TEN US Jets SURGE to Israel, INSANE Iran War Plan Unfolds | Alexander Mercouris

Co-host of The Duran and geopolitical analyst Alexander Mercouris joins to discuss the massive escalation building up for another round of strikes by the US and Israel, and what impact midterm elections, Israeli elections, and Western emergency alert panic are having on the geopolitical landscape. Plus, a full deep dive into the news and analysis on the Middle East (West Asia), the Ukraine conflict, and much more! Follow Alexander Mercouris: https://www.youtube.com /@AlexMercouris https://www.youtube.com/@TheDuran/ PATREON.COM/DANNYHAIPHONG Support the channel in other ways: https://www.buymeacoffee.com/dannyhai... Substack: chroniclesofhaiphong.substack.com Cashapp: $Dhaiphong Venmo: @dannyH2020 Paypal: https://paypal.me/spiritofho Follow me on Telegram: https://t.me/dannyhaiphong #netanyahu #iran #trump

#Danny

Welcome back to the show, everyone. As you can see, I am joined by the co-host of The Duran, geopolitical analyst Alexander Mercouris, to go over the latest developments. So, Alexander, I wanted to begin with a very busy 24 to 48 hours in West Asia. In the last 24 hours, at least 10 U.S. military transport aircraft have landed in southern Israel, according to Israeli media outlet Kan News. Air bases in Israel, as well as in Qatar and Saudi Arabia, have reportedly received more air defenses and other munitions for the coming war. Senator Chris Murphy said that an insane U.S. war plan is underway and that the Senate has been briefed on it. Here is what he said.

#Chris Murphy

In one of these briefings, we did get the chance to have a fairly detailed conversation about what the war plan would be if we restarted military operations. You've heard a preview that it would be a short-duration plan. I will just say this: their plan is insane. It will lead to devastating escalation and the likely destruction of our commitment to the rule of law.

#Speaker 1

Can you say more?

#Chris Murphy

I mean, there's been open reporting as to, you know, what we may be planning and the civilian infrastructure that we may be targeting. They have certainly been asked by the president to develop

a plan. Whether they believe it will work or not, I do not know. But the plan that they have developed will lead, in my view, to a prolongation and an escalation of this war that will definitely...

#Danny

So President Trump was reportedly briefed yesterday on all of these options. Here's what Fox News had to say about that.

#Fox News

President Trump is reportedly receiving a briefing from the top U.S. commander in the Middle East regarding potential military options for Iran. Jackie Heinrich is at the White House right now with the latest. Jackie, a very important briefing.

#Speaker 1

Yeah, no kidding, Brian. The top U.S. commander in the Middle East reportedly met with the president just yesterday at the White House, alongside War Secretary Pete Hegseth and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Dan Caine. It comes after the vice president held a similar meeting on Wednesday, following warnings to regional allies that the U.S. could continue strikes right after the midterms.

#Fox News

President Trump reportedly...

#Danny

So, Alexander, it seems like we're on a knife's edge, with the kinetic action of this war about to restart. What do you make of these developments, and how does this all tie together in the broader geopolitical picture?

#Alexander Mercouris

I think it's all very, very ominous. I think that the decision to attack Iran has been made, and I expect it to happen at some point over the next few days—a week, maybe—certainly after the midterms. All of the indications suggest that the aircraft, the fighters, and the military people are being put into place. All the pieces are being put into place. There has been a small amount of diplomacy, but I think that the signals from this diplomacy are being read wrongly by many people. So there was a visit to Tehran by the Mecca Three: Saudi Arabia, Turkey, and Pakistan. But I don't

think this was really effective diplomacy. I think it was rather a plea to the Iranians to make some concessions to avert this attack, which is coming and which would be a disaster. And Lavrov, the Russian foreign minister, has also recently been to Iran.

And I think that's also, again, basically to gauge the temperature and to see whether there was anything that could be done to move things forward. And the Russians have had some discussions with the Americans about this. But all the indications tell me that the Americans are now moving towards a war. And the one thing that might have stopped it was an election outcome in Israel that meant Prime Minister Netanyahu's position was no longer secure and that he would no longer be prime minister over the course of the next few weeks. I think the election result in Israel, on the contrary, has secured Netanyahu's position for the short term. And he will now be looking to shore it up. And the way he will want to shore it up is by escalating the war against Iran. So he's going to be advocating for this war. And I think that his voice is decisive. And I think the war is going to come.

