

Alastair Crooke: Iran Goes On OFFENSIVE, US DEPLOYS Aircraft Carrier as Israel PANICS

Alastair Crooke discusses Iran's announcement of a new offensive that includes targeting US soil, the deployment of the USS George Washington to the Middle East and Israel's shock about Iran's rapid recovery amid talks of renewed CENTCOM & IDF strikes. Alastair Crooke is a former British diplomat and the Founder of the Conflicts Forum based in Beirut. <https://conflictsforum.substack.com/> PATREON.COM/DANNYHAIPHONG Support the channel in other ways: <https://www.buymeacoffee.com/dannyhai...> Substack: chroniclesofhaiphong.substack.com Cashapp: \$Dhaiphong Venmo: @dannyH2020 Paypal: <https://paypal.me/spiritofho> Follow me on Telegram: <https://t.me/dannyhaiphong> #iran #iranwar #trump

#Danny

Welcome back to the show, everyone.

#Danny

As you can see, I'm joined by Alastair Crooke of Conflicts Forum Substack to talk about the latest developments. So Iran has reported that they are going on the offensive, or are on the offensive, as they report. Iranian military says that the new military doctrine says that they are preparing operations potentially for U.S. soil, adding they will take operations into enemy territory, into the enemy's lands, and carry operations far from our own territory if they decide, the United States does, to continue pursuing war. While Iran hasn't stopped enforcing its control over the Strait of Hormuz, striking two of its vessels last night in the UAE. Now, another interesting development I know Alastair will be very interested in is that Iran informed Syria yesterday, through Turkey, that hundreds of targets they have compiled with drones and missiles throughout Syria if the Jolani regime decides to intervene in Lebanon in any way. Now, these are unverified, unconfirmed reports that Iran reportedly struck Erbil, Iraq, a hotel housing U.S. personnel. Still awaiting confirmation of that.

Now, in other news, the United States, after much talk and discussion and viral headlines about the deplorable conditions on the USS Lincoln, it appears that the USS George Washington is going to set out to sea toward the Indian Ocean to replace it after Iran war strain, according to The Wall Street Journal, where several crew members attempted to take their own lives aboard the ship. Israeli

officials are incredibly shocked and in panic that Iran has essentially rebuilt militarily in a rapid way after thousands, tens of thousands, 30,000 strikes from the U.S. and about 2,600 strikes from Israel were conducted during the 40-day period of war.

And this was confirmed by Mohammad Reza Naqdi, an IRGC commander, who said that the number of missiles we manufacture every day is more than the number we have launched thus far. This was to PBS News. So, Alastair, a whole range of developments, a very busy day overnight. But this goes into the longer context of this war. I'm wondering if you could talk about what Iran means by this offensive posture today that it says it is taking, especially now that the United States appears on the back foot and going through a string of humiliations, not least what's happened on the USS Lincoln?

#Alastair Crooke

Yes, it is a new phase by Iran, and it's taken a few weeks. It's not suddenly come out of the blue, because the changes in the military leadership, which were announced by the Supreme Leader, Mujtaba, and the statement, I think it was some days ago, by the Supreme National Security Council—a tough statement—it actually was not that new because much of it was already in the MOU. But the language was tough and said, you know, we don't accept to be spoken to in this way, this deprecating way, by the United States. You can keep your language to yourself. So it was tough, sort of presentationally. But there were one or two things that were noticeable. The most obvious one was, in the MOU, the focus was on Lebanon, as you recall, very much.

But there was also a reference to Lebanon and Iran's allies, and to the allies generally, the Axis of Resistance. In the new statement by the Security Council, it says Palestine. So it says Lebanon and the Palestinians must be included in a ceasefire. And that's an important shift, I think, that has taken place because, at the moment, the West Bank is heating up. I think we have to be alert to the possibility because this is what is being said in Israel. We've reported this. It's in our Substack. You can see the details from the Israeli Hebrew press. But Ben Gvir and the right are looking really to set the West Bank on fire, even to the extent of inciting an intifada, or maybe attacking Al-Aqsa, Temple Mount, Haram al-Sharif, or both. And why?

