

Alastair Crooke: Decline, Irrationality & War on Iran

Alastair Crooke is a former British diplomat and the Founder of "Conflicts Forum" based in Beirut. He was formerly an advisor on Middle East issues to Javier Solana, the EU Foreign Policy Chief. Crooke argues it is necessary to consider the West's decline, desperation and irrationality to understand why the US is heading toward another war against Iran. Follow the Substack of Alastair Crooke: <https://conflictsforum.substack.com/> Follow Prof. Glenn Diesen: Substack: <https://glenndiesen.substack.com/> X/Twitter: https://x.com/Glenn_Diesen Patreon: <https://www.patreon.com/glenndiesen> Support the research by Prof. Glenn Diesen: PayPal: <https://www.paypal.com/paypalme/glenndiesen> Buy me a Coffee: buymeacoffee.com/gdieseng Go Fund Me: <https://gofund.me/09ea012f> Books by Prof. Glenn Diesen: <https://www.amazon.com/stores/author/B09FPQ4MDL>

#Glenn

Welcome back. We are joined by Alastair Crooke, a former British and EU diplomat. Thank you very much for coming back on the program.

#Alastair Crooke

Always a pleasure to be here with you.

#Glenn

So you wrote this article, **The Precursors for War Are in Place**, in which you talk about the possibility of yet another war against Iran. It's published, by the way, on your Conflicts Forum Substack. We'll leave a link in the description, and I hope people subscribe, because it's one of many excellent articles. But we've seen others trying to predict what might come next from the United States. Some expect that after Venezuela, they might go for Colombia. Some say Cuba is more likely. They might even strike Mexico, or try to take back the Panama Canal.

Some look to Africa, with the bombing of Nigeria. Others worry about Greenland—closer to home here in Europe, I guess. But we also have this: besides the great power rivalry with the Chinese or the Russians, many would expect, as you write, that Iran could be at the top of the list of the most likely wars to see this year, given that Netanyahu was recently in Florida and, of course, trying to advocate for another war with Iran. But how are you reading this situation? What are the warning signs, if you will, of another war with Iran?

#Alastair Crooke

Well, I would just say, first of all—and you described it very well—I mean, there's a sense right now from the United States, after that rather bizarre press conference Trump held, that there are now pretty clear threats, particularly against Cuba, with whom the Secretary of State has a sort of long-standing vendetta. He's Cuban and comes from Miami, in Florida, where there are a lot of Cubans. And, of course, Colombia also seems to be on the list, and Mexico. What are we going to see? What's going to happen in Venezuela is also not very clear. I was talking to friends in Venezuela just an hour or two ago, and it seems at the moment that—what I was trying to explain is—it's almost following exactly the same pattern as what happened in Syria.

This is the model for what happened in Venezuela. As you recall, what happened with Assad was, first of all, that he was urged by the Gulf states—by Qatar and the UAE—to cut his links with Hezbollah and with Iran, and to move toward the West. And he was doing that, but gradually. At the same time, Qatar was working with Russia and with Turkey. And, of course, then there was the removal of Assad, which happened very quickly. He was spirited out of the presidency, and no one knew what had happened—he just disappeared. He's now in Moscow. But the main thing I was trying to say is, you know, this is all part of this new model that Trump announced in May in Riyadh. This is really a new business model of doing politics. In Syria, it was like getting rid of the CEO of a big company and then having a management buyout.

And that's really what we've been seeing in Venezuela. First of all, Maduro has been taken and removed, and then presented on a walk in New York shortly afterward. Then the vice president, Delcy Rodríguez, has now resigned, now become acting president, and she has been in touch during this period with Qatar too. She's been talking, and her brother also has long-standing relations with Qatar and the royal family there, and she apparently has business interests there. It seems very likely that this is the arrangement Qatar was organizing. The letter she's just portrayed and written—about how she wants to have good relations with the United States and with everyone else—has the fingerprints of Jolani's letter. It's exactly the same.

In fact, there are paragraphs in it that are identical—probably from the same production team in Doha as the first one. And again, it seems they were bought, or, if you like, the management—meaning the defense and security establishment—was. With the exception of the Cubans, the bodyguards, all of them were killed. All 32 Cubans were killed by the Americans when they came to seize Maduro. And it's the same impasse and the same prognostication, I think. Just as Syria has been turned into, if you like, a failed state—it didn't work. Giuliani was not in charge of it. There are still ethnic killings regularly. It's an extremely dangerous place, with others intervening—Israel on one side, the Turks on the other. It's a failed state.