#Danny

Yeah, well, to that point about Israel, Alexander, was this the worst possible outcome in terms of restarting heavy military action against Iran? I mean, the war has been going on, but the U.S. and Israel have refrained from bigger strikes for a variety of reasons. But now, without a majority for any side in the Israeli Knesset, and as you said, Netanyahu will be prime minister for quite a while, actually. No decision is imminent. There's a whole process that's going to take weeks to months to resolve. That gives Netanyahu time to do something about this. What's your reaction to that?

#Alexander Mercouris

Well, that's exactly what's going to happen. Netanyahu remains prime minister. He has all the levers he needs under his control. And, of course, the way the election played out is that Netanyahu, or his coalition, won a majority of votes from Jewish voters in the Israeli elections. A majority of Israeli Jews, as I understand it, voted for Netanyahu, which puts the opposing coalition in a very difficult position because, in order to oust Netanyahu, they need to forge a coalition with the Arab parties.

And how is Netanyahu going to make that much more difficult and perhaps outright impossible? He's going to engineer, or so it seems to me, a crisis in the Middle East—in other words, a war. I mean, that's in his interest now. And he's going to say to the other side, "We are now in this conflict with Iran. How can you get into a coalition against me with the Arab parties, who are, at the very least, sympathetic to our enemies? You're taking an anti-patriotic position. On the contrary, everybody ought to be uniting behind me, the prime minister and leader of Israel, in this crisis." So I think that this election outcome has actually made a war even more likely than it was previously. And if you wanted an outcome that perhaps incentivized Netanyahu to desire a war, this is the outcome you have.

#Danny

And what do you make of the calculations around diplomacy, Alexander? We've heard all kinds of reports about mediators, Qatar, and you even had J.D. Vance supposedly reaching out to Mohsen Rezaei, the Supreme National Security Council leader. But at the same time, you have all the indications that the head of CENTCOM is literally briefing on options, and it seems like the plan is for a strike right after the midterms—or who knows when, but at least after the midterms. This feels like a loop. It feels like what was happening before February 28th, but under different circumstances, of course. What are your thoughts on this diplomacy?

#Alexander Mercouris

Yeah, I mean, this is exactly what it is, in my opinion. I think what is happening is this: Trump has made a decision to go to war. There are some people close to him who are worried about this, nervous about this. Vance has never been keen on this war from the start. The Saudis undoubtedly are having cold feet about this because, back this time last year, they were gung-ho for a war. They thought Iran was weak. They were apparently pressing Trump to attack Iran. They told him they believed that the Americans would quickly prevail. Everybody now is very nervous. Everybody's looking at this situation, and they're saying, "Well, if this war resumes, it could potentially be a disaster for the region and for us." But they face, in Trump and Netanyahu, I think, an immovable axis on this now.

I don't think that Trump is in any mood or in any position, actually, to back off. I think Netanyahu, obviously, as I said, is incentivized to push forward. So what they're all trying to do—Vance by calling the Iranians, the Saudis, as I said, by going to Tehran—is get the Iranians to make some concessions to persuade Trump to call this off. I don't think the Iranians are going to do that, because I think that the message the Iranians have taken from the last year is, firstly, that any concessions they make to the Americans and to the Israelis will simply lead to more demands. And if Iran accedes to these further demands, then still more demands will come until Iran's entire negotiating position collapses. That tells the Iranians to stand firm.

And the other thing that I think tells the Iranians to stand firm is that they've seen over this last year, or they believe that they've seen over this last year, that they can actually withstand any pressure that the United States brings upon them. So I think that this diplomacy has not really led anywhere and cannot lead anywhere. If the war begins, if the fighting starts, if missile strikes happen, if the situation starts to escalate, then we might start to see real diplomacy kick in. That's perhaps when the various external parties—the Chinese, the Russians, maybe the Saudis, if they're still able to conduct diplomacy at that point—will begin to step in. They may try to come up with proposals that might finally be listened to in order to avert the most extreme crisis. But at the moment, that isn't the situation.

#Danny

Well, it seems the Trump administration, or big parts of it at least, believe that renewed strikes will bring Iran back to the table. Chris Murphy said that infrastructure is going to be targeted. You know, I know Israel has been pushing CENTCOM to approve strikes on Iranian energy and nuclear sites. But the narrative in the mainstream media is that this will bring Iran back to the table. I had thought that Iran and the Trump administration had signed the MOU. And Ghalibaf just said yesterday that the terms Iran is putting on the table are pretty clear. They haven't really changed. So what's going on here? What's with this narrative of pushing Iran into negotiations? What does that mean?