Because it seems that although the polls show very clearly that Israel has tilted quite clearly towards the right, and to increasing settlements in Gaza, settlements in Syria, settlements everywhere, and no Palestinian state, et cetera, and supporting the military actions in Lebanon, where they are destroying whole swathes of urban territory, just leveling it down to the ground, although it's moved to the right, the parties—not only Likud, but also the National Religious and Ben-Gvir's party, Israel's Supreme—are not picking up seats, prospective seats in the Knesset. For some reason, you know, their shift in public opinion, which leans heavily, seemingly, in their direction, is not actually sort of resulting in seats, in projected seats in the Knesset, in the forthcoming Knesset.

Elections are due there in October, so not too long away. And the parties—Netanyahu is not doing well in the polls, and they are not. So what we're seeing is essentially a move to change the course

of the Israeli election. They're intent on really, as it's expressed, a sort of '48-type outcome, where Palestinians flee for their lives and leave the country and are forced to grab their bags and go. And it would be a form of ethnic cleansing. And it's already happening. I mean, it isn't at full spate, but we can see, you know, the settlers are incessantly attacking. The Americans got quite angry about this and told Israel, you know, to rein in these settler attacks on the Palestinians. But, of course, nothing happens.

And the settler attacks are increasing, very obviously, on villages, on Palestinian farms, and elsewhere. And it seems that the aim is to sort of take it to a level in which the right believes this will win them the election. This is what it's all about. Netanyahu is working to sort of, if you like, spatialize the electoral scene in such a way that no other party is able to win. It's doing this by creating new parties and new groups, spinoffs, splits from Likud and other things, all of which are being orchestrated by the prime minister to make sure that whatever happens, another government cannot be formed. So it's area denial rather than sort of winning the whole battlefield.

So that is something, and that can change the whole of the Middle East, I mean, very quickly, if we start seeing that sort of develop in October. And remember, that'll be just before the midterms in the United States. It's going to be a sensitive period. But the divisions within Israel have become very acute. There is a hard line between what I would call the European, more secular reformist section of the Jewish population in Israel, and the Messianic and more Talmudic section, hardline, hard right, hard nationalist element. And the hardliners are really determined they are not going to give up power, even if they lose the election. I don't think they're going to give up power. And, of course, the reformists.

I mean, many of these people did not come for the type of policies that Israel is now pursuing, in the sense that many of these were Sephardic Jews that had been in Europe and were looking for safety, to get away from Europe, to find some place where they would be safe. And, you know, they didn't sign up for, you know, Greater Israel to be acquired by military means and the killing of all the Arabs in the way of that project. So there is a big, big divide. And that divide is already pretty ugly, but could turn really nasty as we approach these elections. That could change the whole vibe throughout the Middle East, as you can well imagine. So all of the things you said were true, but, you know, put like that with the sort of compartmentalization, well, you know, reports are that something happened in Erbil.

Reports suggest, you know, that Syria has been bombed. I'm missing really the sort of putting it together, because what's really happening is that the whole region is—the whole region, the hotplate, is getting hotter and hotter. And by that I mean, you know, it's not just in that we recall that, you know, the attacks on the militia in Iraq at the end of the Arbreen procession by Saudi Arabia and America. They attacked them. Now, in the news, these are often described—the militia, the Hashd—are often described as Iranian proxies. One second. As Iranian proxies. But this is to misunderstand, to misread again a situation in the Middle East. I've met the Hashd in Karbala, and I can tell you what they are is very fervent Iraqi nationalists.

#Danny

Yes, they're Shia.

#Alastair Crooke

Yes, Iran is the mothership of Shias. But these people are Iraqis first. And they're militant and radical. And don't forget, the demographics of Iraq, I mean, are really up to around about 60% of the population are Shia. Of the remaining 40%, only perhaps 20 or 20-plus are Sunni, and the rest are Kurds. So the Sunnis are actually very much in the minority, and the Shia are the majority in the country. And the Americans are leaning on Iraq very hard to disarm and tame these resistance groups. And they attacked them. They attacked them with Saudi Arabia during Arbaeen, when they were not in a position to retaliate.

These militias have given, have really given the Iraqi government, you've got so long to retaliate for this, to take revenge for this, or else we'll do it. And the Iraqi government, under the pretext of trying to stop corruption, these corruption operations are just a cover for really trying to root out and to try to arrest and imprison some of the leadership of the Shi'i militias in Iraq. It's pretty obvious that's what's going on. And the prime minister is totally in the White House's pocket. He's ready to do what is required to try and do this. So, you know, this is going on at the same time the Yemenis are at war with Saudi Arabia on the other side. And the war is getting hot there too.