And what you have is a president in Venezuela who's got the right connections. On the one hand, she's very well connected with the business community—the landowners, the business leaders of Caracas, and the oil industry. She's also the Minister for Oil. The Americans are lining up a delegation from Wall Street to come and look at how to take over the oil industry in Venezuela very

shortly. But there doesn't seem to be a plan two. It seems to be this new style—a sort of business approach: how do we split the goods up? How do we pay the management, the existing management, put in our own managers, change the CEO, and the firm will do well again? And this is the same thing, it seems, that they're proposing.

It looks as if Rodríguez—there's no real plan. The Americans were just going to hand it over to her, on the assumption that her business connections and good relations with the security forces would be enough, and it wouldn't need to be run by America from Washington. But rather, in the same way as we've seen in Syria, it turns out there are rival groups and other ideas. One of them is Diosdado Cabello, who was head of security, head of intelligence. He was, if you like—taking a Ukrainian example—the Budanov, the hitman, the head of the intelligence and security services. And he's come back. He was with Maduro, then he went to Cuba. He's very close to the Cubans. He's radical. He's a revolutionary.

And he's now back, with strong support from his former security and intelligence colleagues there. For the moment, he's not saying much. I listened to him this morning, and he was saying, "Well, you know, we'll fight the enemy. We'll fight the enemy and their invasion. We have to see." And then there are other militias across the border. I was in Colombia for three years, so I know FARC and the ELN, you know. They're all buried in the jungle there somewhere—a difficult place to manage. So we'll have to see. But this could spread. I mean, this could spread, as you rightly say, across Latin America—into Mexico and Colombia. Trump is already threatening the president and others, as well as Cuba, which is almost certainly in the sights at the moment.

So then, let's return to Iran and to what's been happening in Israel. Just to set the scene a little before I go into that article you mentioned—first of all, during this period, Netanyahu's situation has worsened quite dramatically. I mean, he's a Houdini. Everyone predicts his demise, that he's finished, but somehow he always manages to escape and get himself out of the bind. But it's closing in. There are not only the corruption cases, which have been quite longstanding and whose trials are still ongoing, but also the general legal opinion—among Israeli lawyers, not just mine—is that if those cases are taken to their conclusion, he will be convicted.

And probably that will mean he has to go to prison. But then there's a whole new set of attacks, or problems if you like, coming from what's called Qahage. This is the scandal, in Israeli terms, that it's been discovered—and it's not really disputed now—that at least three members of Netanyahu's inner circle in the prime minister's office were being paid by Doha, by Qatar. And, of course, it's not clear. The questions are, obviously they didn't pay for nothing. We all know that when Mrs. Netanyahu—when Sara—goes to the United States, she stays for free at the Four Seasons Hotel owned by Qatar in Miami. But the question is, what was the return on this money?

What were the Qataris asking for? What did they want in return for this expenditure? No one knows. And the second question is, really, did Netanyahu know? How could he not know? And if he did, why didn't he do something? If he didn't know, why not? And shouldn't he resign? Now, this has been

taken up quite seriously by people of standing. I mean, Bogie Ya'alon, who was defense minister, and even Naftali Bennett, who is most likely the next prime minister of Israel—they're using words you don't often hear. They're talking about treachery. And so there has been pressure. They also add, of course, that it has to be investigated and handled in a legal way.

But this is very, very toxic language in Israel—highly toxic—and it's dividing people. The serious figures, the leader of the opposition and people like Ya'alon and others, are calling it treachery. So he's in deep trouble, and he needs a way out. This is one of the problems he was expecting to encounter at Mar-a-Lago, because he's done soundings within the Likud party, and the party is boiling over with the suggestion that the American program for Gaza is a defeat for Israel. They say, you know, if they're going to start rebuilding Gaza—which is what Trump, Witkoff, and Kushner want to do—rebuild it first, bring in some sort of technocratic government, and only at the end disarm Hamas.

The Likud people are saying, come on, look what's going to happen. We're going to have supplies coming into Gaza, the IDF having to move out when the rebuilding starts, foreigners coming in to do it. It's going to be, you know, the IDF is going to be contained. And at the end of that, we don't even know that Hamas won't still be armed. It's a restoration of Hamas, not a defeat of Hamas. I'm just expressing what the Likud are saying and Netanyahu's opinion about this. So really, he needs a sort of big balloon to lift him out of these growing crises. And what is that big balloon? Iran. War with Iran. Because, you know, first of all, it's popular.