#Alexander Mercouris

Well, exactly. I mean, you're absolutely right. We had the MOU. The MOU was clearly set out. Trump signed it. The Americans appeared to agree to it. It was a deal, a deal that the Americans ultimately walked away from. They did what they often do: they cherry-picked parts of the deal. So they maneuvered to get the Strait of Hormuz reopened and oil to start moving from the Persian Gulf. But they took absolutely no steps to lift or relax sanctions, for example, as they were supposed to do, or to do the many other things that were in the MOU. So there was never any good faith behind that, and it basically unraveled very quickly. So now, I think the U.S. believes that Iran has been greatly weakened over the last 10 months by the war, that the Iranian economy, as they imagine, is on the brink of collapse.

So they say to themselves, let's hit what we haven't hit before. Let's hit Iran's civilian infrastructure: its bridges, its railways, its port facilities, its energy production facilities, its power stations, its gas fields, all of those things. And let's do that overwhelmingly and quickly, and that will be enough by itself to bring Iran to the negotiating table. It's wrong on multiple levels. Firstly, it's wrong because it's not going to work. What we have seen in the Ukraine war is how resilient energy systems, bridges, water supply systems, all of those things actually are, and how quickly a country under pressure, especially a country like Iran, can repair and restore these facilities, even in the face of overwhelming war.

We've seen in previous wars as well that this is never enough to actually break a country. What it's much more likely to do is to cause the Iranians to feel that, if they are being attacked in this way, they have no choice but to respond by launching their own attacks against America's allies in the Middle East and on energy and oil facilities across the Persian Gulf, which have already suffered significant damage. And of course, if the Iranians go further and attack the desalination plants across the Middle East, depriving tens of millions of people of access to fresh water, then we are in a humanitarian catastrophe of unimaginable dimensions.

#Danny

You know, our mutual friend Brian Berletic often cites a Brookings Institution paper called “Which Path to Persia?” And in it, they have a whole chapter dedicated to “Leave it to Bibi Netanyahu.” It seems like all of the preparations for this next attack are centered on Israel, which was not

necessarily the case in the first attack. Of course, in the first attack, the initial reports on February 28th were that Israel had conducted strikes. But eventually, it came out that the U.S. Air Force was right there with the Israelis from the very beginning, so it was a joint attack. This one feels a lot more like there is going to be an attack based out of Israel. What are the implications of that? Because for a while now, since I believe it was April, Israel has not been involved, at least kinetically, in this conflict. But what are the implications if they do get involved, given all of the factors you outlined earlier in the program?

#Alexander Mercouris

Well, first of all, we've seen that the Iranians have the capability to hit Israel, and they can hit Israel hard, and probably a lot harder than they have done up to now. And Israel is small, and Israel does not have the same degree of resilience as Iran does, simply because it is geographically small. So it doesn't have the enormous depth of resources that the Iranians can bring to a battle. So if Israel starts to get into trouble, then of course it will call on America for help. And the moment America steps in—which it will; it has to—

I mean, this administration, politically and ideologically, has no choice. Then, of course, we are right back to where we were with the war between the United States and Iran—a war in which the United States has struggled to prevail, and Israel, of course, has struggled to prevail. And then we are back to the old story: What do you do if this war drags on, if the Iranians won't break, if oil prices rise? The whole pattern of things that we saw in the Middle East. And we have further crises, desalination plants destroyed, all of that.

Well, I have to say, given that the entire pattern of this conflict up to now has been brief periods of negotiation and pause followed by escalation, I worry that we're going to see the same again: another pause, perhaps, or another attempt to achieve a pause, but without anything ultimately being resolved, and each side then preparing for the next escalation. And, well, as to where the escalations can take us, we've heard the rhetoric from the president of the United States about "an entire civilization ends today." That was one thing he said. And in another speech he made to the General Assembly, he talked about annihilating Iran. I think many people think that these were hints about using nuclear weapons. And frankly, so do I.

#Danny

Right. Yeah. And you mentioned earlier those three countries. Why was it that they ended up going to Iran? We know that Saudi Arabia is in big trouble. And I also want your take on—you know, I know the United Kingdom and France have tripled down on support for Saudi Arabia at this time. But Saudi Arabia had a big incentive to broker talks with Iran. All three of them came, but not much was conclusive, though. What's your take on their diplomatic role—Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, and Turkey?

