States, for 250 years, basically got rid of anyone who stood in its way of, like, expansion, right, over the North American continent. They started as 13 colonies, right? And they became what it is today. And a large part is by using warfare and massacring people and expanding. But it's not working anymore. So this is where the strategy is not working.

And this is maybe just the very last point. If now the United States is caught in a war without a strategy, and a war that it cannot win, and, you know, basically a Vietnam kind of situation, just many times bigger, faster, worse, what is your interpretation? How long will it take until this machinery will run either out of steam because they don't have the implements of war anymore, or out of interest? Because, you know, like, we've seen that before, when they just walk away from Afghanistan and go like, "Yeah, we don't care anymore, bye." Do you have any gut feeling? Because it seems to me that things are going quite fast, much faster than Vietnam, much faster than Afghanistan.

#Marandi

Well, actually, that's what I was going to say. And you answered the question, I think, very well with your last comment. The difference between Afghanistan and Iraq and Vietnam and all the others is the global economic crisis that's emerging very rapidly. It could be a long war. I mean, I really don't have an answer, and I'm just guessing. It's just 100% speculation. The Iranians are prepared for a long war, and they've been preparing for this war for decades. And they have so many missiles and drones in all these underground bases, and they're building them and producing them like there's no tomorrow. So they're prepared for a long-term war.

As I said, they built this infrastructure for this moment. But personally, I think it's difficult for it to last too long because I don't think the global economy can tolerate this war for very long. This is not the United States of the 1960s. I mean, Vietnam was a burden, no doubt, but the United States was the power. It was the global economic power, and there was no number two anywhere near it. We live in a different world today. The United States, relatively speaking, is much diminished. Relatively speaking, I'm not saying it's a banana republic, but it's not what it was in the 1960s. And the same is true after the collapse of the Soviet Union.

There was no power to counter the United States, and the United States foolishly wasted its energy in Iraq and Afghanistan, which, by the way, largely was because of Iran. And when they invaded, the Iranians began to support the resistance in these countries—General Soleimani, of course—and the United States wasted trillions of dollars in both countries. And that today makes the United States much weaker now in its war against Iran because it's been weakened so badly by its previous wars. But in any case, the United States is not in a good financial situation. It's not in a good economic situation. It's not in a good military situation or political situation.

And we see that, for the first time, a war waged by the United States is deeply unpopular from the very beginning. Usually in the United States, a lot of people seem to like wars. But in this case, it didn't start well, probably because many people are waking up. They see through the propaganda, and some other people see the economic hardship. But I find it difficult for the United States to be able to sustain this for very long, although many people disagree. And I may be wrong. But I don't think that this can go on for years. I think that ultimately, if this continues as it is, and the global economy continues to deteriorate, I think that at some point the United States is going to have to stop.

#Pascal

I have the same gut feeling, but maybe that's also just kind of my morbid optimism, because I would like things to get better again. In any case, Saeed, thank you very much for this wonderful update. That was very insightful. People who want to read more from you, I think they should follow you mostly on Twitter. You tweet quite regularly, updates and pieces and nuggets of information there. Is there any other place where people should find you?

#Marandi

No, I've been removed from Instagram a long time ago, and the same is true with Facebook. So all I have is my Twitter account. I also have a Telegram channel, which, if they go to my Twitter account, they can see at the top. But I do advise people to read those books that I mentioned: *Going to Tehran*, the book by Alastair Crooke, *Resistance*, and also a couple of other books, *Manufactured Crisis* and Peter Osborne's *A Dangerous Delusion*. There are very few good books on Iran, and that's one reason why I think the West miscalculates so much. They write their own books. They're all

about a weak Iran, a broken Iran, unpopular Iran. These four books that I named are honest, are intellectually honest. The authors are all intellectually honest, and that's what makes them a lot different from the rest. And if U.S. policymakers had paid attention to them, we wouldn't be where we are today.

#Pascal

Read more books, everybody. I will try to put the links to the books in the description below. Saeed Mohammad Marandi, thank you so much for your time today.

#Marandi

Thank you, Pascal. It's always a pleasure.