

# **Alastair Crooke: Iran's Missiles AVENGE Larijani, Tel Aviv BURNS as Trump Panics**

Former UK Diplomat and Middle East expert Alastair Crooke joins to discuss Iran's massive retaliation for the decapitation strike that took out Ali Larijani head of the National Security Council, and a full break down of the Iran war. Alastair Crooke's Conflicts Forum Substack: <https://conflictsforum.substack.com/> Subscribe for more in-depth geopolitical analysis! Leave your thoughts in the comments below! Support the Channel: Patreon: <https://www.patreon.com/dannyhaiphong> SUBSCRIBE ON RUMBLE: Rumble: <https://rumble.com/c/DannyHaiphong> Follow Me on Social Media: Twitter: <https://twitter.com/DannyHaiphong> Telegram: <https://t.me/DannyHaiphong> Support the channel in other ways: <https://www.buymeacoffee.com/dannyhaiphong> Substack: [chroniclesofhaiphong.substack.com](https://chroniclesofhaiphong.substack.com) Cashapp: \$Dhaiphong Venmo: @dannyH2020 Paypal: <https://paypal.me/spiritofho> #iran #trump #israel

## **#Danny**

Welcome, everyone. Welcome back to the show. It's your host, Danny Haiphong. As you can see, I am joined by Alistair Crooke. He's a former UK diplomat and expert on all things Middle East, a geopolitical analyst. Alistair, great to be back with you today. Thank you very much. It's also a pleasure to join you. Yes, it's great. Everyone, hit the like button as we get started — that will help boost the show. But Alistair, let's get started right away. So, yesterday, over the last 24 hours, was wave number 61 of Operation True Promise. According to many reports, at least a hundred sites were hit in Tel Aviv. The sensors have been breaking of late in recent days and weeks as this war continues. A major train station was hit.

It seems like the escalation against Israel, according to Iran, is largely because of the assassination of Ali Larijani, which happened in the last 24 to 36 hours — the head of the National Security Council. Now, in the hours before this show, Israel has hit major gas lines in the south of Iran, I believe. And now Iran, as we were talking about before the program, Alistair, is looking to target gas and oil fields across the Gulf states — Kuwait, Qatar, and others. I'll pull up some of those images, but I want your reaction to where we are in this war now, as we enter the third week, and as the escalations on all sides — especially the U.S.-Israeli side — become very inconsistent and almost haphazard. What's your assessment of the situation?

## **#Alastair Crooke**

Well, essentially, despite what has happened to Larijani, who was the head of the security apparatus — the Supreme National Security Council — his loss will be felt. And, as is often the case with Israeli assassinations, they tend to target the more moderate figures, who are then replaced by people that

are more hardline. We don't know who's going to replace him, but he was a very learned, intellectual, and clever man. He was a philosopher, and he will be missed. He was also, to a certain extent, connected to the reformists, so he was a centrist more than anything else. And, of course, as you know, it's standard practice in Iran to anoint and prepare your successor — and even your successor's successor. Everyone has to do that these days, especially since the beginning of the war.

It's mandatory for all the military and political leaders to have a successor who's ready to step straight into their shoes. The war itself won't change much because it's really being led by Qalibaf, the former mayor and a former military officer. He was also Speaker of Parliament — a formidable figure, much admired in Iran. He's been in charge of the immediate response to events on the ground. It doesn't always go to the full Security Council; there's a smaller, more specialized committee of military and technical officials that deals with the war as it unfolds. Qalibaf has been managing that since the outset, and indeed, he was the one overseeing the response to the violent protests that took place in January.

## **#Danny**

And Alistair, what do you make of these reports? I know you said on Conflict Forum that you're publishing a very important piece coming out very soon. There are also reports, I think, that go along with what you're about to release — ones that talk about how Israel is having not only a lot of difficulties with the missile fire, but also that they're likely running out of interceptors as we speak, as Iran has been hitting them every single day since February 28th. And now Israel, according to a cable the State Department leaked to the Washington Post, told their U.S. counterparts they hope for an uprising, even if it leads to a massacre.

But that cable said Iran isn't cracking and is willing to fight to the end, which means the goals of the war may need to be reevaluated. What do you make of this, Alistair? Because over the course of this war — now into week three — it appears that while the escalations and strikes on Iran continue, there are a lot of questions. Even an intel officer, the number two to Tulsi Gabbard, I believe, is now leaving. There are questions about Joe Ken, and really about what exactly this war is for — and whether it's winnable at all.