#Alexander Mercouris

Saudi Arabia is in a very, very difficult position. I mean, it is another very high-spending, very high-cost economy. It depends heavily on maintaining the supply of oil. And, of course, MBS himself, the leader of Saudi Arabia, the crown prince himself, had a very ambitious program to develop Saudi Arabia beyond oil. I mean, I thought it was an overambitious program and a very ill-thought-out program. Well, whatever, it was a program. Now, all of that is in massive jeopardy. And what the Saudis also discovered is that the American guarantee of protection that they've lived under since the Second World War doesn't mean as much as they believed it did. So they find themselves in a conflict, a long, drawn-out conflict with Iran.

They find that they're involved in another long, drawn-out conflict with the Houthis in Yemen, who are allies of Iran. There are pressures in the north from the Iraqi militias. And, of course, they have a Shia population in parts of Saudi Arabia that is also very, very restive. And we are very uninformed about Saudi Arabia itself, so we don't know exactly how stable it really is and what tensions might exist within the royal family and within the wider reaches of Saudi society. So they want to end this, and they want to end this quickly. And they made this alliance with Pakistan and Turkey in order to try to get another guarantee, since the American guarantee wasn't working.

But of course, what they then discovered is that neither Pakistan nor Turkey is really that keen to go to war on Saudi Arabia's behalf against the Houthis and against Iran, because that would be deeply unpopular in both Pakistan and Turkey and would be a tremendous crisis for these countries as well. So everybody got together with the Saudis and said, "Look, this is an impossible situation. We've got to see what we can do." And they all went to Tehran. And as I said, they probably told the Iranians, "Look, we're faced again with war. Can you give us something we can give to Trump and tell him, 'Don't proceed, because the Iranians are backing off'?" But the Iranians refused to back off because, as I said previously, from an Iranian point of view, there is no sense in doing so.

#Danny

And it really shows the relationship that these countries still have with the United States. It's not these countries going to the United States saying, "Maybe you should back off. This is going to hurt us. It's going to hurt the region. It's likely going to hurt you." You know, there's none of that. Instead, they're going to Iran and telling them, "How about you capitulate? How about you give concessions to the United States?" When, you know, you've been the country that has been struck and that the war was targeting. So I think it's very revealing. You're absolutely right.

#Alexander Mercouris

You're absolutely right about that, by the way. And it's an important point. It's one that people should take note of.

#Danny

And speaking of relationships, Europe's relationship to all of this, Alexander—and the UK, I guess, technically outside of Europe now. But the UK and the rest of the EU have been silent on this for the most part, with tepid opposition in some cases, but very much supportive. It's interesting how much the UK in particular has been supporting Saudi Arabia, or saying that they're going to support Saudi Arabia against Yemen. This war in the region doesn't really have Europe's interests at heart, yet there's not much opposition. And certainly, whatever activity is happening, it's lending support.

#Alexander Mercouris

What we're looking at, and you put it very well, by the way, is the bankruptcy, again, of European diplomacy—the fact that, to all intents and purposes, it didn't exist. So back in 2002, 2003, when the George W. Bush administration sought to invade Iraq and claimed all sorts of things about WMD in Iraq, you saw European countries—Germany and France, first and foremost—come out and vigorously oppose this, saying, "This is a hugely mistaken idea, a hugely mistaken policy." And I mean, it made an impact in international relations. This time, the Europeans have remained not just silent, but silently complicit in this whole crisis. They didn't speak out last year, in 2025, after it became clear that the Trump administration was looking to resume an attack on Iran. They didn't come out and say the attack on Iran that took place in June 2025 was a mistake, and terrible and wrong.

They didn't tell the Americans after the failure of the June 2025 attack that another attack on Iran would be a catastrophic mistake. On the contrary, they've remained silent throughout all of this, even as this crisis has developed and evolved. That complicity is now going to go a whole step further, because my own personal view is that these deployments of fighter jets by Britain and France to Saudi Arabia, and all these declarations of support for Saudi Arabia, are not really about the battle with the Houthis. They're about the conflict with Iran. And you're going to see those British fighter jets participate in the war against Iran. I don't see how that can be prevented. In fact, I have no doubt that was the intention all along, and that that is why they're being sent there.

#Danny

Right. Yeah. Well, Alexander, that gets to the question of—well, first, maybe you can go a little bit deeper into Europe, not just in relation to the Middle East, but now, of course, with Ukraine and domestic unrest. The United States appears to have shifted a lot of responsibilities to Europe, but a lot of this collaboration seems to be against Europe's interests. And we're seeing unrest blow up all across the continent. You know, what's going on there, and how does it relate to this war and the wars in general?

