

# Alastair Crooke: Iran Will Emerge Stronger After the War & Reshape the Global Economy

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## #Glenn

Welcome back. We're joined today by Alastair Crooke. Today is April 7th. Thank you very much for coming back on the program.

## #Alastair Crooke

Oh, it's my pleasure to join you.

## #Glenn

Well, as I said, today is April 7th, and Trump threatened that he would essentially destroy everything in Iran by the deadline tonight, which is 8 p.m. Eastern Standard Time. Again, it's a very big statement. I'm not sure what to make of it. Is this another bluff? You know, he tends to put a lot of emphasis on this maximum pressure, but given that Iran can't capitulate, I'm not sure whether he's actually planning to go through with what he threatened or if he misunderstands Iran's position.

## #Alastair Crooke

Well, I think you put a very, you know...

## #Alastair Crooke

Favorable complexion on it.

## #Alastair Crooke

It struck me that these statements and the things he's been talking about are just getting crazier and crazier, further away from any sort of real rationality. You know, swearing at people and saying—and someone said, "But what you're doing is going to be war crimes. How are you going to do these things without committing a war crime?" And he just said, "Look, they're animals. It doesn't matter." I mean, these seem to me to be some of the statements coming out from Trump. I'm not suggesting that he's in complete command of his mental faculties or thinking things through. And I think there's increasing concern about that, particularly in the Pentagon, because they're at risk of making the wrong decision. They'll be the ones who have to go and tell the parents that their children are dead.

So it's always more acute in the Pentagon in that respect. But even within his own team, I believe that Vance was desperately, last night, trying to get a ceasefire together, talking to Pakistan. I don't know who else he was talking to, but clearly he was trying to get some sort of ceasefire arranged. But Iran has already given their answer to the United States. It's very clear—they gave, I think, a ten-point response or whatever—but it said there will be no ceasefire that suits him to get Homs or Qom. Their conditions remain what they've always been. And the bedrock of those conditions seems to me to be the ones that were made by the Supreme Leader in his statement a little while ago—a twelve-minute-long statement—and he said all troops have to leave the Persian Gulf region. Then there has to be a lifting of all sanctions and an unfreezing of their assets.

And thirdly, you've got to pay reparations in some way for the damage you're doing to Iran. I don't think that's what Trump has in mind. He says, you know, "I'm only interested in an agreement that suits me." He says that pretty frankly. Well, I don't think the sides are very far apart. The foreign ministry has again reaffirmed that they are not interested in a temporary ceasefire, only a final solution to the problem. So I don't think he's going to get the capitulation he seems to continually expect from Iran—after his bluster and threats, the evening before he expects them to come begging for a ceasefire, begging for a solution.

And it's going to put him in a difficult position, because I was going to say that it's really time for people to acknowledge—though I know this is very difficult for many to accept—that the reality is Iran is getting stronger, and therefore has less and less reason to capitulate. It is getting stronger. If you look at a simple metric, Israel keeps writing—I look at the Hebrew press—and they say, "Oh, well, they've got no money left, they're going to be broke." On the contrary, in the first month of this war, Iran made double, in oil revenues, what it did in any month in recent history—double that. Yesterday, I think it was Sunday, five tankers were loaded at Kharg and were part-processed to pass Qeshm and Kish through the straits on the other side.

And they contain 7.7 million barrels, equivalent to about \$850 million. So, you know, the prospect isn't that they're going broke. In fact, they're earning more money than before, and that's going to increase, because more and more states are coming to the conclusion that if you want to get your

oil or gas out, or the other materials you need for your supply lines—which are becoming so crucial—then you have to do a deal with Iran. That's it. If not, you do without. So, I mean, it's a fairly strong position they're in.

I think the other two things are, first of all, people are beginning to realize that all the propaganda about the destruction of their military forces was actually about the destruction of the huge purchase Iran made of decoys from China. They bought a lot—really a lot—of decoys, and they're very high-quality ones. I was surprised to learn, I was told the other day by the Iranians, that they actually emit heat as well. It's a good thing for them—they emit heat so that American sensors and radars pick them up not as decoys, but as the genuine article, because they're looking for a heat signature, and they're getting one from these decoys.