I mean, you know, Israel is now—looking at the Hebrew press—they're agog with excitement about what happened at Mar-a-Lago. Because at Mar-a-Lago, they've lured the Americans into it. He got a green light for an attack on Iran, no doubt about it. You can read it anywhere in all of the authoritative press—no qualification. He got a green light from Trump for another attack on the missile system, the ballistic missiles, or the nuclear components. So that's going ahead. Yesterday, Sunday, was Cabinet Day, and there were Cabinet meetings that went on, and the reports are that they war-gamed the war with Iran.

They war-gamed it. But all the precursors are very obviously in place. At the same time Mar-a-Lago was taking place, what did we see? Suddenly, demonstrations started in Iraq. You know, I don't believe in coincidences, and I know a little bit about why they're happening. Mostly these are being stimulated from outside. They're mostly in the small cities, not the big ones, and many of them are armed. There's been very clear evidence that armed people came and tried to force merchants to close their shops. An Egyptian shop owner tried to rescue them, and there was a firefight—he was killed, and the others were killed. It's that sort of thing. It's nothing to do with the kind of protests we've had in earlier years, perhaps.

These are purely orchestrated, purely M.E.K., and this time around it's all about Pahlavi and bringing back the Shah's family into power, apparently. Although, as you can imagine, among real Iranians there's almost no support for the Shah's son returning to office. This is really an American sort of

fantasy. Anyway, that's going on. Then there's the attack on the currency. In parallel to that, there's an attack on the rial. The rial is falling. That's why some people are demonstrating—because there's been a big drop in the value of the rial. But clearly, as always, as with Russia, when the pressure was on and there was the attack on the ruble, it was orchestrated out of London and Washington. And this one is clearly orchestrated out of Dubai, because that's where all the merchants are.

This is where business with Iran is done. And it's not too difficult to manage a currency collapse. Then you have all the newspaper articles saying, "Oh yes, Iran is working with Al-Qaeda, and we're going to have sleeper cells that are going to be activated," and so on. They don't even bother to explain the fact that Al-Qaeda and Iran have been, in practice, lethal enemies all this time. The idea that Iran would be operating ISIS or Al-Qaeda is total nonsense. But there's the final piece, if you like—the precursor showing that a war is coming—and that is, today, in the Israeli press, they're saying, "It's done. It's too late. You're too late now."

The deadline was the 31st of December, and it's too late now. You were supposed to have Hezbollah disarmed by then, and it hasn't happened. Now they're saying they're going to come in and attack Hezbollah and disarm them militarily, and the Americans have given them a green light for that. That's pretty clear, because it was always the case—I remember from years back—that the CIA told me, if there was an attack on Iran by America, they would first have to disable Hezbollah and the Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza, so that Israel wouldn't be fighting a three-front war but could focus entirely on Iran. So all of these precursors are in place.

And I suppose the question you're asking—which was part of the article—is why Netanyahu needs to find a way out. And, you know, the war with Iran is popular. In Israel, I mean, the majority of people will support it. It's also popular in the United States and in parts of Europe. Congress will almost certainly endorse it, and so will many European governments. So this is, you know, his escape route. When everything closes in and everything becomes paralyzed—because really, although he's had wars on various fronts against the resistance movement—ultimately, these wars haven't come to an end. They're incomplete.

And the Israelis are saying, look, you know, whether it's Syria, Lebanon, or Gaza, you haven't actually finished the job. I mean, you may have weakened the enemies of Israel, of course, but you haven't completed it. So what do you do? Either you withdraw and go backwards, or you go upwards. I think it's more complicated with Mr. Trump, as always. In the case of America, there are actually two elements to it. One is that Trump is now under a lot of pressure in terms of the financial and economic system, and so he's been looking for whatever way he can. One of the reasons for Venezuela, of course, is that they want all the reserves of Venezuela priced in dollars. They don't want any more devaluation of the dollar.

So what are they going to do? What is Trump concerned about? He's concerned, too, about what's happening in MAGA—"Make America Great Again." The young Republican, and increasingly now also Democratic, popular space is unhappy about the close association of America with Israel, with Israeli

policy, and with what's happened in Gaza. In a very serious way, the images coming out of Gaza have really galvanized the young. It's true here—in Italy, the Italians tell me—it's Gaza that's really changing the political landscape. And it's the young, Generation Z, or Zed if you want to call it that. These are the ones pushing it. The young, up to 35 or 40—these are the people who are unhappy with policy. And so it splits.

