

# **Alastair Crooke: Trump SURGES 10,000 Troops! Iran HITS US Carrier Next**

Alastair Crooke discusses Trump sending 10,000 more US troops to the Middle East as tensions with Iran reach a breaking point. With a third US aircraft carrier heading toward Iran, Alastair Crooke breaks down the real consequences of the US-Israeli march back to war and Iran's devastating card it has yet to play. 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](https://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. As you can see, I am joined by Alistair Crooke, a former UK diplomat, a current geopolitical analyst, to go over the latest developments. So, Alistair, I wanted to ask you about this. There is a bit of a surge, it seems like, toward war. There's the USS Theodore Roosevelt heading to the Middle East now, a carrier strike group carrying what the Wall Street Journal is saying, 9,000 to 10,000 more U.S. troops and personnel, including 2,000 Marines. This comes as Donald Trump has now blamed Iran for the Flydubai incident that led to what Israel is saying was a near hijacking of that civilian aircraft.

Iran has said that, given all of these movements, its next move, if the United States restarts the war, will be to strike a U.S. aircraft carrier, U.S. ships in the Indian Ocean in particular, where they have identified they are residing now. The U.S. has also sent more Patriot missile systems, whatever they have left, I guess, to protect Saudi Arabia and Qatar. Now, Alistair, it seems like war is escalating, and I'm wondering your reactions to these developments, especially since we have major elections coming up, both in Israel and in the United States. Both countries are talking very much in the language of war and now escalating very concretely. What are your thoughts about what's going on right now?

## **#Alastair Crooke**

Well, I do. I have been very hesitant to say before that, you know, that war is coming and it is inevitable. But I think now we are in a pre-war situation and that, you know, the likelihood is that we are going to a much bigger war with Iran, and even tensions with Russia are escalating very rapidly indeed. Just yesterday, in the last day, the Russians circulated a paper to the European governments, and it was saying that Kaliningrad, which is this isthmus that is part of Russia, it is not sort of divorced from it. It is part of this territory of Russia. And there have been a lot of statements

coming out, threats, not necessarily actions, but threats, saying we're going to invade Kaliningrad, that NATO might attack it or surround it or cut it off, put it under siege.

All of these have been more generalized statements. But nonetheless, exercises have been run by various nations and by NATO under the NATO umbrella as if they are preparing to take Kaliningrad. So Russia has issued a statement saying, for the first time, very explicitly, saying if there is an attack on Kaliningrad, Russia will use all the weapons at its disposal, including nuclear weapons, according to the Constitution. First time we've had, I think, Russia saying so explicitly that if you try and take this provocation too far, you risk that we will use weapons. We will move to the nuclear level in response to it.

And that has shocked Europeans. For the first time, the Europeans have had to sort of pinch themselves and say, you know, I mean, we're heading into dangerous territory. When you talk about Iran, you know, it's very similar. What we're seeing is, I mean, first of all, kicked off with Trump at the UN General Assembly saying, you know, after the midterms, I'm going to increase the bombing, the attacks on Iran. I've got a very difficult decision to make. I mean, you know, either they have to capitulate and come to my terms, or I have to decide whether to annihilate Iran, annihilate them very quickly.

And since then, I think there have been—I haven't personally counted it—but I think six times Trump has repeated either that annihilation wording or a synonym, which means a complete destruction word, of Iran. Six times, I think, he said it. "Blow it—we might have to blow it up," I think is another way. Yeah, all saying the same, I mean, basically the same message. You know, it's coming to this point. And I think why I think that war is now getting inevitable is that it is clear from all these statements. It must be very, very clear now. Trump can't do the obvious thing, which is to walk away from the Iran war. He's not going to walk away from it.

He will not allow himself to be presented as a loser. He cannot go back now and accept the memorandum of understanding. It's not possible. Of course, theoretically it's possible; it's just not part of his psyche. And also because, on the question of Iran, he is in thrall to another power, to another political force, both in the United States and overseas, that is wanting Iran destroyed. And I completely agree. And so we're also seeing, again, like we saw in June, Netanyahu then in June was saying, "Oh, you know, Iran is moving closer and closer. We see tangible evidence of it sort of preparing to move to a weapon state."

And paradoxically, because we follow the Hebrew press and things very carefully, this was rebuked by most of the defense and security experts in Israel. They said there is no evidence of this. And they said explicitly, Netanyahu is lying. There is no evidence of a move in that direction. Well, now elections are looming in Israel this month, later this month, and it's fraught. It's a very fraught election. We can talk about it more if you want. But it's very fraught and it's very perilous for Netanyahu. He's terrified that he is going to be roasted on the question—on the issue of the 7th of October and what was his involvement in it.