Very common—the Chinese just need to put that in their decoys. So, the other thing is that, of course, Iran and its population are being subjected to bombardment, mostly targeting civilian infrastructure. But what I understand is that it's actually, amazingly, less than in the 12-day war. There may be about 10,000 casualties—less than in the 12-day war—because they emptied all the institutions, all the, you know, symbols of the state, and most of the medical facilities and universities. All emptied. And largely, Trump, in his anger, has been bombing empty buildings.

But, you know, the point is, yes, people will get killed. I mean, caretakers, but also they do bomb residential areas. There are, of course, casualties coming. But so there are in Israel. Israel hides everything, but clearly they are suffering enormous losses. Unlike, if you like, the adversary, Iran does not typically target civilian structures or civilians. They do a rough proportional response, basically—an escalatory ladder. If they're attacked at the university level, they'll go up a step on the ladder. They won't take that step first unless they're attacked on that kind of plane of targeting.

If they're attacked on that plane of targeting, then they move up and attack on another. I don't think... I don't think the West has properly understood the basic Iranian equation. The basic Iranian equation is this: security for all or security for no one; prosperity for all or prosperity for no one. This is the equation that says, yes, there can be security and peace, but that means for everyone—and that means, of course, for Palestinians, in Palestinian terms, for Hezbollah, for Ansarullah, and for the Hashar, of course. So it's a different approach, a very different approach from the one being pursued by Trump.

As I say, I believe Vance was trying desperately to get a ceasefire last night—up all night, he was said to be trying to do this. But this has been the practice, and it doesn't work. They just keep doing the same thing. In Ukraine, it was always about a ceasefire, with long talks among Europeans and others, papers being passed around. But it was really the West discussing it among themselves. Because, as Lavrov pointed out, we've never seen those papers. We don't see them, we're not involved in the talks, and we don't agree to a ceasefire. And, you know, it's the same position we're in now with Iran.

Iran is saying to them, "No, I'm sorry—you want to do a proper peace agreement? You want to provide security for us, agree on a security paradigm for us? Okay, we can do that, but it's security for the whole region. And that means you have to remove yourself from the region, because you're not providing security, you're providing insecurity. So you have to leave your bases and go." And that is the paradigm. But it's still, you know, let's—well, you remember the same thing in Gaza with Witkoff and Kushner: "Yes, we're going to have a peace process. It's going to be a peace process."

## **#Glenn**

And then you've got to do all this, and the hostages have to be freed. And then what was stage two?

## **#Alastair Crooke**

Never defined. Never spoken about. What was stage two of it? No one really knows. I mean, it's still in the sort of Witkoff deciding what might be a materially advantageous solution. So I think this is really where we are on this. Iran is in a strong position.

## **#Alastair Crooke**

It's not going to be dislodged from the Home Office. And Trump now faces, as does Europe—still somehow hanging on to the American coattails—a very difficult position. That partly comes from the failure of what happened over the weekend, the catastrophic failure, which was complicated. We can go into it, and I'd like to say as much as possible about it, but it has repercussions because, effectively, what we do know—can I say a few words about that?

## **#Glenn**

Oh, yeah. No, actually, I was going to ask about that, because I read on your—well, I should have mentioned you're also the director of the Conflict Forum, which is a Substack. And I noticed that you wrote about some of these issues, which I wanted to ask about.

## **#Alastair Crooke**

So what we know—and a lot of this comes from Robert Pounce, the constitutional lawyer who's a friend of J.D. Vance—is that in the lead-up to Easter, because, as everyone has probably realized by now, Trump likes to start military operations when the markets are closed and then have a solution and a positive story to tell on the Monday or Tuesday when they open again. An upbeat story for that. So before Easter, when a military operation was being planned, Vance went to Susie Wiles, who is Trump's chief of staff.