I think what's happening is that the old guard in the Republican Party—the establishment, if you like, the traditional Republicans, which is quite a substantial element at the top of the party—want the MAGA group to be defeated. They want them weakened so they can take full control of the party again. They're frightened by this sort of organic populism that's surging up in America, on the right and on the left too. They want to try to contain it, to bring it back under control as it was before—with control of the media, control of the resources. So they've introduced this wedge idea into the mix to try to weaken and destroy MAGA by saying, "Either you support Israel unreservedly, or you're anti-Semitic. And anti-Semitism, we won't accept."

There's a war on Tucker Carlson and others who they say have been guilty of making anti-Semitic statements, although that's hotly disputed by him and by others. They're trying to use this to divide the MAGA young populist group, particularly in the lead-up to the midterms, when the old guard—the old party stalwarts—and the mega donors, the big donors who've long supported the party, are working together. They want new candidates to come up for the midterms, and they'd like to see America First gone and Trump weakened. They come out of the Sea Island grouping that was against Trump—the joint uniparty grouping, the Carter Group—that opposed him in 2016. And now they want to bring that back. They want to do this. So what's happening is, I think Trump has done two things.

Trump is, first of all, joining in this argument—very obviously, at the Mar-a-Lago meeting with the Israelis and Netanyahu. I mean, he's giving... I won't say "support," that's not the right word. He gave unvarnished love for Israel. I mean, it was pretty plain, not unconscious. But at the same time, he let it be known that there was a disagreement with Israel about Gaza, about the timing of Gaza, and about the annexation and the settlers in the West Bank. So he was really saying—reflecting what Vance has been trying to do—to sort of square the circle by saying, no, it's all right to criticize Israel where it's appropriate, and that is not anti-Semitism. Anti-Semitism is different. Now, Netanyahu and the big donors in America—you can't make this division.

You have to make it complete. If you want to avoid being called anti-Semitic, you have to support Israel completely. You can't criticize it and still say you're not anti-Semitic. So they're trying to push us very hard. I think Trump was trying to find some sort of solution that would give room for the MAGA people to be somehow brought back into the political system—by bringing them in, if you like, finding a compromise. Yes, it's okay to criticize what's happened in Gaza; that's not anti-Semitic. But you still have to support Israel unreservedly. The state of Israel has to be supported. And, I mean, there's a lot of jockeying about what happens next. You know, what is the future of MAGA? Who's going to lead it?

Who's going to inherit the MAGA group, if anyone? And can it be brought under control by the old guard—the country club Republicans? Can they manage to bring it under control? The questions are being posed, and there really aren't any answers. Personally—this is just my view—I think it's highly unlikely that the old guard can do that. I mean, these people have now actually seen the machinations of politics: how you have false candidates, or two false candidates, and the party leaders structure it so you appear to have a choice, but you don't really have a choice. And once they understand that, once they know it, you can't really put it back in the bottle.

I don't think it's very easy to put it back in the bottle. So that's rather a long story about why we're possibly going to war with Iran. And in fact, I haven't even mentioned Iran or whether they're a threat. I just thought I'd better, for the sake of completeness, say what Netanyahu said to Trump to get him to say that. He said, look, he avoided doing what he's always done in the past. He didn't say, "Look, Iran is just weeks away from a bomb—six, eight weeks." He'd been saying that for 25 years: a month away, two months, six weeks. He gave that up completely. He said, no, no, the threat is quite different. What's happened is the Iranians are not just reconstructing their defense systems—their missile defenses, their air defenses.

They're constructing a completely new doctrine of defense—a new system that's going to put a full umbrella over their strategic nuclear areas. They're going to cover all of this with new missile defense systems. So, if they succeed in that, we wouldn't be able to strike even if we had intelligence that they were moving toward a bomb. We wouldn't be able to destroy it because of their defense system. That means we have only a tiny window now to destroy their missile system, so we can at least keep the option to attack their nuclear sites. It's a complete change of tactics. It's saying, no, no, it's not the nuclear issue—it's the missiles. We have to destroy them. And Trump apparently said, "Okay, yes, I agree. Right, green light."

#Glenn

It's interesting that the domestic disputes within the U.S. around "America First"—the criticism of it, the divisions within it—are obviously tied very closely to Israel. So it's interesting that this could be what's driving another war with Iran. But I did want to ask: what would such a war actually look like? Because this has been a bit confusing for many people. What exactly would the objectives be? A drawn-out war wouldn't be a good thing—you'd need too many interceptor missiles, and it would hit Israel too hard, as we saw last time. Is the purpose a decapitation strike? Is it to destroy Iran? Is it regime change? Because, as you said, if it's regime change, it's not as if they have anything solid to actually replace it with.