## **#Alastair Crooke**

Well, those are big questions. But let me first of all say this: in these last few days, because we follow the news — particularly the Hebrew channels and the Hebrew press — very carefully, what we've seen has been quite a noticeable shift. The vibe is different, very different, in these last few days. And people have been saying, well, it's time for Trump to declare victory and get out. I mean, senior military officials from Israel are saying this, and others are saying the same. So these days, it's been very odd. I mean, for us, we've looked at it, and you can see that something has been taking place — but it's not clear what that is.

I mean, it's obvious from the whole range of comments that were coming in about three or four days ago. And as recently as yesterday and the day before, when you look at the Hebrew press, there were no comments about the war. I mean, it was just off the pages. There were commentaries about rivalries between coalition partners in the government — who might be going up, who might be going down — and others about legal aspects, the attorney general, and so on. But everyone seemed to be avoiding the big issue, the elephant in the room: the war with Iran. And it wasn't clear why, or what was really going on.

However, today it seems we've got some inkling of what's been happening, or what is happening, because Yediot Aharonot, which is a Hebrew paper, has an interview with Ronen Bergman. Ronen Bergman is a sort of premier political correspondent. He also writes for The New York Times in the U. S., but he's well-known and a serious commentator. And he writes in his column today that Netanyahu has given up on total victory, which, you know, has been his theme all this time. He's given up. And Bergman says that Netanyahu is saying that it's clear — and this is a big change on his part — that they're not going to achieve the success they hoped for in Iran.

We're not going to destroy the state. The state is not going to fall. There's not going to be an overthrow of the state by an opposition — it's not going to happen. And we're going to have to redefine our victory in different ways. He goes on to say that we still have these other wars, and Bergman says, well, the wars are not going well — whether it's in Gaza with Hamas, in Lebanon, or elsewhere, for example in Iraq. All of these are faring badly. So how are we going to redefine victory? And then Netanyahu comes up with a strange sort of formula, saying, well, Iran was a threat, but it's not an existential threat anymore.

It's just a threat, and we have other threats. Threats go up, threats go down, and, you know, we have our alliances and our forums, and we are emerging as a global power thanks to these efforts. It really doesn't hold together very convincingly, but this is the story he's putting out. At the same time, Katz is announcing that henceforth, any Iranian official they identify or can locate, they will kill automatically — it doesn't need authorization. Blanket authorization is given to kill any and all Iranians they can see and identify. So that's an escalation on their part.

The second big escalation that's happened just in this period, effectively today, was that—I don't know who led it, though it seems as if it was led by Israel—but reports indicate it was done with a green light from the U.S., from Trump. The attack was on the South Pars gas field. South Pars is this huge gas field shared with Qatar; it's divided between the two. But it provides much of Iran's gas resources. It's a serious source of energy for Iran. And what we've seen as a consequence, or in addition to that, is that the IRGC has now warned five gas and oil facilities throughout the Gulf to be evacuated, saying all staff must leave immediately.

And we've seen overnight a huge escalation in response to the assassination of Ali Larijani, the head of the National Security Council in Tehran. Apparently, they managed to identify him staying overnight in an apartment owned by his daughter, I think. And so they were all killed, and his

security detail was killed too. There's also been a massive attack into Israel, and Hezbollah has been pummeling the center of the country — a major attack across Israel from Hezbollah. Of course, the censorship in Israel is near total. And as yet, I mean, the Israelis are—very deliberately, and we have evidence of this—being careful.

When you see a film that claims to show the result of an Iranian strike in Israel, what you usually see is a bit of debris lying around or maybe a damaged car, and we're told there were light or no injuries. And we know—because an Israeli journalist has said this—that what's actually happening is deliberate. The Israeli official or broadcast journalists go out and deliberately avoid showing any major damage. They just focus on something trivial, like a damaged car or some debris on the street, as if they're acting as real journalists, as if they're giving a true picture of what's happening. But it's not the picture at all. They're deliberately filming a minimal effect and publishing that as if that's all that happened. So, in total, we don't really know.

And Israel too. I mean, it's been sort of a strange war from that side because, you know, every time it was reported, there were no injuries, or maybe one Sri Lankan was said to be injured as a result of an attack. I think this is the first day they've actually said that two people were killed. Otherwise, this is a war where, apparently, according to Israeli sources, they haven't really admitted to any deaths. A few injuries, some people in hospital, but no fatalities. I mean, it's a bit like America—America's doing the same thing pretty much everywhere. How many people are dead or killed? Oh, well, you won't get those numbers from the United States, from Hegseth. He just says, "Well, six people died in that refueling tank that came down in Iraq."