She's really the sort of gatekeeper for Trump, because he believed that information from Israel—distorted pictures—was being, as we say, stovepiped directly to the president by Kushner. Kushner

was presenting a rosy picture of Trump's successes against Iran, with images of explosions and damage being done. He gets a two-minute video that shows him all the latest Pentagon attacks on Iran in vivid colors, and that's the only briefing he gets—these kinds of videos and clips. Anyway, Vance went to Susie Wiles, I believe—this is from Barnes's account, who knows him well—and he said, not literally but effectively, that he pounded the table and Susie Wiles told him, "Listen, you've got to show the counter-picture to the president."

I insisted that he had to do it, because otherwise Trump was getting this completely distorted view—of successful operations against Iran, Iran on the point of, you know, collapsing, Israel suffering no problems or damage, and so on. We don't know exactly what was being shown, but this is obviously what not only Vance but other people like Griskell, the Army Secretary, and Gavard believed—that Susie Wiles was excluding the other pictures. And we know there is another picture, and there's some uncertainty because you've all seen how many generals have been sacked now, I think. Someone asked him, "How many generals have you sacked?" And he wouldn't say—he said, "Five, seven, something like that. I don't know."

I don't know the correct thing, but, you know, people are getting sacked—and what are they getting sacked for? Well, I mean, a whole array of reasons. They're there at the pleasure of the president, as Hegseth said, but it's also believed that it's because they think these military plans—the idea of putting troops on the ground and all that—haven't been thought through and are therefore going to be a disaster. So anyway, that was all set up. And there was a plan for Easter. We have a pretty good idea that that was one of Trump's sort of favorite "in-boom" moments—that the special forces, who were already pre-positioned in Kuwait, which has long been a kind of special forces base, were going to go and operate at Isfahan.

The narrative is that Grossi, the head of the IAEA, said, "Oh yes, well, the enriched uranium at 60%—the 430 kilos of it—is in this tunnel. It's for harm." And maybe some of it had been moved, but 60% to 70%, he was suggesting, was still there. So they wanted to go in, take it, and be out by Saturday. Then, by the weekend, Trump could have a big success—a sort of Maduro-type operation. Only what happened was that an F-15 was shot down, close to Isfahan. What was curious about that was that there was a pilot and a weapons support officer as the number two on that plane. It's a two-man plane.

And the second officer was a full colonel. And that really is very, very bizarre because, you know, this is admitted—Trump calls him "our brave colonel." But what was the colonel doing as the number two in an F-15? Normally that would be a second lieutenant, you know—it wouldn't even be a lieutenant colonel, let alone a full colonel. A full colonel would have commanded the entire base, in military aviation terms. We don't know the answer to why he was in it. Anyway, they were shot down by Iranian air defenses. And then there's a hugely complicated story about exactly where it happened.

But it was generally confirmed from geolocation—it was close to Isfahan. Then attempts were made to start a rescue immediately, partly because of the pilot's high rank and partly because they always fear a hostage situation. The Israelis were pressing that point: you don't want a pilot taken prisoner by Iran and turned into a hostage. You'd spend a year negotiating a release, if not longer. So there was a big hunt. I'll leave out the details because it was complicated, but first of all, it didn't go well.

Shall we say, first of all, that the first Achilles aircraft that landed—with helicopters, possibly those mini-helicopters inside—came under fire. They made a hard landing in this agricultural field not far from Isfahan, and they crashed. Were people killed? Were they injured? We don't know. We can see the wreckage, but maybe that was because it was later destroyed by the Americans or bombed. That's not entirely clear. Then we get into the most extraordinary story, because suddenly we're talking about not just more big aircraft with many helicopters inside—four, six, seven, a lot of them—and then an Airbus transport, and we're talking about something like 100 to 130 Special Forces on the ground.

## **#Alastair Crooke**

I don't know what was going on altogether, but my suspicion is that an operation was set up. We know that because Edgdon talked about it and said, you know, for the operation to go and seize the uranium, they had to plan for a military airfield to be established near Isfahan, bring troops in, and take the material out of the city. So I think the operation was all set up and ready to go. And then on Friday, inadvertently, an F-15 was shot down and they had two missing pilots. So part of the operation had to become a rescue mission to try to get the pilots back. And I guess the commanders went to Trump and said, "Look, Mr. President, we've got a problem. We've got two aviators down. We need to find them. Shall we cancel the operation for Isfahan?"