I mean, they've been firing ballistic missiles into the Saudi-aligned forces in the south of Yemen, sending them fleeing. I mean, killing many, sending them fleeing. It's still continuing. It's still escalating between Saudi Arabia and Yemen. So Saudi Arabia is stuck in this position. It says it attacked the Iraqi forces because they had attacked one of the Aramco refineries. But at the same time, Yemen has attacked the refinery at the other end of the pipeline on the coast of the Red Sea, and they've attacked the Jizan refinery by Yanbu, the one port that Saudi Arabia has into the Red Sea, and it has been on fire, and it's certainly quite heavily damaged.

Now, as a consequence, Saudi exports have dropped by about 74%, I'm told. I'm not an expert on the exact figures, but clearly there's a big drop in Saudi exports of oil. Now, Saudi Arabia has been short of money anyway in this period because it has needed, during this last period, nearly \$100 price of oil just to balance the books at full export levels. Well, export levels are not full any longer. And at the same time, Bessent, Treasury Secretary Bessent, is telling Saudi and everyone, "Don't sell your treasuries. I mean, we'll be after you if you sell your treasuries." I mean, the prime address is to Japan, where they banned them from selling.

They have a lot of U.S. Treasuries, about, I think, \$1.4 trillion, and they've been banned from selling them. So Bessent has come up with a complicated scheme where the Treasuries are lent to the Federal Reserve, and then the U.S. Treasury gives them the dollars, and they can use the dollars to

buy bonds, the yen, and to support it. But this is becoming a real crisis, the slipping of the yen and the attempts by America to sort of keep it up. But this all squeezes Saudi Arabia very badly in this way. And so the Saudis are fighting on with the Yemenis pushing hard. They've taken ground in the south. And everywhere you look—you mentioned Syria—well, the Hashd too have warned Syria.

You mentioned Iran warning them, saying, look, if you do this, we have the targets, we'll hit them. That report is accurate. But there are other reports showing that the militia in Iraq are on the borders of Syria. And they say, "You invade into Lebanon, you go into the villages alongside, we will invade Syria too." And then what you said was correct. In Kurdistan, in Erbil, in that part of Iraq on the south bordering Iran, the Iranians have been going in, making incursions into Iraq, assassinating some of the leaders, destroying their munitions, their depots, their supply lines. And it's heavy war. I mean, they're firing pretty continuously into that.

Because there was a report, maybe they had more concrete intelligence that America was still contemplating trying to mobilize the Kurds to go into Iran and set up a mini-state, a mini-Kurdish state, to sort of leverage the situation against Iran. All this leveraging against Iran, including an attempt by Ukraine to attack an Iranian ship in the Caspian. All of this is pressure. If we can't, if we haven't got the weapons, if we haven't got the interceptors, we haven't got the missiles to attack Iran, we've got to put pressure on another way. So one way is to put—or they thought they could put—pressure on Iran through the region, by, in Lebanon, by putting pressure on Hezbollah there, on Yemen. All of this pressure on Iran, but actually it's had the opposite effect.

It's actually putting pressure on America's regional allies. It's not putting pressure on Iran. It's putting pressure on allies like Saudi Arabia and Gulf states and others like Pakistan and so on. So it's not working. So now, though, we have the new one, which is, as I said, invents a sort of series of stories about how, you know, the Straits of Hormuz is open. And on Sunday, there were 20 million barrels of oil. They were exported through Iran—the American-controlled corridor. It's just not true. I mean, I think there were a total of six vessels, perhaps, on the weekend that passed through. A few are passing through close to Oman with great American sort of support and fanfare. But, I mean, it's nothing in terms of what it used to be or anything like it.

It's just a trickle that gets through Hormuz. And don't forget, we have the Red Sea, which is also going down to a trickle. Why? Because actually the insurance companies have started to say, well, you need to pay war premiums for your vessels, not just tankers but commercial vessels in the Red Sea. We're going to have to impose war premiums on vessels. So some of the Saudi vessels that have been hit by the Houthis are not tankers but commercial ships. So the whole thing is where it was before America stopped the attacks. They are trying to put pressure on Iran, but Iran won't talk to them. And so I'm coming slowly to your question.