And others—there are injuries, but they're all back in service. They've been rehabilitated into service again. So the idea that no one has been killed or injured in the attacks, you know, across Erbil, where there have been heavy attacks on American bases in Erbil and in Iraq—people apparently have had some psychological effects, but only light injuries. So we don't know. We don't know what's been attacked. We do know that there have been serious attacks with some of the advanced weapons. The Khorramshahr weapon was clearly being used toward Israel last night. But what effect these are having, we don't know. Still, it's really instructive now to learn that Netanyahu is trying to reverse his narrative.

Instead of calling for the big war—the war he persuaded Trump to lead—he's now saying it's not going to be pursued because, if you like, it's unwinnable. They're not going to achieve their main objectives. They'll still go after Iran and other adversaries, but it's going to be redefined in a new way. It's going to be redefined as Israel having these threats, but those threats are not absolute—they're relative. They go up and down, there are other threats, and we have different threats, but we'll win in all of them, and that will be our victory. But actually destroying Iran and collapsing the state is no longer possible, likely to be achieved, and therefore is not on the agenda anymore. Big change—and it comes at a time when Trump is escalating.

**#Danny**

Yeah, yeah. Maybe you can talk about how Trump is escalating here, because, as you said, the censors are just incredible. Israel was obviously preparing for what Iran was going to do and has tried to cover up as much of the damage as they can—or, as you said, highlight that it's targeting so-called civilians rather than causing huge damage to Israeli infrastructure. I'll just show here, there have been some reports getting out. There are power outages across the capital—or at least the capital as the world recognizes it—Tel Aviv. There have also been massive images from last night of these missiles that Iran has been launching, especially those so-called cluster missiles, the Khorramshahr-4 missiles, which have been used for many days now.

And, uh, it's not just against Israel that they've been used. There have been images over Dubai of these munitions—these submunitions—being released from the missile in the sky. Many have noted that it's pretty unprecedented that Iran is using these and really evading all of these air defenses. But, uh, to your point, Alistair, if you could react to the energy question—because prices, as I was showing while you were talking, continue to go up—it seems like a big escalation the U.S. is pursuing is the attempt to either seize Iran's Karg Island or cut it off from its own oil production, supply, and trade.

But at the same time, this has massive effects on oil prices—so much so that Qatar reacted to what Israel did. They released a statement opposing it, which I'll pull up, because they've been affected dramatically by Iran's drone and missile strikes that are now targeting their energy infrastructure specifically, although that's been happening to some degree even up until now. So, your reaction to this—how does this play out in the war? Because what a lot of the mainstream media is talking about right now is how this is going to affect the energy question.

## **#Alastair Crooke**

Well, in a word, it's going to affect it badly. Iran had been careful not to bomb or strike the energy infrastructure until now. Yes, storage tanks and other facilities were attacked, but their focus was much more on ports, and that had a different objective, too. It was about the Hormuz Strait and about changing the geopolitical balance within the region. Ports are important because, particularly Bahrain's port—which is part of this—was home to the Fifth Fleet, but also to much more. It was home to a major intelligence-gathering center, to radars, administrative centers, munitions—an entire intelligence infrastructure was based in Bahrain, and that's been systematically destroyed.

And part of this is to reestablish, if you like, Iranian control over the whole Hormuz corridor. This is deliberately meant to, if you like, flip the whole geopolitical strategy, because the Americans have controlled the Red Sea and Hormuz through the Fifth Fleet—at least until the Houthis started their operations there. They've controlled that area. The objective, and Trump made this very clear, is to maintain dominance over the choke points and sea corridors—the navigation routes of the globe—

first of all, to squeeze China, to squeeze China's oil imports. I mean, that's what Venezuela was largely about, because most of Venezuela's oil was heading to China. And it's also about squeezing in the other direction—it's been about squeezing Russian oil.

If you like, the seizure of tankers—the attacks on tankers in the Black Sea and in the Baltic—all of this was quite clearly part of the new war to try to suppress Chinese economic development by limiting its energy supply. And secondly, it was, if you like, to stop Russian exports of oil. So they are now reestablishing and taking, if you like—because, you know, they even attacked ports in Oman. Oman has been friendly to Iran, but it's part of the network of American attempts to dominate the sea and navigation routes. That has been an important element. By and large, they'd left the actual energy infrastructure untouched until today. And that was because Trump agreed—or green-lighted, according to the Israelis—an attack on South Pars gas field, the South Pars field that serves Iran.