And I think he said no. So we ended up with all these troops on the ground and so many planes. I think altogether they lost about 12 planes that were destroyed, including the F-15s, in the sort of consequential fight. Of course, it's very likely—I mean, the Iranians were, you know, playing this along, I suspect, before it was finished. Because, you know, first of all, we've all heard Grossi saying he went on television and said, "Oh, it's there, in this tunnel—there's a little tunnel just out there—it's all sitting there, half of it, at least half, more than half, is sitting there." So he said that, and the Iranians knew that. The Iranians probably knew there was this disused airfield quite close to Isfahan. I mean, you know, they are military people.

They understand how special forces operate. And I can tell you, you know, 130 special forces is not normal—that's company size. I mean, special forces like Delta or the British SAS are usually in eight-man squads. Eight men, you could double it—16, maybe 30—but 130? You know, this is not just a rescue operation. So I think they put it to Trump—he looked at some commander and probably said, "Listen, we've got a problem with this airframe down and missing crews, and we've got a rescue operation. Shall we cancel the Isfahan one?" And he said no. And then the whole thing collapsed

and went badly wrong. We don't know how many casualties—they won't say. I would think it's very likely there were a number of casualties; we just don't know. But they lost, in the process of this, 12 aircraft.

So I think the point I'm making about his bigger picture is that I very much doubt it. I think, you know, what Trump has always wanted—he wants a sort of Venezuela solution: in, boom, out. Go in, Delta Force, take Maduro, come back. And he's always been hankering for them to take the uranium out and be ready, before markets open on Monday, to pronounce a great victory. And a long weekend over Easter was quite convenient, with a market shock lasting a bit longer. Well, you know, I just underline—I can't prove any of this. This is speculative, putting together what we do know from facts on the ground. What is still not known—there are many aspects of this that remain very much unknown.

But my feeling is that it doesn't add up as just a simple rescue operation. A simple rescue of a crew would have meant long-range helicopters—if it was safe to go in there—perhaps with air cover or something like that, to find the man. They had a beacon on him, a radio beacon, and they have a light beacon as well, on the suit. There are established procedures for this. But you don't put masses of people on the ground in big, heavy aircraft and then say some of them got stuck in the sand. I mean, it's not like that. Special forces would have identified that landing strip and tested it beforehand to make sure. You know, it's difficult landing a Hercules on sand if it's not solid or stable. You know, these things you have to do.

Otherwise, you could lose all the crew and the soldiers inside the Hercules. I do know a little about that. You know, it's not as simple as it may seem in the briefings you just brought up. Say there's a landing field—just go and land on that—and you could lose everything. So you need to plan this very carefully. Anyway, now that it's sort of—well, it's claimed to be huge—I mean, of course it'll be a Hollywood film. This is inevitable. You know, like after the killing of Osama bin Laden, which was all fake. But it'll be a Hollywood film nonetheless, I'm sure. But in fact, I think that operation is over, because they've advertised it, and they know they've advertised it.

## **#Alastair Crooke**

Even though the Iranians were quite capable of figuring it out for themselves.

## **#Alastair Crooke**

But they've advertised the whole process, and so, you know, the Iranians will be waiting if they try to do it again. So what does this mean? How does this fit into the big picture? It fits in the following way: this was supposed to be the quick, you know, quick success—like a Venezuela-type success—that would allow Trump to say, "Wave one, and I'm out," and to get out of the process with a victory. I think that's over. So what he faces now is what I think he least wanted: a long war. A long, bitter war, which means damage to allies and business partners of his and his family's in the Gulf. A

long, bitter war—or the alternative of putting troops on the ground in Iraq to try to achieve some sort of victory by opening Hormuz.

And that is likely—unless that's why there's some sort of pushback. We know there's a big pushback taking place in the Pentagon. It signals that it's going to be a catastrophe. They're not going to be able to take it. In fact, this is what the IRGC would welcome—American forces. If you know the geography of Hormuz and that part of Iran, I mean, it would be, you know—well, all I can say is, best of luck. But I'd be glad if it didn't occur, because it would not be successful. But what else can he do?