What is the point of their new posture? Their posture is, well, actually, it's going to be the other way around. We're going to put pressure on Trump, not wait for Trump to try one of these measures to put pressure on us. We are going to do that, and we're going to do that by taking proactive military

action against targets, whether they be American targets or targets in the Gulf, depending on the circumstances. And certainly vessels passing through Hormuz will be targeted. I mean, quite nicely on Monday when, you know, we usually wait for Barak Ravid on Axios to come online and say, "Oh, there's a deal. You know, they're begging for a deal."

And this time, half an hour before opening, the Iranians attacked a vessel trying to get out of it. So they manipulated the markets in the opposite way to the usual way that we've come to expect. But anyway, so that's where we are. There seems to be a sort of complacency taking hold in Washington that, okay, okay, well, you know, since the oil—since the gasoline prices are sky high, everything's all right. I think we can just sit it out. It's no problem. But, you know, at the end of the day, what really counts is the physical oil. Is the physical oil there, particularly the middle distillates that go to make up diesel and kerosene?

And by all accounts, there aren't. So, you know, I don't think people are prepared for it because you look at the European press, not a mention of this oil. You know, the Iran story, it's sort of off the pages completely. It's all sort of holiday news and the weather and things like this and, you know, human interest stories, nothing there. So if, you know, we're suddenly told we're going to have a sort of new rationing system for filling your vehicle with diesel, I think it will come as a huge shock to Europeans. I don't think they have any idea that could happen. When? I don't know, but all the experts on that side of it suggest it's quite close.

#Danny

I think that's a really important regional context you just gave, which then falls into the global context, especially with the emerging oil crisis, which has J.D. Vance—you probably saw the report—has told the media that there is going to be a focus now on getting oil prices down. That is the main focus. The nuclear situation, nuclear deal, Iran's nuclear enrichment, all of that, that's priority number two now. Now, what I find so interesting, Alistair, is that we see a very consistent line of reasoning and of messaging to the world by Iran, going on the offensive, putting pressure on the United States to meet their demands in so many different ways, while the United States is looking quite the opposite, where there is not only no consistency, but there's also a bit of panic.

I pulled up that Jerusalem Post article earlier. What I find so striking is that Iran has now said that they have been producing, ever since the war began, more missiles than they have been launching, which suggests that they are not operating at any kind of deficit right now militarily. And this is despite the fact that Jerusalem Post cited Israeli numbers: 2,600 strikes by Israel, 30,000 by the United States against Iran, that month and a half or so of fighting. This is looking very bad, Alistair. Your thoughts on this?

#Alistair Crooke

I think that's quite true. But I think the aspect that is missing is really that Iran is finding its path back to a form of thinking that was much more prevalent in Iran from the time of the revolution. It's not Western thinking. It is thinking that is quite different. It is not, if you like, the Western view that we simply have, you know, rationality, and that, you know, you have two senses. You have the normal senses, and then you have a form of mental process which you deal with them. They have a different type of thinking, which is about thinking altogether, all at once, in a unified way, a type of thinking which engages the whole being, that is not just, you know, seeing, or as one philosopher put it many years ago, seeing with both eyes.

And what he meant by that was not both eyes and the eye at the back of the head. In other words, to see not just the appearance of something, but what lies behind it. What does it mean? What do all these things mean? And they also think in a different way. They have a third cognitive faculty, which we don't have in the West, which was called the world of the imagined. And so they see things much more in terms of imagination, partly by an alteration of the attention that you pay to reality, to change it. How you dispose your attention determines what you will see. But if you change the way you look at the world, change your attention to the world, it suddenly becomes more spacious.

It suddenly becomes different. And this is what is happening in Iran. They are moving back to these ways of thinking that have been there all the time, even before Islam, some of these ways of thinking, of thinking in terms of image. Why image? Because image actually allows you to sort of reconcile the subjective and the objective, because it just becomes facets in an image and not things that are clashing in terms of the way in which we think. And so that, and the way of, if you like, imagining consciousness, because in Iran consciousness is a product of your attention or your disposition towards the world.

You spatialize the world around you. But how you see the world, how you attend to the world, determines what you see. So that if you change your attention to the world, then your consciousness will change, and what you see will be different. And this will actually open new vistas for you and open a new horizon of what it means, why you are there, who you are, what your essence is. And always in Iran, I remember the story, you know, it's actually a man's or woman's consciousness that was important, because they always saw your level of consciousness determined what you understood.