#Alexander Mercouris

It's not just collaboration. It's also collaboration that is underpinned by dependence. The Europeans have maneuvered themselves into a situation where they are now committed to a long, drawn-out

conflict with Russia, which is, to be clear, the great power on the European continent. No European state individually is able to take on Russia, and it is debatable whether the Europeans could take it on together. They need the United States because they are in conflict with Russia, and they need the United States. They can't stand up to the United States and tell it, "Please don't attack Iran," or, "Don't attack Iran."

“This is something that is absolutely wrong and unacceptable for you to do,” because they worry that if they do that, then the Americans will get angry, as they did in 2003. And the Americans will at that point say, “Well, the Europeans are being obstructive and unhelpful. Why should we help them in this conflict in Ukraine?” So, as a result, the Europeans are willing to assist the Americans in anything that the Americans now do in the Middle East. They were very unnerved when Trump started to blame them for the fact that the United States was fighting Iran on its own. And that is why, as I said, British and French military assets are being deployed to the Middle East, so that when the fight with Iran resumes, the British and the French can say, “We’re involved.”

And it is wrong to think that we are just abandoning the United States to its own wars, so the United States shouldn't abandon us in our war. Now, that is an appalling policy. It is a policy of war, as I said, of war rather than peace. It is a policy that is economically ruinous for Europe. Both of these wars are economically ruinous for Europe. And it is a policy that European publics are instinctively deeply unhappy about and are protesting against every day, even if they don't always understand all of its details. All of these protests that we see in Europe, which are the result of an economic crisis and a social crisis on top of it, are ultimately also a product of these wars, which have caused these crises in the first place.

And if you want proof of how deeply unpopular these policies are, look at what has just happened in Britain. The British government has published a budget that demands more sacrifices from the British people. What the British government is not, however, talking loudly about, and what the entire British media avoids discussing, is that in this budget, the British government also commits to a further £10 billion in support for Ukraine. They've made this commitment, but it's a commitment that they don't want to discuss or talk widely about. And the media, unfortunately, is helping them to do that.

#Danny

Yeah, well, the last question before we get to the latest updates in the Ukraine conflict you referenced is about Russia and China's role now. We know Sergey Lavrov was in Iran recently. China has been relatively quiet other than reinforcing the MOU. But there have been some rumors that Russian cargo and transport planes have been in Iran. What is the state of the relationship between these three countries now regarding the war? Because there have been some who have said that there may be pressure on Iran to, at the very least, continue on a diplomatic path. I haven't seen so

much pressure in terms of getting them to capitulate on any points. But nevertheless, this has been part of the narrative, and I'm trying to decipher what exactly is going on between these three countries.

#Alexander Mercouris

Well, the Russians and the Chinese have a very straightforward position on the war. As far as they're concerned, Iran was attacked. It was an act of aggression against Iran. The attack took place even while negotiations were underway. The Russians, at least, have never wavered from that position. And the Chinese basically take the same position as well. Where there is a difference between Russia and China on the one hand and Iran on the other is that the Russians and the Chinese want freedom of navigation in the Persian Gulf. They do not want to see the Strait of Hormuz closed.

They do not want to see the Iranians exercising control of the Strait of Hormuz because both the Russians and the Chinese understand that if the practice of imposing sea blockades spreads, then sooner or later, the West is going to try to impose a sea blockade against them. So for that reason, that very straightforward reason, they are unhappy about what Iran is doing in the Strait of Hormuz. But at the same time, they don't want to see Iran collapse. They don't want to see the government collapse. They are giving quite a lot of economic support to Iran, and we're now getting some information about this. By way of example, I recently learned—and these are public figures, uncontestable figures—that Iran is now the biggest buyer of Russian grain.

Now, how is Iran paying for that grain? It's difficult to imagine that Iran has much foreign currency it can spend on this. So probably that grain, that food that the Russians are supplying to Iran, and the natural gas that they're also supplying to Iran are being funded through some kind of loan arrangement. I mean, that's what I would guess. I suspect China is providing additional assistance of that kind. The Russians and the Chinese, I am sure, are providing Iran with intelligence assistance too. And they're probably telling the Iranians at the same time, "Look, we're giving you all of this help, but remember, we are not happy with what you're doing in the Strait of Hormuz. We want you, in the end, to settle this."