That's why he flew off to the Gulf, was not so much to prepare a war against Iran, but was to tell MBZ, bin Zayed, look, do not repeat what you have said in the past, that you gave a warning to me about what was going to happen in Gaza. Don't repeat that. And don't let Qatar start talking out of turn about, you know, the relationship between Israel and Qatar in this period. And actually, the UAE didn't want him even to arrive. I mean, they cancelled the visit, and he insisted, and then he came. He insisted and he arrived. And then they said, MBZ isn't even available. Sorry, can't see him. He's not in town. Well, it turned out he was in town, and Netanyahu delivered the message.

But it wasn't a sort of chummy meeting to discuss tactics and the way ahead. It was rather different. So Netanyahu has begun saying, again, in the lead-up to this election, fresh evidence is available to Israel that Iran is moving towards weaponization. And, of course, this is being stovepiped directly into the United States. He's actually going to say, and has said, I think on CBS, "Look, Iran is preparing the missiles and he's going to fire—they are going to fire nuclear weapons into American cities." I mean, he's ratcheting up the fear to, you know, level 11, I mean, on this issue for the American electorate. And Trump goes back to the same thing, saying it every day virtually.

Iran cannot be allowed to have a nuclear weapon. Iran cannot have a nuclear weapon. If they had a nuclear weapon, America wouldn't be here. Israel wouldn't be here. The Gulf would have disappeared. They cannot have a nuclear weapon. So it looks as if we are moving to a very dangerous stage. Because how might this happen? Is it possible that nuclear weapons will be used against Iran, which is one way of interpreting a very quick annihilation of a country, 91, 95 million people? Is this possible? I mean, there would be pushback in the United States. I mean, from grassroots and even from the Pentagon, there would be, if you like, pushback, I think, because they would say it is a war crime.

And I mean, not everyone in the Pentagon would push back, but there are those at various levels that would push back against this, and you will know who some of those are. But of course, what is possible, and what would be conceivable, if you like, to move Trump to the next stage, would be if Israel sought to use a nuclear weapon again in this period. And Israel does have a number of submarines, diesel submarines that were given to it by Germany. And they are capable of firing Tomahawk missiles with their nuclear-capable missile systems on board, Tomahawk missile systems. Now, that is possible. I mean, I have no evidence that that's happening.

I'm sure, but have no direct evidence. But I am still certain that Israel and others are going to be watching very carefully to see if such missiles or such devices are being loaded on Israeli submarines. And the other thing, of course, is that if they are loaded and they want to prepare to fire them, those submarines have to surface. They can't fire them. It's not like other, if you like, submersible systems. They have to surface to fire these Tomahawk missiles. So it's possible, just possible. It's not certain by any means that Iran and its allies would be able to identify it as soon as it starts surfacing and take it out before it is able to fire the missiles.

But still, a threshold is passed. It's something that is very significant in the way ahead. So that is one aspect of it. The other aspect is, well, let us put nuclear weapons aside, leave them for the moment. What is it that the United States can do now to bring about the complete defeat and the victory of the United States in Iran? And the answer is that it's very hard to see what would be the possibilities for Trump to get that sort of win now. I mean, we've had, you know, heavy bombing. Now the United States has far less of those. It doesn't have standoff—it doesn't have so many standoff missiles to fire that it had before. It doesn't have the same level of air defenses.

So what could he do to bring about a victory, a very pronounced, clear victory that would win back the applause of even the Republicans for this wonderful military operation? I'm not sure, though, even if the Republicans would applaud, even if it was a major military victory, because, you know, they can understand that the consequences in the Gulf and the consequences of the supply of oil are going to be profound, whether it is a great victory or whether it is a half victory or no victory. And what you have also to consider, and it's possible, is that actually Iran could win such a clash. It might win such a clash. So you've already suggested an attack on an aircraft carrier.

I'm not sure if that's rhetoric or if Iran is thinking of that as a deterrent, a statement of deterrence to the United States, because there are 5,000 sailors on board a carrier. It would be, even if, you know, if they fired it in such a way and it started to sink, and then the ancillary vessels and the Iranians themselves were going to help pick up those sailors from the sea, it would be a big event. So I'm not sure. But, I mean, I think that what I feel pretty confident in is that the Iranians are not going to sit back, allow America to get to peak readiness, and just sort of sit there and take whatever it is Trump cares to throw at them. No, they're not in that sort of mood at all.