## **#Glenn**

Yeah, well, given this military operation, which went so horribly wrong—when Trump tweeted out, or put on social media, this message—I think everyone's read it by now. He wrote, "Tuesday will be power plant day and bridge day all wrapped up in one in Iran. There will be nothing like it. Open the fucking strait, you crazy bastards, or you'll be living in hell. Just watch. Praise be to Allah, President Donald J. Trump." I could interpret it in two ways. One is, you know, this horrible military operation goes wrong, so he's angry, he loses his mind. On the other hand, one thing he does very well—if something goes wrong, be it the Epstein files or something—he's very good at bringing a new shiny object over here. And suddenly all the media focuses on the vile language and the threats of war crimes. And there hasn't been that much talk about what went so wrong in this military operation. Again, it could be both.

## **#Alastair Crooke**

Because he's threatening people—you've seen that. He said, oh, someone talked about a pilot being, you know, on the ground in Iran, and this man should go to prison. "We're going to identify the journalists who said it, and we're going to put him in prison." Well, he's going to have difficulty doing that, because it first came out in the Israeli press, not actually in the U.S. press. So maybe he needs to go to Israel to find the culprit and put them in prison. But I mean, you know, these outpourings—as I say—well, actually, they're unimpressive. And the Iranians, you know, just, I mean, just regard it as ravings.

## **#Glenn**

I want to ask you about your comment that Iran might come out of this war much more powerful, because I agree with what you said about the ceasefire. I think this applies to both Iran and Russia. The objective seems to be to use sanctions and military actions to gradually weaken Iran year by year until it falls apart. And I think that's what they're doing with the Russians as well, which is why a ceasefire doesn't make sense. I think the foreign minister of Iran said, "Well, this will just give the Americans time to regroup, rearm, and have another go at it."

Of course, they want to exit this, but the way they're looking to do that is essentially not just about preventing an American threat. It appears to be about reorganizing the region's economics as well—removing all sanctions, but also having the U.S. not control the trading currency or the shipping corridors, and reducing its powerful influence over the Gulf states. So how do you see Iran's economic goals? Because I find it interesting that, you know, the U.S. usually has some economic interest in wars, but Iran seems to have destroyed the economic benefits of fighting this war with the Iranians.

## **#Alastair Crooke**

I would say, you know, it's understood in completely the opposite way, mostly in Washington. But for the Iranians, this is seen as both necessary and an opportunity—an opportunity, yes—because this is how they can break out of their 70 years of containment. They've been placed in a kind of cage, just as, if you like, Hamas and Gaza are in a literal cage, with fences, borders, and drones overhead. So, Iran—have you looked at all the military bases surrounding it? On every side, Iran is surrounded by U.S. military bases. And that was deliberate. It goes back to the 1970s, when Iran didn't have the advanced missiles it has now.

So they've been caged in—not by offense, but by military forces. The control of the Persian Gulf, and they regarded it as the Persian Gulf, was held by two main elements, particularly in their own Gulf: the Fifth Fleet in Bahrain, and all the special forces down in Kuwait. Those were the same special forces that were operating in Iraq, so they'd been there for a long time. It's been known as the sort of special forces base for CENTCOM in the region, with CENTCOM itself in Qatar, along with all their radars and intelligence gathering.

## **#Glenn**

And so this was really effective.

## **#Alastair Crooke**

They dominated the Strait of Hormuz in a way that allowed them to control the flow of traffic through it, and they controlled all the areas around it. All the Gulf states had become, if you like, supplicants of the United States—not just in security issues, but in financial ones as well. So you had these three layers: first, a military engagement; then naval control of the seaways and the choke points of the region, exercised by the Fifth Fleet and by military bases across the region, especially the Al Udeid base, the main base there. And then you had the third element, which was financial control—the Gulf states were the bedrock of the petrodollar system.