"We understand that the Americans are impossible people to negotiate with. But do keep your doors open to the Saudis and to the other Persian Gulf states. And eventually, when this storm passes, we will help you to come to some kind of long-term deal with them." I think that is what the Chinese and the Russians want. On the topic of China, I just quickly wanted to add one thing. When I was in Japan recently, I attended a conference. There were quite a few Chinese representatives there, and all of them said that the public mood in China is hardening. And it is hardening in favor of Iran and against the United States. And, according to these Chinese people who were telling me this, that is something the Chinese government now has to take into account.

#Danny

Well, Alexander, I wanted to ask about the state of the Ukraine conflict. The latest reports are that Ukraine is once again attacking Russian refineries, despite Trump's maybe nonexistent efforts to stop this kind of behavior. As you know, Donald Trump has blamed the Ukraine conflict and strikes on energy infrastructure for the rising cost of diesel in particular. But what exactly is happening in the conflict now, as the Trump administration gets more mired in Iran or in West Asia? What's happening here?

#Alexander Mercouris

Yeah, I mean, the Americans are causing a huge amount of confusion, which I think we perhaps shouldn't be devoting an enormous amount of time to. I mean, on the one hand, the Americans want the Ukrainians to stop the attacks on the refineries. This is what Donald Trump is talking about. On the other hand, we increasingly know that American intelligence assistance is enabling these attacks on the refineries. So perhaps the Americans aren't able to be clear about what their objectives are.

Trump perhaps wants, again, to see some kind of quick end to the war in Ukraine so that economic arrangements with the Russians can be sorted out clearly. But the wider American government, over which Trump himself probably has only tenuous control, is not interested in any of that. They continue to support Ukraine. They continue to provide it with intelligence assistance. They continue to provide it with communications assistance through Starlink. They want the war to be prosecuted as aggressively as possible, which is exactly what Ukraine is doing.

What has changed in the war over the last few weeks, few months—basically since the beginning of September—is that the Russians have moved towards conducting a much more aggressive war in the air alongside their continuous ground offensive. So they've basically blockaded all of Ukraine's Black Sea ports, ending Ukraine's maritime trade. They're attacking its railway system. They're attacking its energy system with an intensity that we've never seen. And now they've begun the process of attacking the bridges across the Dnieper River. Now, these bridges are absolutely critical for the war because the Dnieper bisects Ukraine. It passes through Ukraine from the north all the way to the south.

There is no way that you can get to east Ukraine from west Ukraine without crossing the Dnieper at some place. So that means that the Ukrainian army and the Ukrainian economy on the east bank of the Dnieper depend on supplies sent over these bridges. And the Russians have now finally begun a campaign to destroy, or at least damage, these bridges. And that ultimately is going to have an effect on logistics, and it's going to weaken the position of the Ukrainian army, which continues to face this creeping offensive that the Russians conduct—the lava flow, as some American military analysts in the Pentagon apparently describe it. The lava flow continues to move westwards, but the supplies are not coming through.

#Danny

Wow. Yeah. You know, Alexander, with this conflict in Ukraine, I'm curious about your thoughts on the political changes that are about to happen in the United States. I pulled up Chris Murphy earlier, and one interesting thing that I've noticed about the U.S.'s current situation is that, while the Trump administration has appeared to be very hands-off, it's been involved, as you said, in CIA targeting and all of these things. It's involved in that way, but there hasn't been a lot of attention to any direct involvement in actually carrying out the conflict.

Well, of course, West Asia has been the focus, along with Latin America. But with the Democrats and Chris Murphy—I mean, he's a Russia hawk—I wonder if you have any concern that a switch to the Democratic Party in Washington this November and then, of course, a couple of Novembers from now will lead to a reorientation of the United States toward a more outwardly hostile posture toward Russia. I think that's what the mood really seems to be, not a desire and thirst for peace.

#Alexander Mercouris

I think that's absolutely right. I mean, we have two groups of hawks, basically, in the American political system. One group of hawks hates Russia and wants to end the war in Iran so they can focus on Russia. The other group of hawks hates Iran and wants to end the war against Russia so they can focus on Iran. Both groups of hawks, by the way, in my opinion, hate China to an equivalent degree. But there is no real peace party in the United States. I mean, there are plenty of people in the United States who would desire peace, who would desire to move on—probably a majority of people.