So now the rhetoric has switched in America. So first of all, we have this rhetoric that, you know, there are so many vessels passing through, that there's more fuel passing through Hormuz than even before the war, and a billion barrels' worth of oil were coming out in two weeks last week. I think I would advise people to discount all that as nonsense. It's not true. It's just simply not true. It's said to be dependent on satellite images, but those sort of satellite images are carefully controlled and released only to people that perhaps are ready to pursue the right narrative. I don't want to suggest anything beyond the fact that we see—and you've seen, presumably—that tankers are getting attacked. There's no doubt about it. They're on fire.

You can see it. So, you know, what do you believe, the narrative or what's in front of your eyes? I think I advise you to believe your eyes rather than these narratives. And so the narrative is sort of to gin up support before the midterms, saying, look, it's all going to be all right, and there's going to be plenty of diesel around, and the price will come falling down. It's not going to be like that. The diesel shortage is going to be real and is hitting. It's here. The price of diesel in America, you know what it's at, well over \$6. In Europe, it is, you know, going through the roof. The point is not just the price.

It's if it's available because, you know, the feedstock's got to go to the right refinery. There's got to be a tanker that takes it there. You know, it's not just a simple, oh, well, it's open and, you know, the price is going to fall because, you know, in France there's been violence because of the shutting down of gas stations in France because of shortages of diesel. And Britain has been warned that it may have to go on to rationing and be subject to a 50-mile-an-hour speed limit. I mean, it's here. So, I mean, you know, all of this is hype. And I think we shouldn't be deflected by this talk of it, because the real issue is the war escalation.

And it's quite clear that Trump doesn't have any ready answers to his need to score a sort of, you know, all-dancing, singing victory that he can go out and claim and say, "Look what I've done. It's wonderful. I've stopped Iran. They'll never get a nuclear weapon," even though his own people and the Israelis say there's no evidence that they have one. But this is—so it is becoming a very dangerous situation. And so he's pinning his hopes now on what—I mean, the advisors are incredible. I mean, you've got, first of all, you know, what's he called? Ratcliffe, that's it. Ratcliffe on the one hand, and then you've got Bessent, and Bessent is saying, "Two weeks," and, you know, they will capitulate, and... It's the same thing.

They just do not know, understand, or can really have any feel for Iran and the Iranian people. Actually, they think that the people are going to come out in the streets to overthrow the government. They don't understand the opposite is happening. People are coming out in the streets, but it is to support the government and to support the policy of a tough response to the United States. Look what's happening in Iraq. Great cheers going up. There are demonstrations because the Americans are leaving their bases and going. They left on the 30th of September. And across Iraq, there are big, big, if you like, demonstrations of celebration, and four days of holiday have been declared. I mean, you know, they can't get it more wrong.

Yes, there was criticism in Iran before this war started. But basically, the criticism arose because a government at that time wanted to reform the economic system by going, can I call it by shorthand, neoliberal—you know, abolishing subsidies, raising prices, and going to a full market economy. Well, that's, you know, it's very difficult to do that in the short run, to suddenly shift from what was a controlled economy to a market economy. Surely some reforms might have had some merits, but, you know, you're going to get a lot of pain from that. So there was, you know, anxiety about that. But that's all gone—I mean, changed. It's hard now for Iranians. Of course it's hard. But they are getting food in.

Agricultural output increased during the war by 13 to 14 percent. It hasn't stopped, as Bassan tries to suggest. Of course they're getting revenues in. They're selling oil. They have some oil at sea, so they're getting revenues. I can't pretend it's all, you know, just so easy. But the support for the government and the support for their policy of challenging America is growing. It is not turning into a sort of popular pitchfork attack on the government. Quite the opposite. You don't have to believe me. Look at all the videos. Every night in Tehran, people are out demonstrating in support of the

government, particularly the young, very much led by the young. This generation of young Iranians is tough. And it's not like Iraq. So that's going to be a big failure.

It's not going to. Iran will outlast the United States if it tries this. I mean, you know, if they look at it, if you're, you know, the Iranian command and you look at it, I mean, you must have a sort of wry look on your face, and they say, "You know, excuse me, is it Iran that's going to collapse? I thought it was your markets that are collapsing. I mean, you know, what about the bond market? And what about the increase in interest rates? And, you know, I mean, the stock market is all based on about five or seven shares. You know, if there's any hiccup in any of those, the whole market might collapse. Who's in an economic crisis? Is it us, the Iranians, or is it the United States?" So I don't think this is going to—I don't think it's going to work that way.