So now all restraint is off, and Iran feels free to attack all oil installations. Of course, it's going to have a big effect on the economy. Of course, it's going to affect the Gulf states in particular. But finally, I mean, the Gulf states will probably have to decide at some point where they stand on this war. Until now, they've been firmly in the Washington ambit, if you like. They've been completely Americanized and dependent on Israel for technology, for AI, and now increasingly for tourism. But all of that's changed. The business model of the Gulf is broken. Some people will stay on in Dubai and other places, maybe, but there's been a big exodus from Dubai—not just tourists, but others who say they're not going back because it's broken.

We went there because we thought it was safe, secure, and, you know, plenty of money could be earned there. Now it's not so safe, not so secure, and not so much money is going to be around. So the Gulf states have to decide. I mean, they'll be dependent on Iran for their revenue from now on—not on the United States—but Iran can either green-light their vessels to pass through the Strait of Hormuz or not. And furthermore, a state like the UAE imports all its food through Hormuz as well. Qatar exports its gas through Hormuz. All of these are going to be subject to permission being granted by Iran. So this is going to continue to be a vital issue in this period.

And the ability of the West to do anything about it is very, very, very small—almost non-existent. The reason being, and we've heard from Trump frequently, you know, "Oh, well, we've sunk their navy." Well, Iran really didn't have a navy in the proper sense of it, deliberately, because navies are sort of vulnerable now. They don't have battleships or carriers or anything like that. But what they do have is real deterrence, because they have, first of all, underwater drones that move very fast, can be directed, and can find their own targets very rapidly. They're like high-speed torpedoes—very little, very difficult to do anything about those. Then they have unmanned surface drones, effectively like speedboats packed with explosives.

But that also moves very fast and can be steered so it can zigzag around. And that, I think you've probably seen videos of, actually struck an American-linked tanker, which ended up in flames. But that's not the end of it, because then they have small surface vessels—like speedboats—but carrying

anti-ship missiles too. And beyond that, Iran has 25 submarines that can fire anti-ship missiles while submerged. So this is their navy. It's not battleships or frigates; it's these small, very fast vessels and submarines. And, you know, it's all been thought through. This is asymmetrical warfare. They didn't need a frigate there or anything like that.

This would be pointless. But I wouldn't like to be the frigate or the tanker that tries to get through Hormuz. And they don't even need to use those, because actually, from the center point—they're making sure that people have to move past Hormuz, Qeshm Island now—which is the narrowest point. That's 21 kilometers from Iran, which means the whole of that area is under fire control from further back, not just from the coastal areas. Artillery can reach all of that area easily. So, I mean, it's no surprise that no one has volunteered to escort a tanker through this. The Iranians control it utterly. What they're going to do with 2,500 Marines supposedly arriving in the next week or so, I have no idea.

## **#Alastair Crooke**

But the Iranian coast of Hormuz is 2,000 kilometers long, which means you'd have about one American Marine per kilometer along that coastline. Are they really going to take that on? And how are they going to suppress the artillery, let alone the missiles that are honeycombed into that shore? As I say, the Iranians have been preparing for this for a very long time. This is asymmetrical warfare, and it's been thought out. And it seems, you know, Trump said, "Oh, we didn't expect this. We didn't think they were going to—I didn't think they would shut Hormuz down." Come on. The Iranians have said that if they were attacked, Hormuz would be shut for the long term. They said that. I kept saying it. I think I probably said it on your program. That's what they would do. And they've done it.

And so what can America or Europe do about it? Nothing, except that eventually they'll have to come to terms with Iran. But the terms Iran will impose on the United States to resolve the economic crisis are going to be, I think, beyond the capacity of the U.S. to tolerate that degree of retreat and humiliation. It will mean lifting all sanctions on Iran and returning all their frozen assets. It will also include an end to all conflicts, the continued enrichment of uranium—their nuclear project—and, I'm almost certain, a demand for Israeli withdrawal from Gaza and from what's happening in the West Bank. So that will be quite hard for Washington to digest. But that's basically what they'd have to contemplate to set this right.

## **#Danny**

Yeah, I mean, that's exactly what Iran is putting out there as proposals, demands—whatever one wants to call them. But Iran is operating with the understanding that it is, in fact, dictating terms, Alastair. And I wanted to ask you—you know, there was a piece in the *\*Financial Times\** that talks about how, with what you just described, this has essentially led to a conclusion around the world that the era of U.S. dominance in economic warfare is over. It specifically cites something we've

mentioned on this show many times before, which is that sanctions are really just a tool to open up a wider war, like we're seeing with Iran.