For example, in Ukraine, I thought this was done well. They took over the intelligence services quite quickly. They helped control who would be in the government and who would stay out. We saw control of the military, the economic decoupling from Russia, the cultural purge, control of the media and civil society. And with the war with Russia, the U.S. could present itself as the defender. So no

matter what the U.S. has done, it's at least helping against Russia, which is the immediate threat. So all along it was very well played. But with Iran, it's not clear exactly what the purpose of the war is. Would they defeat the entire army? Would they knock out the government—and what exactly would come in its place? Or is it just to weaken, dismantle? It's very unclear to me how we defeat a country like Iran.

#Alastair Crooke

You know, that's why I started off talking about Venezuela and Syria—because that's still the model. Not only the Venezuela model, but the Syria model too, and it's effectively the model for Iran as well. So I think what you mentioned—the main characteristic of all these recent American military ventures—has been decapitation. We saw that very clearly in Yemen. They said, as Haistaff put it at the time, "Our objective is to decapitate the Houthis in Yemen." And that can be done in two ways. In Yemen, they're trying to do it by buying people out, promising money. They did that in Syria too—they promised money. They did that in Iraq as well; they bought off the Republican Guard in Iraq, or at least the major part of it.

I know that, and they paid a lot of money to get them to refuse to fight against the Americans. So I think we're going to—well, no one knows exactly what it'll be—but I think the Israelis are going to be looking for a major American intervention to destroy the missile system. What's it going to take? I imagine this will be unlike, you know, the 12-day war, when Israeli airplanes didn't penetrate Iranian airspace. They succeeded in damaging some of the localized air defenses. The people who had been in place were turned, sent into Iran, and were taking out the smaller air defense systems using intermediate weapons, mainly.

And then the Americans tried to jam the more strategic radar systems and take those out. It was all done with standoff cruise missiles—short-range, small cruise missiles—either fired from Iraq or from Azerbaijan. The question is, would America feel it's safe enough now to fly missions in Iranian airspace and attack? I think that's uncertain, and at the moment they're trying to work out whether they can. I mean, some people, you know, just sort of misunderstand us. They say, "Ah, well, look, whatever happened in Venezuela—the air defenses didn't work—and therefore it's safe for America to assume Iranian air defenses aren't going to work."

As you can see, that's nonsense. I mean, their systems didn't even get turned on. And there was also a cyberattack in Venezuela that probably affected them, just as it did in Iran. So I think we'd see massive cyberattacks. I'm sure they'll go back to that. I mean, in the June 12th attack, it was very clear what the aim was—which, as agreed with the Trump administration, was to collapse Iran. It was, you know, a time-worn phrase: it was a house of cards. One push and the house of cards would collapse. I mean, just as you've heard—Russia is a house of cards, Venezuela is a house of cards. I mean, people in Venezuela told me that; they kept saying they were convinced of it on the ground.

He said, you know, the Americans are absolutely convinced that Cuba and Venezuela are just houses of cards, and that one little push would make it all collapse. And it's the same with Iran. I think there are elements in Israel that quite vociferously disagree. The INSS, which is a strategic defense NGO, has written and said that both of the journalists found there was no sign of an uprising against the government—no sign whatsoever. This is the Israelis saying it, not me. And they said there was no sign of that, and that the attack was misplaced. The aim of the attack, which was centered around regime change and the collapse of the state, didn't happen. When the high command was decapitated, they very quickly produced new commanders, and it worked.

And the issue was about twelve hours when they were unsighted or confused, but it all came back into position. So this is the INSS. But I think, you know, the point I was making about Trump, and also Netanyahu—going to war with Iran is a way of jockeying over the future of Israel, just as Trump is jockeying over the future of the United States vis-à-vis MAGA, and what comes next after MAGA, or when he goes. And so Netanyahu put him in. The right are in power, and all the pillars of Israel that used to hold it up—the judiciary, the Supreme Court, the military, the police—all of those have been either weakened or taken over by the right, in the broad sense: the national religious, the settlers, the small church. And they're running that, and they have weapons, and they have a military force.