But I remember Lula, President Lula of Brazil, some years ago, was going to see the Supreme Leader, and he'd got a brief from Washington to say to them this and that about the nuclear negotiations, written by the U.S. Secretary of State, and he was told to sort of get that agreed. And he went and came to Tehran, and he was talking. He was there with his foreign minister, and suddenly he was told he had a meeting with the Supreme Leader. And the foreign minister related the story to me, and he said, "And then Lula turned to me and said, 'Oh my goodness. I mean, what do we say to a Supreme Leader? What am I supposed to say? How do I manage this?'" And Patriota

said, "I haven't a clue. I don't know what we're supposed to say." So they went into the meeting like this.

And what happened was Lula simply talked about his experience, I mean, his childhood in the favelas of Brazil, and about what life was like then and how it was. And at the end of this, the Supreme Leader said, "Fine, you can go ahead with all your work here." And what it was, and, you know, they were surprised. They said, "He hasn't asked anything about what we're doing or what we're finding out or what." And, you know, the answer was he could see that this was a man with a consciousness that was capable of understanding and sufficient. So it's a very different way of, you know, looking at the world. And I think what we're seeing in Iran is a shift of young people.

They, you know, are very dissatisfied with the Western world and how it is and what it means. And they are sort of moving back to these earlier forms of thinking, thinking in image and understanding. You know, the most important thing, you know, it's like you go to a clearing in the woods and there's a stone in front of you, and you can just look at it. And you think, okay, there's a stone. But actually, what you do is, in the East, you think, well, let's look from behind. What's behind it? Why is it there? What's it doing? And what is the meaning of finding a stone in a clearing in the wood? So all of this is about looking beyond. So I think Iran's horizons are suddenly opening up, becoming more spacious, if you like.

So they're seeing the world differently. The attention, how they dispose it, has changed, and therefore they're seeing the world differently. And therefore they're feeling stronger, and they're feeling more confident in what they're able to do. So in that way, they're taking on the Americans and are happy because they can see the Americans are weak. And so the old sort of sense, you know, that was among some in Iran, "Oh, well, you know, the West, it's richer, it's easier to make money, it's more..." But for ordinary Iranians, they see this as just a sort of declining civilization, which is corrupt, obviously corrupt, obviously hollow, no values. And they remember Persia, which has been a powerful civilization for thousands of years.

And I think that's, for me, that's the main story that is sort of being missed: the sort of shift in the whole consciousness of Iranians to going back and thinking, because Persia was the dominant power in the Middle East. And on two occasions, you know, the West tried to reverse this. The clean break came in '96, this paper that was written for Netanyahu saying that Iran, Iraq, Syria, and Lebanon had to be destroyed in order to preserve the position of Israel. And so America, twice really, from the '70s onwards, was always trying to invert the power paradigm, to change the whole power paradigm of the region, so that actually the Sunnis, who've always thought of themselves as the establishment, but in the Gulf areas were really sort of Bedouin sheikhs.

I mean, you know, what we now call, you know, the Gulf and the UAE, I mean, was called the Trucial States, I mean, before, you know, until about 70 years ago, and there were a number of states. And, of course, when the Shah was there, I mean, Iran was—the adjudicator was prominent in the region. And so then, in 2006, after the war in Lebanon, the vice president called a meeting.

And at the meeting was Prince Bandar from Turkey and John Hanna. And he was complaining. He was complaining bitterly. And he said, "Listen, you know, this war against Hezbollah that you just concluded, the Israelis had just concluded," he said, "it was meant to weaken Iran, not strengthen them. And that's what's happened."

And he was very disappointed. And Bandar said, "Don't worry. Don't worry. You shouldn't be concerned, because the king knows that the way to weaken Iran is to remove Syria. It has to be taken out of the equation." And, of course, Cheney said, "Oh, hold on a minute. How are we going to do that? You know, that's not so easily said and done." Bandar said, "No, we'll do it." And Cheney said, "How?" And he said, "We're going to do it. We're going to insert Islamists into Syria, and we'll do it by that." And Cheney sort of backed off and said, "Well, I'm not sure that we can get too close to this sort of thing." And then Bandar said, "You don't have to do anything. We'll take care of it." And so that was the second time.

I mean, in the '70s, they decided, you know, the future: America would have as its allies the Sunni sheikhs and emirs of the region against Iran, the previous power in the region. They wanted to turn the region upside down. Then they did that again, and as you can see, they succeeded in Syria. The Saudis and the Americans succeeded in destroying Syria and weakening Lebanon, and that is the program. But as I say, Iran has a memory, and the memory is of powerful, strong civilizational structure, a power in the region. And so I think that is making a big impact on how they think and why we're seeing this change. It's not a tactical thing. It's not a sort of, you know, a little quick twist of it.