And that Iran has essentially flipped this against the United States and the entire world. Exactly. I wanted to ask you—you know, a lot of questions, Alistair, have been raised about Iran, given that the U.S. and CENTCOM are putting out all kinds of data that looks very impressive. It looks like the U.S. is causing all kinds of destruction that could change the outcome of this war. For example, CENTCOM just said they dropped bunker busters on the coastline and destroyed some of those anti-ship missile systems you were describing. Now, of course, Iran says differently. But they've also claimed they've hit tens of thousands of targets.

Iran says those are mostly civilian targets. And Iran has not—at least it hasn't been documented yet—been able to hit, for example, the F-35s that have been conducting standoff strikes on Iran. Some have asked in this audience, Alistair, why the U.S. and Israel are able to hit Iran the way they have. And what is the veracity and validity of U.S. and Israeli claims to this kind of dominance they say they're imposing, despite the *Financial Times* talking about what may be the most important part of this war—the economic realm—being firmly in the hands and grip of Iran's dictated terms?

## **#Alastair Crooke**

That's quite a wide area that you've just outlined. But let's start. First of all, what I've tried to get across to people repeatedly—for me, this is sort of *déjà vu*—because I saw so much of this playing out when I was in Lebanon during the 2006 war in the south, the war of Israel against Hezbollah at the time. But the most important point to make is that you can't compare two things that are completely dislike—apples and oranges. You don't say which is better or tastier or something; they're different. And Iran has been pursuing, if you like, an asymmetrical war. They've been planning and preparing for it for 20 years. They've thought about it deeply. They've established a system of decentralized command so that a decapitation does not stop the system.

In fact, by establishing a whole series of commands across the entire extent of Iran—with commanders and pre-designated targets to pursue in the event of a war, or the loss of a command, or communications with Tehran—they've built a system that's ready to act. They have missiles, missile capabilities, and forces. And the key thing is, they have the initiative to pursue the war according to their sealed instructions as soon as the Supreme Leader is killed. Only the Supreme Leader has the authority to change any of those instructions or alter the war planning. So when the Supreme Leader was killed, within an hour, targets in the Gulf states were being hit very quickly because, as I say, all of this was pre-organized and pre-arranged.

So, you know, all the claims we hear from America—that they've killed the commander, the leaders of the military—it's been called a decapitation. You know, they killed a Supreme Leader who was at home. I mean, it wasn't some great intelligence coup. He was sitting at his desk in his home, which is part of his office. I've seen the house; it's very identifiable. We all know where it is—it's on the

edge of a forest in North Tehran. It's a very simple dwelling, a simple building. And he was there with parts of his family, all of whom were killed. I think it's fairly evident that, in a sense, the Supreme Leader had said before this, "Listen, I'm 86, I'm partly crippled. What I have left is my dignity, and that's something you've given to me."

And I am ready to sacrifice that for Iran and for its people. And so I think he did deliberately accept martyrdom. I mean, he'd been told to move, and he said no—other people have nowhere to go, so I'm staying put. So he was killed, and it created a farce among Shia across the region. They're quite a tight community. Yes, there are differences—some are Sevens, some are Twelvers, etc.—but it's created a situation where many of the Ayatollahs of Marja, the people who are emulated and whom you go to for advice, have mandated that it is obligatory to defend Iran. They've said they will declare jihad—mandatory jihad—against America and Israel if the attacks on the Shia leadership continue. So, you know, this aspect of it has not succeeded.

It's actually created something new. One of the things I said to you earlier was that there's been a change in the atmosphere in Israel, but there's also a change in Iran. What it's done is bring the Iranians together like they haven't been since 1979 and the revolution. I mean, they are fully behind the state in this war against America. And, you know, it's Ramadan, and every night after the evening feast they go out into the streets. Even if a rocket lands near the crowds, they don't run, they don't move—they just stay there and keep singing and calling for retribution against America. So it's really brought people together and given them resilience and steadfastness. Yes, it's hurting.

I mean, that's what's happening. As for this other aspect, it's false—and it's exactly what I saw in Lebanon in 2006. You know, the American-Israeli propaganda was, "Oh, these flip-flop-wearing Hezbollah fighters—what chance do they have against the biggest air force in the region and the most sophisticated army of Israel? Of course, victory is certain; they'll just be obliterated." And, of course, what happened was very different. Yes, they did obliterate—but they obliterated the residential area of Dahiya in Beirut. I went there, I saw it. These were residential blocks; they just knocked them down one after another, trying to create a sense of despair and panic.