## **#Danny**

Hmm.

## **#Danny**

Yeah, great points, Alistair. And, you know, originally when I heard that a third aircraft carrier was heading to the Middle East, heading to the CENTCOM area of operations, as it's called, the initial report said, "Oh, well, it's going to go replace the USS George Washington." Now they're not talking about it like this. And I'm curious, Alistair, if you could, you know, comment on whether you believe that Iran is kind of holding certain cards here that it has not yet played. You know, the New York Times reported today that five tankers in the last two days have been hit in the Strait of Hormuz.

And they like to say something to the effect of, well, they fired a lot more missiles and drones at ships, and they missed a lot of those targets, they claim. But nevertheless, this is where Iran has been focusing on. And many have wondered if Iran is actually—you know, you said they're not going to wait for the U.S. to get prepared—but are they holding on to certain cards that they have not yet played, which maybe the United States is not considering? Or maybe the Trump administration simply is willing to take these risks. What do you make of this? Because you said yourself, the options for the U.S. in terms of using these forces, they're not necessarily favorable, or as favorable maybe as it's being promoted.

## **#Alistair Crooke**

Well, absolutely. They have lots more cards to play. And don't forget, all through this period, they've been restocking their missiles. In fact, I believe they have more, if you like, in their missile inventory than when the war started. And some of these are new missiles, and they have new air defenses. And, you know, the Iranians are very careful. They don't just sort of show everything all at once.

They use a particular type of weapon when it can produce a particular result and when that result is something that they need at that time. So they don't just willy-nilly say, "This is all I've got. Here we are. This is what we've got." Now, on the aircraft carrier, I'm not sure.

What I believe has happened is that Iran actually fired a ballistic missile over an American carrier at hypersonic speed. And this was pretty shocking to the people. It wasn't intended to hit it; it was shot over it, but it was a pretty clear message. And the shockwave from it being hypersonic, you know, I think damaged a number of people from just the air pressure and the effect of the sound. So, I mean, and what has been the consequence is that the aircraft carriers have had to move out further away from Iran, to about 1,000 kilometers. I think that means that operationally those carriers are much less effective than they might have been, because what that means is—I understand that you have to check this with a military expert.

But what I understand is that means that most of the aircraft on the deck of those carriers would not be able to reach Iran, strike a target, and return. They would need refueling on the way there and refueling on the way back, making them quite vulnerable at that point, because F-35s and others, whatever they have on the deck, their range is very short. So they would have to have refueling aircraft in the air that could come up and support it. And they would be very, very, very, very interesting targets for the Iranians, those refueling aircraft, and especially when they return to base, because they'll be standing out in the open. And nearly all the refueling aircraft have now been pushed out of the airspace where they were, and many of them are sitting in Ben-Gurion, out at the airport, the Ben-Gurion Airport, out in the open, and also Nevatim Airport in the desert.

And there are a lot of them there because, you know, they've taken them now. They've removed them from Jordan, as well as the bases along the Hormuz shore. So, you know, all of that means it's much more complicated because most of those will need refueling, perhaps even going and coming back again. So a lot of refueling, a lot of fuel, a lot of logistics to make anything work. So I think moving the carriers 1,000 kilometers, you know, puts them almost at the very, very limit of their operational range. So I think that might be one element. I don't know what the Iranians have in mind, but I think they are planning a serious escalation.

And I don't think necessarily—I have no inside information—but I don't think they are going to wait for Trump to get all his ducks lined up and sent out towards Iran. Whatever that might be, conventional or whatever, they're ready for it. They expect it. They are entirely mobilized for this war. And there's another thing that people just miss, quite important. A little while ago, I think three weeks maybe, Iran announced it is mobilizing a million men. They said a thousand battalions of a thousand people each. And apparently people have been surging to join these, what they call self-sacrifice battalions. Again, you know, it doesn't sound to me like a state that's about to rise up and overthrow the government. But apparently something like 31 million people have expressed an interest. Why does Iran need a one-million-man army?