And there are certainly people within the American government who think about those things too. You know, I've met some of them. But the ascendant political factions are all for war. It's just that they want war in different places. Now, the Russians take it as read that when the Democrats come in, they're going to demand an intensification of support for Ukraine. And I think the Russian leadership has entirely factored that in. But I think that the Russians calculate that things have now moved too far on the battlefields, in the sky, for the Democrats to be able to do very much to turn it around.

And besides, I think the Russians also think that, yes, Trump talked less about supporting Ukraine. He was more openly sceptical about Zelensky. He indulged himself sometimes in peace talks. But ultimately, the level of American support for Ukraine never really slackened. In fact, what we've heard is that intelligence assistance to Ukraine was massively expanded from about the spring of last year. So I don't think the Russians are particularly fazed by this. I think that they expect it to happen. And, you know, they're prepared to ride with it.

#Danny

I was watching some of your recent commentaries, Alexander, and you mentioned, as you often do, Zelensky's whereabouts—almost like a "Where's Zelensky?" "Where's Waldo?" type of situation. If

we get a little bit more into the internal situation of the NATO-backed regime in Ukraine, why is it that he's always traveling? What's with this?

#Alexander Mercouris

Well, I think that there is a festering political crisis in Ukraine. And I think that most people who are not signed-up enthusiasts for Zelensky believe that if there were an election in Ukraine now, he would almost certainly lose. And there are lots of political factions in Kiev, and some of them are very hostile to him and likely to become increasingly hostile to him. I think he's also afraid of something else. I mean, the Russian missiles come in, the drones come in. There has been a history of Ukraine conducting assassinations against Russian or pro-Russian figures in this war. And I think he's nervous.

I think when you go down that particular road, you're always worried: "The moment will come when the other side is going to come after me. And if I'm in Kiev at a time when there's no air defence in Kiev and the Russians can strike any target in Kiev that they choose, well, who knows? From one moment to the next, I might be that target." So I think all of these factors are at play for Zelensky. But the other reason why I think he travels all the time, mostly to Europe, is that he needs to keep the money flowing to Ukraine. This is something that Alex and I on The Duran have talked about many times. It is the money flow, which is enormous, that holds everything together.

If the money stops, Ukraine will tip over very quickly into hyperinflation. And the various factions that exist in Kiev will say, "Well, without the money, what is the point of Zelensky? Maybe if we take over, maybe it's we who can get the money coming." So he has to keep the money flowing. And because Ukraine's economy is collapsing under his feet, because it can't function when the ports are closed, the railways are collapsing, the energy system is collapsing, and all of that, his demands for more money from the West, from the Europeans, can only increase. And that, in a sense, also obliges him to travel around Europe, you know, with his begging bowl, asking all the time for more.

#Danny

Yeah, and Alexander, what's happening on the battlefield in Ukraine? And how much does this factor into Russia's own calculations about the political changes that are going to happen not only in the United States, but also about the internal combustion and rot that's happening inside the Ukrainian regime? What is Russia doing on the battlefield right now?

#Alexander Mercouris

We are approaching the moment when the battle for Donbass ends. Donbass is this industrial region in eastern Ukraine where there was an uprising against the Ukrainian government after the Maidan events in 2014, which the Russians have now said is incorporated into their country, and which they've struggled to gain control of. Now, I've described Donbass in many places. People from

Germany who know the Ruhr would know that Donbass is very like it. It's basically the basin of a whole series of rivers. It's very marshy. It's very heavily forested. It's very, very industrialized. And a lot of it is made up of urban sprawl. It represents a powerful fortress belt that the Ukrainians built up after the 2014 crisis, basically in order to hold the Russians back.

Now, the Russians have taken control of 90% of Donetsk region and all of Lugansk region. In other words, there's about 5% of Donbass still in contention. Once the Russians have it, they'll have taken the region where the war began, but they'll also have broken through the fortress belt. And from then on, it's open country, basically, all the way to the Dnieper River. So this is going to be a major moment in the war because if the Russians capture Donbass, they'll have achieved their original political objective when the war began. And they'll also have broken through Ukraine's major defense line, its shield, if you like. And at that point, the Russians, if they want, can start to move to other places, towards the Dnieper or even towards Kiev, and do so more easily.

#Danny

You know, in the interest of the last 10 minutes or so we have in the program, I have a kind of bigger-picture question for you. Does the West have any control over these wars that have ignited? The biggest three, of course, are the Ukraine conflict with Russia, the war on Iran, and—we have to put in there—what's happening with Saudi Arabia and Yemen, given all of the Western support and instigation of that conflict. So does the West have control over any of these right now? Because some might say, well, the West could just stop. The U.S., Europe—they could just stop. But is it more complicated than this? It's a lot more complicated than this.