And then, you know, we had all these statistics—oh, we've done so many raids, we've dropped so many bombs, we've obliterated Hezbollah. But they hadn't. And what happened? It wasn't the three-day war the Israelis said it would take to do this. It was 33 days, and then Israel asked for a ceasefire—demanded a ceasefire. And, you know, what were they hitting? I went down, I saw the tunnels and everything. I went around the south. I mean, the tunnels—they'd put dummies there, mock-ups of launchers. And, you know, they were striking when something very obvious happened: after a week, the Israelis announced their data bank was over. They'd expended all their munitions on that data bank, and they didn't have anything else.

But since the war was going on, what did they do? Well, they started knocking down civilian houses and attacking homes, because they had to keep the statistics up—the war, you know: "How many bombing raids today, General? How many raids yesterday, General?" So they've got to have

something, but they're not targeted. And what we haven't seen in Iran—we haven't seen any sign that they've been able to target the deeply buried, sophisticated missiles. These are dispersed right across mountainous, forested Iran—an area the size of Western Europe, a huge area. And these are buried deeply. There are no missile launchers visible there because they're fired from silos about 90 meters down.

They come straight up through their silo tube and into the atmosphere toward their target. There's an automatic system at about 90 meters that rotates and puts the next missile into place, and then the one after that. So there aren't any of these mobile missile launchers—those do exist, but they're for the simpler ballistic missile types, mostly used to deplete air defenses, either in the Gulf or in Israel. And some of these ballistic missiles—actually, most of the ones Iran is using at this time—date from the 2012–2013 production batch. I mean, they're old, they're early models, and that's what they're using.

They haven't really begun to use many of the newer missiles, mainly the more sophisticated ones that are being reserved for the attack on Israel. So the whole thing is a phased process, and we can track where it is. The first phase was to destroy or deplete the air defenses of the Gulf states. Secondly, to strike the American bases there—but primarily to destroy the radars, to blind the American defensive system. And we know that succeeded because the Israelis are complaining bitterly that, whereas before they had three to five minutes' warning of an incoming missile so they could get down to the shelters, now they're lucky to get one minute—or none.

And that's because the radars are gone, and it's an integrated system, so it isn't giving them the warning. It also explains why much of the Israelis' intercept capability has deteriorated—because without those radars... And Hezbollah has actually been destroying some of the radars in the north of Israel, so nearly all of them are gone. The American Air Force is doing this blind. And no, they do not have air dominance. They keep talking about bombing Tehran as if their aircraft are flying anywhere they choose over Iran, but that's not true. Nearly all of these attacks are standoff attacks from outside Iranian airspace. We saw a big show about B-1s flying over and bombing, if you like, the coastline of Hormuz.

And, you know, the implication is they're free to fly over Iran, no problem. That's not true, because we can see from the photographs that they were loading up with JASSM missiles. Now, I'm not a military person, but I know these are essentially glide missiles. They're not bunker-buster bombs, as they pretend in the press. These are standoff weapons—you drop them outside the airspace, and they glide in and hit the target. So, what's the state of the war? Well, as I said to you a little while ago, you can't really say. I mean, the point about, if you like, the American war—the very visible, obvious attack—is how effective it's actually been.

Well, the answer is we don't really know how effective it's been. You can't—knocking down residential buildings in Tehran isn't effective; it's actually probably counterproductive. So we don't know how effective it is. And the censorship in Israel is extreme—five years' imprisonment for

photographing a missile from Iran as it arrives, and another five years for photographing the aftermath, the effects of it. So we know very little about what's happening. But that's why it was, I think, so important, what I said at the outset of this program: that Netanyahu is saying, "We're not going to achieve our objectives. We're failing. We're not going to collapse."

The state isn't about to collapse—very far from it. It's not going to collapse. We're not achieving our objectives, and we're going to have to rethink this whole system, this idea of the great war, and try to redefine it in a different way. So, you know, I'm sorry, but that's a long answer to what sounds like a simple question: who's winning? I think I would say, in sum, it's America's and Israel's to lose. And Iran has just got to survive it, stand firm, and dominate, if you like, in the economic sphere, and also inflict sufficient punishment on Israel—enough, in its estimation, that Israel will never again decide it's a good idea to launch another war on Iran. Yeah.

## **#Danny**

No, I think all of that was very important, Alistair. And it was a big question that I asked you, so you covered all the points. I'm glad you brought that up at the end—about the economic sphere and dominating it. Well, the data is showing this in many ways. Since February 28th, it's been reported that Iran has actually exported at least 10 million barrels of oil. Some people have told me it's definitely more than that, earning at least \$1 billion or more, despite oil prices soaring and the Strait of Hormuz being closed. And this is kind of the graph showing that—the price of oil. What that particular report doesn't mention is the importance of China. China has actually purchased, I believe, most of Iran's exports at this time.