It is going back to the roots. It's going back to Iran's roots. It's changing the whole, if you like, thinking and meaning. And they're looking at what it means for the future to be Iranian and how to construct that. And that means going back to a form of thinking that has always been there, but of course was eclipsed and clouded by Western influence. I mean, you recall in the scientific revolution, the whole metaphysics changed because of the scientific revolution, as the Nobel Prize winner Monod said at the time. There was no reason for it, but the scientific Enlightenment insisted that science was based on a dead, inert cosmos, which was composed of dust, had no meaning and no purpose.

And at a stroke, that killed the metaphysics of most of the rest of the world and left many Muslims in huge tension internally because, yes, you know, they went to universities and had to study in the Western way of thinking that, you know, the world was just inert dust. And then they went home to a very different world where the world is alive, and everywhere about you, you can see it. As the Koran says, you know, wherever you look, you will see living things, intelligent things surrounding you. That is the sign of the other presence, the divine presence around you. So, I mean, there was a great deal of tension, and I think now we're seeing a big shift. And, of course, it's not just in Iran. It's going to be in many places, the sort of sense of moving away from Western materialist rationality towards a different form of thinking.

#Danny

Yeah, very, very important, Alistair, all of those points there. And while I still have you, I want your comments on the other side of the contradiction you were talking about, which is where the U.S. and, of course, the unipolar order that it leads, the state of it now that it finds itself in what is being called in Politico the quagmire of all quagmires. But I wanted your comment on this in particular, Alistair, that the United States is sending the USS George Washington to replace the USS Abraham Lincoln, which has been deployed for more than 250 days and now has made headlines for several days because of the absolutely horrendous conditions on board and the fact that sailors have been pushed to such a brink that they have been attempting to take their own lives.

Comment on what this means, the state of the U.S. Navy, because now I'm hearing that this situation is not just confined to the USS Lincoln, that these issues of shortages, deplorable conditions, lack of morale, this exists across the U.S.'s maritime military power, the Navy, and that it might reflect something a bit more broader about what state the United States really is in as it tries to play this very ambiguous game of chicken on this war now. So what's your thoughts on this development in particular as it's developed, especially over the last several days to a week.

#Alastair Crooke

Well, I think, in a word, it's, you know, the dysfunctionality is one part of it. I mean, if you recall, it was an earlier carrier that was removed because, I mean, the sewage system just wasn't working, and it was getting flooded with sewage, and it was disgusting, and they couldn't manage it in their sort of local ports, so it had to go back to the United States to be treated. Probably the contractor had put in, you know, the wrong gauge of piping into this billion, you know, carrier costing billions and billions. But what I think it shows more than anything else was this inability to, if you like, to hear, to listen, or to understand or respond. I mean, the lack of empathy is what's striking, the lack of the sort of sense of empathy, being able to respond or to hear to the world around them. I mean, because what was the reaction?

You know, because we've all seen it. I mean, it's everywhere. It's not hidden. The families are complaining. And the pictures of the food they give them—you know, there are 5,000 men on that ship. You know, you have to feed them. Just, you know, give them a meal once every two days or something, and then it's some sort of rubbish stuck on a plate, a few carrots and a lump of something that resembles, I don't know what, a bit of meat. But, I mean, you know, they're young men. I mean, clearly they're going to need to be fed. So, I mean, this isn't a made-up thing. But what was so striking was, and what is so important was, what was the reaction? Oh, fake news. Fake news. This is not—whoever leaked this, this is all fake news.

#Danny

I think that was what Hegseth said: "It's fake news."

#Alastair Crooke

If he didn't say it, others were saying it, as if this was an attack on the United States in some way, rather than simply, you know, saying, you know, I mean, you don't seem to be paying much attention. I mean, those ships have been there for nearly a year, I mean, and not been back to port. I mean, you don't seem to care about your men. You don't seem to be hearing, and when you do, you attack them, and you say, you know, they have to obey orders. I mean, it's not—it's a very bad—not only is it just a bad look, it suggests, you know, a deeper malaise in much of the United States military forces. The equipment is not good. Things are not well thought out. There's no real command.