Look, it's not for what you put in the title here. Two thousand Marines are heading towards the Middle East. I mean, where would they land? What would be the base that would go there? How would they be supplied? You name it. I don't think the Iranians are worried, even if it's 10,000 Marines, because Iran is a very inhospitable terrain country to fight on. So a million, a million army? So what's coming? What's next? Who knows? But I don't think—I mean, it's been a huge logistics exercise. The fact that the government is able to organize a million people, the training has started. They're all trained. Many of them have served in the army, of course. They're all being trained. You know, you have to ask, is it just to sort of, you know, defend the ground space from an American landing on the other side of the Hormuz? I doubt it.

## **#Danny**

You know, Alistair, oftentimes when news of U.S. escalation comes out, the initial reaction can be to look at it within a vacuum. But even as you were talking, one thing that came up in my mind was, even if the United States wanted to—and I've heard some military experts say, well, if there's three aircraft carriers together working together on an operation, then they could maybe sustain a kind of 24-hour strike capacity, standoff strike capacity—but that, I think, belies the fact, though, that there's also, with these aircraft carriers, huge logistical problems.

They would have to go all the way to Diego Garcia to sustain long-term operations, which is why I believe some thought that actually the USS Washington was just going to get relieved because it's too difficult for these aircraft carriers to stand out in the middle of the Arabian Sea, Indian Ocean area for long periods of time, like we saw with the Lincoln. So what are your thoughts on this? The actual context is very unfavorable, it seems like, for this.

## **#Alastair Crooke**

It just seems to me to be, I mean, 24-hour blitzkrieg from three carriers. How many refueling aircraft would you need in the air for that? You'd probably need two or three aircraft across three carriers. I mean, are there enough refueling aircraft in the total inventory of the United States for that sort of exercise? I just think this is a little bit exaggerated, I think. I mean, the carriers have not been effective and not participated really in this, except marginally. Now they've moved from 500 to 1,000 kilometers away. They've become less effective. And I'm quite sure that if they try and use them like you've described, they will discover that the Iranians have short-range ship missiles, quite capable of striking 1,000 kilometers away, and will not necessarily sink it, but will cause damage.

I mean, after all, you know, a carrier is... I mean, everyone says, well, you know, it's very hard to sink a carrier. You don't have to sink it. Just put a bomb through the deck, and then what? What does it do? You know, no one can fly. So, I mean, I think, you know, this is a narrative that's being hyped up, like all these narratives about, you know, the siege on Iran, and Iran is about to sort of declare complete war, abject poverty, and everyone's going to rise up and attack the government.

All these things are just narratives that are there, I'm afraid, to gaslight the American and European public and to suggest it's going to be fine when, in fact, the economic realities are going to come home very hard in this next period, both to Europeans—Europeans perhaps more than Americans—but it's going to come home even if they put a lock on the export of diesel.

It's still—the price isn't going to come down because, as I said, it's structural. It's also about shipping. There aren't ships, and there are not many owners of ships who want to risk them for doing things where they might get attacked. So it's structural. And also, you know, there is not—I mean, what, if you like, heavy oil there is, because for diesel you need heavy sulfur-laden oil, what oil there is is not necessarily, you know, in the right place with the right refinery for that type of oil to make it into diesel or kerosene. So, I mean, this is a real structural mess-up, and it's not going to sort itself out quickly at all.

## **#Danny**

And Alistair, your thoughts on the very strange events over the last week or so. There was the RAF incident of the five men who were arrested for supposed, they say, terror attack, even though that base is in active war use. But they say a terror attack on the base was about to happen. It was caught, and they were released on bail. And then we had the Flydubai incident, which... Both have sparked—I was just at a gathering yesterday, and people were asking me, Danny, what actually is happening here? Why are all these events going on? They seem very suspect. Now you have Trump saying that Iran could be behind both of them.

Even Netanyahu hasn't gone so far with regard to the Flydubai incident to say Iran definitely was behind that. Trump is indicating this. What is it about these events? Why are they happening now? We have the Israeli election coming in 25 days or so, right, or maybe a little less than that, and the midterm elections. Israel has already promised that they are under siege, under attack, or at least their intelligence have indicated this. What's going on here? And do you foresee more strange events like this coming, for whatever purposes they're supposed to be? But I'm wondering your thoughts on it.

## **#Alastair Crooke**

Sure. It's preparation for war. These are the false flags coming that are inevitable to scare the public and say to everyone, oh, look, you know, it's so scary, and the Iranians are doing everything. And if it's not the Iranians, it's Putin doing this, and Putin is sending drones over European cities. You should see the press in Europe now. I mean, it's just on full scare about, you know, the Russians are coming. We're going to war with Russia. You know, you have to start preparing. You know, it's going to be your duty to send your children to war. Many are going to die, but that's your duty. I mean, they're literally saying this all the time, and there's a concerted... and they had all the European technocrats at a meeting just recently.