So I wanted to ask you—given that there are reports about Russian intelligence helping with targeting, and a lot of back-and-forth about China's role—what do you make of Iran's economic response to this war, and how it relates to the larger shift that some have minimized? I mean, this big multipolar shift in the world led by Russia and China. Some have downplayed that and, of course, emphasized Israel's role in the war, but it's clear the United States has a major goal here: to destroy Iran in order to derail that global shift. Yet it seems like Iran, at least economically, has things pretty firmly under control right now. And the U.S. seems afraid to bomb Iran's exports, given what that would do to the oil markets. So what's your reaction to that, and how does it fit into this multipolar shift?

## **#Alastair Crooke**

Well, I started a little earlier by saying that the domination of these seaways, these choke points, and these naval corridors for energy products is going to change the whole Gulf. The Gulf—if it wants to have revenue, if it wants to import food—will have to deal with Iran and accept Iran's domination of this area. It's going to be a major geopolitical change for the Gulf, a 180-degree shift.

But the bigger picture, which you allude to, is very important too, because it changes the broader geopolitical map. You mentioned China—about 40% of the oil passing through Hormuz is being delivered to China, and China is sending its own tankers through Hormuz.

The Iranians allow Chinese tankers to pass without incident. However, America keeps talking about how they're going to impose sanctions or close it or something. Nonetheless, about 40% of Hormuz's exports actually go to China, since it's such a big energy consumer—though that's only around 5% of China's total energy consumption. So even if Hormuz were shut down by some American action, the Chinese could live with that. It's not existential at all. Meanwhile, as part of this broader geopolitical shift, Iran is saying that if you want to pass through Hormuz today, all you have to do is make it clear that the cargo was bought and paid for in renminbi—in yuan, Chinese yuan.

And so that's how Pakistan managed to get its tanker through. India has also been allowed to pass tankers through. Pakistan made a statement and convinced the Iranians that their cargo was transacted in yuan. So this is, again, nudging very firmly toward a bigger geopolitical shift. If you like, for the whole of Asia and for the world to see that, in this new era, if you want to do business—especially in energy—you have to shift and think about trading in yuan if you want your vessels to pass through. So this is a really important element of the bigger picture, moving into a different era and a different direction—both for China and away from the dollar.

So, dollar trade—cargoes are not accepted. Dollar payments are not accepted. Only yuan payments will get you through Hormuz. This is an aspect that hasn't had much attention, probably because America is absolutely determined to keep its dollar hegemony for reasons we can see and understand, but which are nonetheless seen by the rest of the world as basically a form of coercion—to extract concessions from those states, either in terms of giving money to the United States or making investments in the United States, particularly in manufacturing industries.

## **#Danny**

Yeah, no, those are great points. And, uh, as we head to the end here, Alistair, I just wanted to ask—you were talking about the Gulf states before, and about them being firmly in the U.S. camp. It seems that the longer this war goes on, given the shift happening in the world and the hedging we've seen over the years—especially with Saudi Arabia normalizing with Iran, and so on—this war has kind of exposed that a lot of these Gulf states really don't have sovereignty. They're following U.S. diktats, despite the massive damage Iran has done to U.S. assets there and, therefore, to the economies of these Gulf states.

What do you make of the future of the region now that, you know, as this thing goes on, it's obviously going to have massive economic impacts on these states? Do you foresee that could create a rupture? I'm even thinking—will they try to come together like they supposedly did before the strikes started and really pull on Trump's coattails, saying, "Hey, can you stop this thing? Can you actually make a deal so it doesn't lead to our ruination?" What do you make of this? Because I'm

seeing a very bleak future for the likes of the UAE, even Saudi Arabia and Qatar. I mean, Qatar—I don't think it's pumping gas right now. It's a really bleak situation. So, what are your thoughts on this?

## **#Alastair Crooke**

You didn't mention Bahrain, but Bahrain is in the process of a color revolution. And of course, as you know, it's about 70 to 80 percent Shia, ruled by a Sunni monarch and a defense force that protects them, which is all Sunni. There have been huge protests and uprisings. I think what's shaking the Gulf is the idea that this could ignite, if you like, a different but new sort of Arab Spring, because they feel a lack of legitimacy on the ground. So they're very concerned about it. But they've been so thoroughly embedded into the Western economic and AI investment paradigm that it's going to be hard for them to make a transition or get out of it.