I mean, you know, it seems the command is run by technocrats, you know, not people who've actually, you know, experienced hardship, experienced having to survive in difficult circumstances, made the sacrifice. No, it's just, you know, it's just no doubt those were—you know, the food is, "Oh, we can't do anything about it because it's been privatized to a contractor, and the contractor's been doing it." I'm sure, I'm sure it wouldn't surprise me at all that some friendly friend has got the contract for supplying these ships and is cutting all the corners on it. I mean, you know, this is the sign of the decline, you know, of the United States. And it's noticed, and it's noticed around the world. And it's becoming dysfunctional in many ways. And, you know, what was it?

Someone quoted it the other day, the saying from Rome, that the only time that the Romans really noticed that their empire was on the brink of collapse is when they saw that the bridges and roads were breaking down and no one was fixing anything. And so I think it sends quite strong messages. And it's during this, at a time when all the attention is on manipulating markets, making a quick buck, or insider trading, having the right connections that you can get the military contracts with your family or with friends. You know in advance that they're going to order a whole number of drones, and so you're up there with a pre-prepared sort of a company ready to supply drones to the military. You know, it all, it has a really bad aroma to it. It doesn't smell good.

#Danny

No. Well, and now, Alistair, to another development. I think with the situation that you just commented on, it very much looks like a decline. And it certainly is not confined to the United States Navy or the military apparatus, as you pointed out there. It's everywhere. It is certainly empire-wide, and it, you know, hits, of course, people in the United States as well, very hard at all levels. Now, I wanted to pull this up because it's another development that not many people are talking about, which is that Iran is going to join the BRICS New Development Bank. This was said by the country's central bank chief yesterday. And so I wanted your comments on what that means, because Iran is a member of BRICS. Of course, its partnerships with China and Russia in particular have gotten very,

very deep and much stronger even over the course of this war. So your thoughts on what joining the New Development Bank means in the grander scheme of these major shifts we're seeing worldwide, especially vis-à-vis Iran?

#Alastair Crooke

It's the signal, a very important signal, that we've been getting bit by bit from China. China is moving very clearly, in a measured way, to unfold a new financial order for the region, for the world. They have started giving credit in yuan, in renminbi. They have panda bonds, as they're called. You even have European banks starting to give credit in Chinese, either in the hard currency or in the digital currency. They're making their digital yuan very much more available. They're actually paying interest on it. They're moving to another system offshore in Hong Kong whereby you can buy gold. You don't have to buy the actual physical gold. You can buy warrants, gold warrants that have a value directly attached to them, and you can use this as collateral.

For big companies, you can use this as collateral for buying, for getting credit from the bank. I mean, in other words, it's a substitute for U.S. Treasuries, perhaps a more attractive one, because whereas your U.S. Treasuries are devalued because the dollar is devaluing, the gold has been rising in value and people trust it more. So they've been moving in this way, and now they pay interest. They've informed the banks that they now have to pay interest on digital accounts, rather like a savings account in the U.S. But that's hugely attractive for people wondering where to go and worried about the dollar and where to put their savings.

So China has been rolling out these sort of procedures, moving, buying gold, and creating much more of a deeper credit market for people to borrow. So it is easier to borrow. As I say, European banks are now actually giving Chinese-denominated loans out. I think Deutsche Bank is one, but other ones in Hungary and others are giving out yuan loans to companies that prefer to take their loans in that than in a possibly devaluing dollar. So, I mean, there's a big shift taking place. And what you've just described is really symbolic of that, an important shift. This is where credit is going to come from in the future. It's going to come from China. And Iran will be well placed in this.

Recall that throughout this period, Iran has made sure that Chinese tankers pass through the Straits of Hormuz full and without impediment. So China has been getting all its oil through Hormuz. So I think it's a big and important element. So Iran will be able to get credit and will be able to sort of rebuild. And as you read out at the beginning about how amazed they were at how much the infrastructure had been repaired during this very short time. Well, this is what it's all about. It's going to be new credit, new financial structures, new means of payment. The Chinese have also made their mBridge system, by which central banks can clear imbalances between each other digitally and in real time, very quickly, open to everyone in BRICS and more.

So this is a new way of clearing. Now, the Chinese are not doing it sort of in an openly aggressive way to sort of try and suggest that they're bringing down the financial system. As usual, the Chinese

are quite careful and measured. So they're doing this bit by bit by bit rather than announcing these things publicly. Much of this doesn't appear in the Western press very much, but they're doing this quietly so as not to have people say, "Oh, well, the Chinese broke the financial system." No, the financial system, if it breaks in the West, is breaking because of our own decisions about it, not because of what China's done about it.