I sent a photograph of it. I mean, they dressed up in military jackets and uniforms, you know, camouflage uniforms. I mean, they looked ridiculous, these sort of middle-aged politicians parading around in military uniforms. But that is the point. They want to frighten everyone, to show that war is coming. And so with Fairford, I mean, it became a farce, because what had happened was some man and his wife, driving back late at night, really very late at night, so I don't know where they'd been or what, after 12 at night and one in the morning, coming back, and then they saw three vans which were actually somehow blocking their access to their farm.

So they called, first of all, the Ministry of Defence because they lived near Fairford. Oh, you know, what is this? And then they came to see, you know, five swarthy Middle Eastern-looking men disappearing into a wood. And so when it came to them, I mean, there were photographs of the five that were apprehended by the police. And first of all, they didn't look the slightest bit swarthy. They looked rather white and they looked rather British. And they are all British. They're all British citizens. And it seems that what they were involved with, there were no explosives. There was nothing found, no explosives.

It seems like it was some sort of scam about fuel, that they were sort of smuggling gasoline, whatever it is. And, yes, they may have, you know, done something, you know, traded in gasoline in an improper way. But there was no evidence of an attack on Fairford. But, of course, you know, Trump having dropped the message, you know, there must be an Iranian attack behind it. So duly, the British prime minister says, "Oh, well, we've had to release all those people because there were no explosives. There was nothing to hold them. So they've all been released." And Trump said, "You shouldn't have done that."

You all need to think if there's something, because the CIA have been following this operation for months and weeks, which was obviously not true. And so then, sort of desperate to keep Trump happy, they've announced that they've arrested a joint Iranian-British subject somewhere in London and are going to charge him with some sort of offence under the Terrorist Preparation Act. Seems completely—it's just, just all, if you like, narratives to support, you know, Iran, Iran, Russia, Russia. That's what it is. I don't know what happened on board that airplane. I haven't got any sort of more facts than you probably have.

But, I mean, it's sort of morphed and, you know, there seems to have been some sort of argument between the pilot and co-pilot. It seems to be more a sort of mental health incident than necessarily an attack. But it doesn't matter because what it's done is, whatever actually happened, whatever it's done, it's given Netanyahu exactly the line that he wanted. This was Israel's 9/11. They wanted to crash the plane with Israelis on board it. And one of them had been indoctrinated with Islamism, one of the pilots. It gave him the perfect line for the elections.

So, you know, really, I mean, you know, there's no point sort of trying to work out exactly the truth and the untruth because... You know, for Netanyahu and for Trump, the narrative is everything. And if you can say, listen, I mean, this was 9/11. I mean, everyone must come and support me.

Everyone in the world have got to come and say, poor Israel, 9/11. They were going to be all killed. Now, I don't know the exact facts, but I don't think that really matters. You know, the narrative has been set now. You know, whatever the truth, whatever exactly happened, the narrative is all about the election in Israel and Netanyahu's desperation to be seen to be like Trump, you know, tough and strong and not tolerating any enemies of Israel.

## **#Danny**

Well, Vladimir Putin spoke at the Valdai Conference, as you know, Alistair. And I want to play this remark he gave about Iran. I thought it was very prescient, to say the least. And then, you know, maybe we could further elaborate on the comments you made earlier about this Kaliningrad situation, because it seems like Russia's response to that really did spook NATO. Here is what Putin said about Iran.

## **#Danny**

Of course, the whole world is focused on what's happening and is amazed by the courage and heroism of the Iranian nation and its resilience, and by the depth of the bench in terms of the government team and

## **#Danny**

So he says the world is impressed with Iran's resilience, Alistair. But this comes, as you said, Kaliningrad is being threatened, or at least—who found that out, by the way? I saw all kinds of reports about embassies, various Russian embassies, sending out notices all across Europe saying that they had been tipped off about this threat to Kaliningrad, and then Russia made their very strong nuclear response. Your thoughts about these two things?