And, you know, it's quite conceivable that we'll see a very different geography in the future in the Gulf region. Maybe some states will disappear or change. I'm not going to predict how or what—I can't. But I think there's going to be a massive reaction to this. I mean, the whole lifestyle. I remember going to see the Emir of Qatar once, and while we were waiting for the appointment, I was sitting in his chief of staff's office. It was bizarre—it felt like being on Wall Street, with all the Bloomberg terminals tracking every movement: red, green, what's going up, where's energy, what stocks are rising.

I mean, it was like a hedge fund. And many of them have actually become sort of semi-hedge funds. Is it possible to continue in that mode? I don't know. I think it's quite doubtful. But, as I say, they've got an existential issue facing them. Where do they stand in this war now? Are they going to stand with the United States as it escalates further against Iran? Or will they decide that, if they want to keep trading and earning revenue, they'll have to start talking about a new relationship with Iran? That's for us to wait and see.

## **#Danny**

And then finally, my last question to you, Alistair, is this: since I believe this is the first time we've talked since the February 28th beginning of this massive kinetic escalation by the U.S. and Israel, how have you seen it affecting the other major flashpoints in the world—the Ukrainians, of course, and the buildup toward China? How has this war altered these, I guess you could say, areas of interest for the U.S. empire and, of course, those it drags along with it?

## **#Alastair Crooke**

It depends a little bit on how this turns out. But this is already having a really significant effect. I mean, first of all, there's the sense that the word of the American leadership is not to be believed—that after three deceptions in a row toward Iran, with decapitations, or providing for decapitations,

and there were more than that—the lessons are about the dangers to one’s own leadership, the dangers of trying to negotiate with the United States. But more than that, I think the effect of these two things—of this language, and also the effect of, you know, the new social media that comes out overnight—is that around the world people are laughing, laughing at them increasingly, because sometimes they’re quite absurd, and what they say is quite absurd. So I think there’s that sense too.

But also, I think what’s quite striking is the language itself. It talks about the Iranians as being evil people who cut the heads off babies and cut women in half, and that they are, you know, people—well, this polarization that’s implicit in that language suggests you’re talking about such an extreme dichotomy of evil and subhuman people on the one hand, that obliteration becomes really the only outcome. And I think this is a bigger issue, and we didn’t touch on it, but it’s something that’s worrying a great number of Americans. I mean, where do we stand in this? Are we in favor of obliteration, or are we not? And was this war really in America’s greater interest? If not, who was behind it? Who controlled it?

What was the mechanism? Who’s in charge? And what interests were they pursuing? So this is a debate that’s opened, and I think it’s going to come to the forefront. This is going to have a big impact on the elections. It’s already having an impact. Is Trump going to be able to recover? Are the Republicans going to be able to recover? I think it’s quite doubtful that they can. I listened to an American politician who was at a Republican meeting yesterday—at a club, I think in Florida, one of Trump’s golf clubs—and they were meeting to discuss where things are going in the lead-up to the midterms. And he said, “Listen, I think most of them know they’re going to be drowned. Some may hope to stay afloat till ’28, but most of them think they’re going to get drowned in the midterms.”

So I think the unexpected element, perhaps, in all this is that it’s going to induce some introspection in the United States about, you know, what is this—if you like—this unseen power structure that takes us unerringly from war to war, even when it’s clearly against our interests, as expressed in the polls and everywhere else, that we do not want another war in the Middle East. So what is this power structure? Who’s behind it? And what are their ultimate interests in it? We’ve had wars in Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya—all of these wars. I mean, were they really in America’s interests? Are the financial benefits that seem to come out of these wars in the general interests of Americans? I think people are demanding that we try to get to the bottom of this, that we discuss it among ourselves, and decide where we stand.

## **#Danny**

Yeah, I think that’s a great place to close, Alistair. I want to make sure everybody knows to subscribe and follow the Conflicts Forum Substack, which is linked in the video description below. You can hit the like button, too, so more people find this conversation we just had with Alistair, as well as the Conflicts Forum Substack. In addition to hitting the like button, there are many ways to support the channel in the description—Patreon, Substack, and more. But Alistair, any final words before we head out?

## **#Alastair Crooke**

Not really. No, nothing further. From what I said, I mean, many things are going to change, I believe, in this period. It's an inflection point for America as much as it is for the Middle East, and for China and Russia. Of course, all sorts of messages—you can imagine the Russians are watching what's happened with Iran in their war as they continue their own. Yeah, definitely.

## **#Danny**

Well, Alistair, we'll have to keep in touch. We're going to leave it here for now, but we'll be in touch and back again with more updates on the show. Until next time, we'll be on at 1 p.m. Eastern tomorrow. I'll announce all of that very soon. Hit the like button before you go, and I'll see you all again tomorrow.

## **#Alastair Crooke**

Bye-bye.