#Danny

Yeah, that's a very good point. Now, maybe in closing, the last five or so minutes I have with you, Alistair, maybe you could comment on the other side. I mean, I think a theme for today is that you have Iran in a very specific trajectory that is very concrete and does mark a very big break from what has been dominant worldwide, militarily and economically, for so long. And then you have the other side, which is basically holding on to what is old. And that is definitely reflected in what Bessent said today, U.S. Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent, who said the U.S. will be applying economic measures, quote, "that have never been seen on Iran, a combination of economic isolation the world has never seen before and the continued blockade of the Strait of Hormuz that will keep anything from going in or out of Iranian ports." So, Alistair, what does he mean by economic measures never seen before? And is this all just hot air, or is there something to it?

#Alastair Crooke

Well, I don't know because, you know, much of what has been said about how many, you know, they keep saying, "Oh, well, Hormuz is open and there were 20 million barrels exited in the last few days." Well, all of that is just untrue. I mean, you can check it on, you know, the tanker monitoring sites. I mean, we know exactly how many, even the ones with their transponders, we know how many are passing, more or less, anyway. So I think, I don't know what it is because, you know, I mean, it's been for so many years that the United States has looked for every possible means to sanction and to strangle the Iranians. So I don't know what new element about it there is. But the consequence, of course, will be a tightening by Iran of their economic blockade of the United States and Europe through Hormuz and the Red Sea.

And I wouldn't be surprised if we see more proactive military action. I have heard—I have no inside information, so it's just my speculation—but I've heard Iranians talking about the possibility of taking action against the American vessels implementing a blockade on Hormuz. It wouldn't surprise me at all if we saw some military action there. So we can see this. So I think the aim is that the Iranians are going to keep fighting Trump and Bessent, continually embarrassing them by military actions, economic actions, things that will affect them, and to put the pressure so that all the time that Trump is saying, "Oh, it's all fine, we've opened Hormuz," you know, it's already there.

I mean, even, you know, in the New York Times and Washington and the Wall Street Journal, I mean, you know, they just laugh at these statements because they know it's just untrue. So I think, you know, this sort of pressure will be continued in this period. I don't know what they have in mind

for their economic—I mean, and also, I don't think that China or Russia are going to allow Iran to collapse. I think that's the one thing we haven't mentioned. But I know some people think that China and Russia are putting pressure on Iran. I don't think so. I think, on the contrary, it's not like that at all, that they are actually helping, and helping in all sorts of ways, which we don't know about particularly. Some we do, but many we don't know what they're doing. It's very important. I mean, look what it's done for China.

I mean, you know, China's been given the absolute example of a naval blockade, which, of course, will be in their minds when they think about Taiwan. Russia has already said, many leading Russians have said, we have to learn the lessons that Iran has been teaching us in this war. We have to do some of the same things ourselves against the West. So it's changed the whole vibe, I think, globally. You even get the Chinese being—I can't remember when it is, you may recall—but when the foreign minister was sort of attacked by Rubio, I think about 10 days or so ago, and he said, "You can't give any weapons to Iran. You mustn't do that." I mean, this was the shortest exchange in diplomatic history of about 25 minutes. And, you know, as I understand it, the Chinese said, "Mind your own business."

#Danny

Alistair, this was a great show. I want to make sure everybody knows that Conflicts Forum Substack is in the video description, and people should read it. People should, of course, subscribe to it and follow all of the latest reports that are put together there. Everyone, hit the like button before you go. That helps boost the show in YouTube's algorithm. Thanks to those—sorry we didn't get to the question here, John—but thanks for your super chat. And thank you so much to Truth, Justice and Peace as well for your super chat. Thanks to everyone who viewed today, all the moderators who helped moderate the chat. I will see you all again live next week, but there will be some original interviews coming out in the coming days as I take a little bit of a break.

All right, everybody, take care. Hit the like button before you go. That helps boost the show in YouTube's algorithm. Alistair, any final words before I hit end stream here? No, well, I think you deserve a break. That's all I'd say. Thank you. I appreciate that. All right, Alistair, we will be in touch. Everybody, hit that like button before you go. Check out Conflicts Forum Substack, and I will see you all again soon. Bye-bye.