## **#Alastair Crooke**

No, the threats against Kaliningrad, I mean, not necessarily all of them very serious, you know, but mounting exercises as if, you know, NATO was about to invade it and so on. I mean, that's been happening for some time. But what is significant is Russia sent out a written statement to all European nations, to their governments, saying if Kaliningrad is attacked, we reserve the right to use any weapon that is appropriate at our discretion, and that includes nuclear. And that's what has somewhat spooked them. I think the message from what you've just played is a very important one. I mean, what Putin was saying: we are like this with Iran. I mean, it was clear. He said he couldn't have been more clear. You know, we support the brave, resilient people of Iran. We are like that with them.

And I think China is also, not in the same way, but is also with Iran, which again, you know, one wonders if these wars are going to sort of somehow morph into each other because of what Europe

is doing with assembling and providing Ukraine with these missiles and drones to fire into the civilian areas and against refineries. And, you know, I think the breaking point came, and there's a huge shift that's taken place in Russian policy. It just needs to be listened to. First of all, Lavrov at the UN General Assembly said something really important. He said, "Listen, we are not prepared to enter into a ceasefire under any format. The negotiations will have to go on while there's fire, under fire. No format. We are not prepared at all to consider any format for ceasefire with Ukraine."

So do you hear that, Washington? Do you get it? And then afterwards, Putin, I think two days later, said even if there were discussions with the United States, even if there were some sort of proposal to discuss Ukraine, we would think twice before agreeing to go to those discussions. Big change. Big change in posture by Russia. Much tougher. And you see the evidence of this every night in the progressive movement and destruction of logistics, of gas stations, of railway systems, of energy supply systems. I mean, it's quite different from a couple of months ago. And certainly, as you know, I was in Russia recently. I would say the anger at the Europeans is really deep. I mean, you know, even from people who... We had dinner with Lavrov, who's very controlled.

But, you know, he is really... I mean, I don't... He didn't... You know, he's a very... He's a consummate diplomat. But everywhere, you know, for Russia, the Europeans just are beyond the pale, and they don't want to have anything really to do with them, although at some point that must happen. But also, it was quite clear that Russia believes that there was an agreement at Anchorage, and the Americans were unable to complete it and fulfill it. And so there's a great mistrust in that position. But also, you have to remember, you know, what Merz has said in this time. And he talked about Germany building the biggest army in Europe, and then he added the words, "again." For Russians, wow. You know, Stalingrad. You know that Germany wants to build that army again.

As Merz said, you can check the wording. That's what he said. We want to build the biggest army in Europe yet again. So, I mean, I think there is a different take. And then we read stories that have come out, which, again, I mean, are bizarre. And we wonder what, you know, what's happening. You know, I don't know that, you know, they've been printed and published and no one has retracted it. And there have been Europeans who said that they've received similar reports from America that when Ratcliffe flew to Moscow, apparently he did go with a message, according to Con Coughlin of the Daily Telegraph, and supported by others, and he does have good contacts in that realm, and he came to tell the Russians, A, that you're losing the war with Ukraine.

You're losing it. You're failing. And secondly, your economy is collapsing, and you're going to collapse like the Soviet Union did in 1991. And you are going to collapse economically. When they gathered that this was the message, he was turned around and sent home. I mean, it was so ridiculous. So ridiculous. But this is the sort of messaging that is probably being, you know, this is what's being said to Trump. You know, a little bit more pressure, a little bit more pressure, and the Russian economy is going to collapse. And, you know, there are sort of queues for petrol and things like this. Look, Danny, in these last months, we've driven much of the area of Siberia.

We started near the Mongolian border and China and drove most of that way across Siberia, far out from the sort of cities. And there were no queues at the petrol stations, gas stations. I promise you, because we were in cars that we had to refuel. And then the only place where we saw a queue was by Novosibirsk. And that seems to have been a local problem, because as soon as you got away from Novosibirsk, there were no queues. And so, you know, all of this is just nonsense they're talking. The economy of Russia—it's growing slowly because they've wanted to sort of tamp it down. It was growing too fast, and they worried about inflation taking off. But prosperity is everywhere.

People are working. I mean, the city is, I mean, a model of prosperity, a well-run city—Moscow, and Petersburg too. I mean, highly impressive. Shops full of food, people are enjoying them, restaurants full. I mean, the idea that the economy is collapsing—what do these people smoke? What do they read? I don't understand. You know, it's the same thing. Like, you know, oh, a billion barrels of oil are passing through Hormuz. Yes, and Russia is—I've come to tell you, Putin, because I'm CIA and I know these things, I've come to tell you your economy is collapsing and you'll be hounded out. What? Does he really think that? Is that the state of things in the West? Apparently it must be.