And the petrodollar system came to life when they reached the understanding that they could be the recipients of all the revenues from oil and gas, and that they would then have to use the U.S. dollar. Of course, the U.S. dollar was then sent back to New York banks. But I don't think, until this point

where it could be lost, we've really seen how much the Gulf states were the linchpin of the financialization of the Western world. Those deposits were put back into Wall Street, and they became—well, it was actually, in a sense, a poison pill too, as well as a great benefit.

I mean, the great benefit was that all those revenues came in and allowed America to run a huge deficit. And they could—you know—the dollar hegemony allowed them to sanction and tariff people. But also, the money side of it, the way it went into the system, actually shifted the economy away from being a manufacturing base—making money by producing things people wanted to buy and providing employment—and it became financialized. So you make money by trading in the West today; it's all about the traders. We've even had those joking cartoons of people looking at what Trump's next statement is going to be and saying, "Has everyone got their trades in yet?"

You know, apparently there was huge money made before his first sort of threatening tweet, because people were betting heavily on the futures markets—going short on the futures and then buying them back later. They could make a billion in a day. I mean, it's outrageous. It's really, you know, kind of unbelievable. But all of these things—whether it's tech, or takeovers, or anything else—it became a very financialized economy. And this was something from which Iran is deliberately excluded, Russia is excluded, China is excluded, and even Brexit is excluded.

This was the Gulf States, and they were encouraged, too, in '73, '74. You know, they weren't told to keep the price of oil down—they were told to keep the price of oil up. Now, why would you do that? Because all that money was going straight back to Wall Street, and Wall Street was going to use it as the basis for financial leverage around the world. The first thing that happened was that debt was imposed on the Global South—huge debts. Credit was given to the Global South, which, of course, when they defaulted, meant the assets then fell due to Wall Street. So this is really a key element of the whole global construct. China and Russia can see that very clearly. I mean, they follow this exactly. And so, think of what happens at the end of this war—think of what we're heading towards.

It's not just what I described at the outset—you know, five tankers leaving on Sunday and 850 million coming into Iran. And as I say, they've earned double what they were earning in this first week of the war, in a month, more than in any earlier month. So, you know, that side of it is very clear. But think more broadly. I mean, if they remain in control of the energy flows from Hormuz and the Red Sea—because, of course, the Houthis are close allies in this venture—well, Hormuz is perhaps 11% of the total, but if you add in the Red Sea, then you're up to about 20% of global energy under the control of Iran. And with control comes the ability to set prices, of course, which America set—high prices—because it suited their oil companies and it suited that financial system. But perhaps we will see a different pricing coming.

But with 20%—and we haven't even touched on this yet—on the other hand, we've all seen what happened when Mr. Trump threatened China with tariffs and said, "Well, we're going to do 155% tariffs on China," and things like that. You know, you've got to bend tariffs to our will. And China said, "Well, you know, we control rare earths, and we control key elements that you need for your

tech industry—for chips, for all sorts of things.” And suddenly you realize this, because when Iran has destroyed that huge billion-dollar radar system at Al Udeid, not only would it take five to eight years to rebuild, but they don’t have the necessary metals. I’m not a scientist, but there are certain metals and key chemicals they need—not just helium, not just sulfuric acid, not just the other things that pass through the Gulf—but more than that.

## **#Glenn**

So we're talking about control of the supply lines too.

## **#Alastair Crooke**

I mean, to the extent—the key elements of our supply lines will be effectively under Iranian control. And how they exercise that—well, how are they going to exercise that? First of all, they’re going to say, “You’re not going to travel through Hormuz if you support sanctions.” So the first thing is, it’s going to break sanctions. And the second thing, it’s going to, if you like, break the dollar hegemony, because they’ll insist that the cargoes they check are paid for in rial. And we’re already seeing the change happen. For example, for the first time, we see a major European bank, Deutsche Bank, announce that it’s not going to continue lending in Europe.