And so, you know, the elections are coming up this year, and Netanyahu has to win them, and Likud has to win them, because they're not about to give up power back to the sort of liberal Ashkenazi wing of Israel at this stage. They've managed everything. They hope to contain the cases against Netanyahu, they hope they'll be able to dismiss the corruption allegations, and that they can win the election. And then it will be embedded—Israel will be a right-wing religious state using Halakha, and the Palestinians will be removed from the territories. So, I mean, this is what's at stake. One of the things I try to say to people is, yes, it's fine to say, let's look at it in a rational, strategic way, geopolitically.

I mean, since I do geopolitics, I hear a lot of that. You know, it's not just about what they would gain by a war. Listen, Israel may gain nothing—it may be destroyed in the war. We don't know for sure, but the reasons are different. The reasons are about the momentum, the need—the momentum and the excitement for this war are essentially eschatological. It's the promise of God that they will win their wars together, that He will defeat their enemies, and that whatever happens, whatever the strategic situation, they will come through. Because this is the order of the world; this is how it's going to work out. And we find that, if you're a secular rationalist, it's a little bit hard to get to grips with.

And I've been saying this for some time. I mean, ten years ago, I started to think the next wars are going to be about religious symbols—Al-Aqsa versus the Temple Mount. And, you know, you might say, "But Israel could be defeated, they could be destroyed." And I say, well, you don't understand. People like Smotrich are highly intelligent. Whether you disagree with him or not, he's not stupid. I remember seeing him some years ago, and he said very cheerily, "Listen, these are our plans, this is

what we intend to do—but we need a big war to really finish off the plan. A big war, a big crisis, to finish it.” Yes, actually, they look forward to Armageddon. I mean, this is part of it.

It's not that, “Oh my God, this could be ending in Armageddon.” No, they're quite happy with that, because this is expected. We are moving into a messianic age. And part of the coming of the messianic age—and of the Messiah—is the need for an apocalyptic struggle that will lead to it. So you have to read it through quite different eyes, I believe, not the ones of secular rationalism. And we've tried to understand this for too long through that lens. I mean, it's still valid, but you also have to look at it and understand the elements of the eschatological and the messianic. Even in the 1920s, a famous Jewish historian, Cholon, wrote a book about messianism.

And he wrote, even in the 1920s, that he foresaw there would be an outbreak of messianic fervor in Likud in due course. He wrote this in the 1920s, and he saw it coming. So we have to try to understand it in that way. It's very hard to predict exactly what will happen, very hard to predict what the consequences will be. But I think they're going to be dramatic for the United States, because I don't believe in that dichotomy that's taken hold in the U.S.—how you can be “America first” and at the same time serve Israeli interests in a primary way. I don't think that's sustainable. I think this is going to be a big debate for the future in America about the relationship—particularly given what's happened, and what may happen elsewhere.

And I think it's going to define the future of Israel too. I don't know how that's going to work out or what the consequences will be. We'll have to wait and see. A lot is hanging on this war, if it happens. It seems, as I've tried to describe, you can just see all the pieces being put into place—war gaming going on in the Israeli cabinet, America saying yes, the Americans getting excited about it. You know, the whole team is on fire. Trump is saying, “Oh, you know, Iran, they've been given a chance, but this is not a president you mess with. When he said something, he meant it. You had your chance, and you threw it away—you Iranians and Maduro, you threw it away.”

#Glenn

I like the point you made about rationality, because it's often, at least for political realists, a flaw in the analysis, I think. When you have this kind of infighting over “America First,” as they do in the U. S., that kind of expressiveness can draw the country into a conflict with Iran—much like the infighting between Democrats and Republicans in 2016 pulled policies toward Russia into their internal battles. And of course, when you add ideology—the messianism of Israel—it takes it to a whole new level. Thank you so much for taking the time.

#Alastair Crooke

I just finished it very quickly. You know, we can't quite absolve the West of having this element too—I mean, an eschatological element—and say we're just rational and they're not. Because really, what we've seen during this period has been the deification of Manichaeism. I mean, you know, we've

seen the leaders of the West talking about how we're fighting a battle of light against dark, of good against evil. You hear it all the time in Europe about Mr. Putin and about Russia. I mean, this came about—you remember the Biden speech that was held in Liberty Hall, with the deep red light and the dramatic setting—and he framed it all as, you know, we are fighting for good against evil, the shining city on the hill. And then von der Leyen and the European leaders followed it up and have seemingly internalized the idea that this is a Manichaean war rather than a war with very clear historical causes.

#Glenn

Well, thanks again for being so generous with your time and for all your insights on Israel, the U.S., and Iran, of course.