## **#Danny**

Hmm. Yeah, a very, very important analysis, Alistair. Now, when it comes maybe in terms of final comments, it seems like—and I want to play this also from our mutual friend Pepe Escobar, who shared another comment on the Valdai Conference—I think a lot of, especially both with Iran and Russia, there's a lot of criticism sometimes of them, even from people who watch our programs, about the restraint that they use. But here is something Vladimir Putin said at the Valdai Conference that I thought was very, very intelligent, to say the least. He was asked, maybe it's time to break the EU apart. Here is how he responded.

## **#Danny**

No need to do that. They will break apart themselves, essentially, is what he said. I'll put that on the next. No need. They will fall apart on their own. So, Alistair, how do you... These comments, I mean, they were said in part in jest, but I think they do reflect an overall posture.

## **#Alastair Crooke**

Not in jest. He's really on the nail. He's saying, I mean... You know, you may object to the fact that he's saying it, but he's saying what many people in Europe also think: that the Europeans are being turned into proxies, a resource base for the United States to keep the pressure on Russia, to keep the war going, because the United States is losing its ability to control events as they used to. Their financialized system is shaky. But also, you know, the states that used to be visited by the IMF, you know, people who would go to sort of give debt and to take debt and to take assets.

Now, even African states have got, you know, alternatives. They turn to China. They turn to other states for credit and debt. And so, I mean, the whole superstructure, the Western elites, are in a very precarious state. All their control mechanisms are collapsing together. Military and everything. What they have left is their control of the financial levers, the control of the financial system, and that is all. And Europe is going to stand, I mean, because America succeeded in making Europe totally dependent on America for its energy supplies. The business model of Europe has been broken.

They are now dependents, and they are being used to sort of jack up a sort of proxy war against Russia by all the scaremongering: "Russia war, Russia war." They are parroting this because they're desperate to be able to survive and to succeed. And they're frightened that people are going to rise up against them. And so he's right. You know, Ukraine was the one sort of flag around which the whole European Union revolved. Zelensky was at every committee meeting, every event, being hugged and praised and everything. And if this Ukraine project fails, there's nothing to keep Europe together. Nothing. What is it? Green projects? No, that's already failed.

You know, what they're facing is unemployment, huge cost of living rises, problems of immigration, serious problems. They're going to break out across Europe. And no, Europe doesn't have a sort of common position. I mean, I was lent to the European Union to see if it's possible to have a common foreign policy, foreign and security policy, by the British Prime Minister. I was lent to Javier Solana when he was High Representative to try and do this. And then there were only 12 member states. And my conclusion was, it's just not possible. I mean, it's like herding cats. You cannot get a common policy. And now how many are there in the European Union?

47, 49 or whatever. And of course, America deliberately brought in, after what happened in Iraq, after France said, "No, we will not join in the war on Iraq. And yes, we are going to disassociate ourselves from NATO." So what was the answer? Ah, yes, we'll bypass old Europe by empowering new Europe, Eastern Europe, the Baltic states, Poland, and all of those that were part of the Warsaw Pact and have got a strong grudge against Russia. And I remember at the time, Solana said to me, "You know, this is going to destroy Europe. It will probably destroy it. The Americans are insisting." He was an ex-Secretary General of NATO, and so, you know, he knew the dynamics.

And under the Treaty of Rome, Europe is obliged to follow the security instructions of NATO, i.e., the United States. And so, against his will, enlargement was going to take place until it becomes an inchoate gathering of nation-states that are trying to preserve something of their own sovereignty against a sort of regulatory maw of Brussels. So I think what Putin said was not, if you like, was not an aggressive comment or not a snide comment at Europe. I would have to say that many, many people in Europe would say, you know, that's exactly right. He doesn't have to do anything. Europe is in the process of fragmenting itself and NATO.

**#Danny**

Alistair, we've come up on the hour. I think that's a great place to conclude here. I want to make sure everybody knows that Conflicts Forum Substack, which you put together, is in the video description below. So everyone should support and follow the work that you do there. Everyone, hit the like button before you go. I want to thank all the moderators and the viewers today. Thanks for the gifted membership, Richard. Without further ado, I will be back again tomorrow. I'll let you know who that is later on. But Alistair, thanks so much again. And we'll end the stream together.

## **#Alastair Crooke**

Okay. Thank you.

## **#Danny**

All right. Hit the like button, everybody, and I'll see you again tomorrow. Bye-bye.