No, I'm not saying they're stocking it all together, but they’re saying, “We’re not only going to lend in dollars; now we’re going to lend in yuan,” and they’re doing panda bonds. Big deal—the first time a major European bank has done that. You know, we’ve heard of the Eurodollar market, but now they’re lending in panda bonds. And China has already said that. And Russia has said—sorry, just this last week—that it will only receive payment from Europeans for gas and oil in yuan, not in dollars. I mean, since Russia said you won’t be able to pay in dollars any longer. So already, the effects of Hormuz are much wider—they’re spreading and changing the global economy, and therefore the global politics, the geopolitics, of the world.

## **#Glenn**

Well, given that there’s so much at stake here—not just a humiliating military defeat, but essentially the transformation of the global economy—is there any diplomatic pathway then? Because you mentioned J.D. Vance was on the phone the whole night. I guess they’re going through their Pakistani interlocutors, but... You know, you were a negotiator for the British government. So if you were to enter this, are there any meeting points, or is there simply no diplomacy here? Because it seems to be all or nothing for both the Iranians and the Americans. But given that Iran has the possibility—if it bows too much to U.S. demands, it could be destroyed; if it holds its ground, it could come out of this war much more powerful and transform the global economy. So, given there’s so much at stake here, what actually can be negotiated? Or do you think we’re beyond that already?

## **#Alastair Crooke**

I don't—I mean, I think the Iranians would see negotiating on, for example, what was supposed to be Witkoff's 15-point plan, as not a solution but a defeat. For Iran, this is an existential war. They have to win it, and that means pushing it to the point where America capitulates on certain key elements. The Iranians have been very fastidious, and they've set out clearly what they're seeking. And, you know, it's an end to the war. I mean, this actually mirrors what Putin has been saying about Ukraine: no, we're not going to have a little stitch-up ceasefire that lasts a few months while you rearm the Ukrainians.

We want a proper security understanding—where we determine the boundaries of NATO and the boundaries of Ukraine, the Chinese and Asian spheres of influence. What is the NATO sphere of interest? Where does that frontier lie, and where does ours lie? We want an architecture—a security architecture. Well, in a sense, this is what Iran is insisting on. It's saying, no, we can't just have a 45-day ceasefire. Why would we do that? Why go along with that? And of course, if we had a ceasefire—because no one... I mean, the other element of this is the lack of trust in the American negotiation.

They're regarded as untrustworthy and prone to trying to create, you know, opportunities for quick strikes while at the same time pretending to negotiate. I mean, we've seen that three or four times in practice, particularly with Qatar, where the negotiations were supposed to go on for the next two or three days or so. So there's a real disgust with negotiating with the United States. But the second thing is, they're not really negotiating with the United States—and Iran understands that. They're negotiating with a certain element of Israelis, if I can call them the sort of Zeus-supremacist element of Israelis, who see, if you like, a Judaic hegemony across the Middle East.

And so they're dealing with that. They know that if there's a pause, Israel will insist that America has to continue the war against them. And indeed, that's what I see in the Hebrew press these days. In fact, from Jerusalem there's a very insistent demand that Trump must keep going. First of all, it was to put troops onto Kargaila—you must do that, at minimum. And now the second demand is to escalate, to start attacking their oil and energy supplies.

## **#Alastair Crooke**

You have to attack them.

## **#Alastair Crooke**

Iran understands that Israel's objective is the destruction of Iran—not an accommodation with Iran, not an understanding with Iran, not a treaty with Iran, but the destruction and breakup of Iran into separate ethnic or sectarian states, into anarchy, a sort of Syria or Daesh version of Iran. So, you know, this is the second point. I'm sure Vance has the best of intentions here, but behind him, you know, pulling the strings, are figures from that particular caliber of Israeli Jewish society. And it's not

everyone, because quite clearly we see big divisions—hopefully not in Israel at the moment—but those who believe in Greater Israel, and those who believe in Israeli hegemony across the energy and resource networks of the Middle East, are the ones calling the shots with respect to Trump.

## **#Glenn**

It's, again, as you said before, got a lot of similarities to the war against Russia, because when the Belgian prime minister was suggesting, you know, once we have peace with Russia, then we have to straighten everything out—nobody really wants that. Even after the war, they still seem to want to keep going, to go after Russia, to try to weaken it. So there's no interest in fundamentally changing the underlying causes of why we have to be locked into this conflict long term. Instead, any peace would just be a temporary setback while we prepare for the next one. Yeah, so I see why ceasefires are popular in Iran and Russia. Yeah.

## **#Alastair Crooke**

Because essentially it's the same interests at play—both in Russia and in what happens to Iran. And those interests decided long ago that Iran must be destroyed because it poses a threat to Israeli hegemony. It poses no threat to the United States. Iran has never threatened the United States. Yes, they chant "Death to the United States" because they're being attacked by the United States. Like in the Iraq war—an Iranian war where, you know, the United States set Iraq against Iran in order to try to destroy it. Time and again, there have been attempts to bring down the Iranian state.

We've seen Mossadegh, the Iran-Iraq war, and then recently the protests, and the shorting of the rial currency to try to destroy the economy. All of these things they understand. That's why I'm saying there's a parallel, if you like—a similarity here. And, you know, the interests in Russia go beyond just its resources. It's also a settling of accounts, accounts that go back quite a long way and became more acute during the '90s. I mean, it became extremely so during the '90s, during the attempt to impose economic shock therapy on Russia.

I mean, it had, you know, results—the connotations of that were extreme. People lost everything, especially the middle class. They had nothing; they were literally selling their books and the things they'd accumulated over their lives. So we're talking about a real hold-on moment—about which way the world is going to go. And much of it is going to hinge on this conflict in Iran, and on the economic circumstances of China. More things are going to come into play. What's happening in China is with the head of the CCP, I think—the Communist Party.

I said it probably incorrectly—the Kuomintang Party, from the old civil war with China. Now they want to come, and they're all going to make a trip and probably meet with Xi, the head of the opposition in Taiwan—the nationalist opposition, the old party of, if you like, the resistance to Mao Zedong and the Chinese Communist Party, which took refuge in Taiwan. The head of that party is going to China and will probably have already had one meeting with Xi, and now another. Why?

Because they can see what's happened to the Gulf states. Did America support them? Did they really come and provide security? No. So the Taiwanese, I think, can clearly read the writing on the wall. They're on their own.

They're only things—tiny objects to be used as bargaining chips in the trade war with China, in America's trade war with China. And so, you know, other things are going to change globally too, particularly because the perception of Iran outside the little enclave of Western countries is changing dramatically. It's much admired, and many people are watching. And of course, what's frightening for the Gulf states is that what people admire is actually the spirit of the revolution. I mean, you know, the original Iranian revolution—its Iranianism is centered around opposition to oppression, support for the dispossessed, and resistance to oppression.

And that has a strong resonance here, because everyone can see where oppression—what is the main engine of oppression for many states, not all of them, but for many—comes from. The big changes, I think, are following. It's really quite a huge moment. Now, it's either going to be more painful or less painful than it has to be. And, you know, judging from what people I speak to in America say—people who are close to the circles around Trump—they say he flies into rages and tempers now pretty much all the time. It's just, I mean... to put it bluntly, he's unstable in terms of what you can expect in this period, and that's very dangerous. So things may get much worse in terms of an escalation—or not.

## **#Glenn**

I remember from his first term that I always suspected he might be playing Nixon's "madman" — pretending to be more irrational than he really is, so other world leaders wouldn't try to push his buttons or hope to have any control over escalation. But again, the problem with playing the madman is, perhaps he is the madman. That's the problem.

## **#Alastair Crooke**

Yes, I think what you say is quite reasonable. You know, two years ago, when he first came into office, there was a sense that you could discern some strategic objectives, and that his language—though directed at all sorts of constituencies—wasn't necessarily meant to be a strategic account of what he was trying to do. So it was fair enough to see it that way. But unfortunately, things have changed, I think, over this period, and that's no longer the case. It won't be sufficient now to sustain a fair understanding of the politics of where we are.

## **#Glenn**

Agreed. Well, Alistair, thank you very much for taking the time. And for those listening in, please make sure to visit Alistair Crooke's Conflicts Forum Substack, where you'll find excellent analysis. And thank you again for taking the time.

**#Alastair Crooke**

Thank you.