#Alexander Mercouris

I mean, what the West does not have is military control over these wars, just as it didn't have military control over the war in Vietnam, and it didn't have military control over the war in Afghanistan. In all of these wars, the military initiative is held by the West's adversaries: the Russians, the Houthis, the Iranians. They are the people who are making the running and who will ultimately decide, if the wars continue, when the military phase of those wars stops. But that doesn't mean that there is nothing that the West could do. It could adopt different diplomatic strategies. In Europe, it could finally start to address Russian security concerns seriously, for example, and work towards some kind of lasting peace with the Russians. With Iran, it could do exactly the same. With the Houthis, it's a more intractable issue because this is also a regional conflict between Saudi Arabia and the Houthis.

But ultimately, if you can settle the situation with Iran, you're probably about halfway there to finding a solution to the problem of the Houthis. The problem is we don't do diplomacy anymore, and we don't do it well. So the result is that we have lost the military initiative, but we aren't able to find coherent diplomatic answers to these problems. So when the president of Finland and the prime minister of Norway, both anti-Russian hardliners, by the way, telephone the president of Russia and

have a civil conversation with him, as happened a few days ago, the reaction across Europe is absolute uproar and fury and rage. And these two leaders are condemned for doing that, which is the only logical thing we can do in order to get out of this crisis.

#Danny

Right. Yeah. Well, that point about initiative is really important because it raises the question: what exactly are the interests that are really driving these wars? Because oftentimes in geopolitics, a lot of people talk strictly in military terms, like, okay, what does the U.S. have versus what Russia or Iran has? What do Europe, NATO, and the United States together have versus Russia, et cetera? But it seems like that's not so much the driver here. I think that would assume that militarism and military forces operate independently, based on values that may be more of a smokescreen than anything real. So what exactly is driving it? We know that Trump's holdings, and really those of the U.S. oil monopolies, are far bigger now after the Iran war, for example. But there have also been a lot of costs to this war and the Ukraine conflict, for sure. So what exactly are the interests that are driving these wars?

#Alexander Mercouris

Well, there is a very, very powerful war lobby in the West. And that war lobby obviously is powerful because there are very strong economic and financial interests behind it. There are always people who make an awful lot of money out of wars. There are arms companies, there are the various contractors, there are the lobbyists, there are the various ideologues that these people fund, and there are the media outlets, which are also involved in all of this. So there is always this enormous pressure from this very powerful and very coherent and very organised group of people who always push for wars because they think it will benefit them.

And it won't just benefit them materially; it does something else. Wars—prolonged wars of this kind—secure their own positions, their own power within Western societies. Generals become more important. Intelligence and security agencies increase their reach. Economic groups that are connected with the arms industry—or, in the Iran war, the oil industry—become more powerful and are able, through that power, to affect the general direction of economic policy in the West. And you're up against a very powerful, very organized, very vocal coalition that is there to keep the wars going.

#Danny

Yeah, and Soros Management Group, for example, was—or is—Chris Murphy's top donor. So there's lots of instability and war at the root of a lot of the money that goes into the U.S. political class and the European political class, which are looking more and more similar in terms of how they operate politically.

#Alexander Mercouris

Well, they think in the same way, and I personally feel that there's actually no real difference between them. The Russians talk about the collective West, and I think there is some truth to this. I think, to a great extent, just as the intelligence communities in the United States and Europe have become essentially extensions of each other, the political classes in these two societies have done the same.

#Danny

Well, Alexander, in the last couple of minutes that we have, any final thoughts on where things are heading?

#Alexander Mercouris

Yeah, there is one thing I wanted to add, which I think is important and has been completely overlooked. It comes from that conversation that Putin had with the president of Finland and the prime minister of Norway. And again, I'm very surprised that people are not picking up on it. But the Russian leader said that in order for there to be peace, Russian security interests must be accepted without conditions. Now, that is a very stark demand, and it comes close to the kind of demand that the Soviets used to make during the Second World War, when they were starting to demand from the other side not just, you know, a negotiated settlement, but, in effect, unconditional surrender.

I have never seen Putin talk in that way. That was extremely harsh language. And I think it gives a very clear sense of the direction in which the Russians themselves are thinking now: that we are close to seeing the Battle of Donbass end, Ukraine is being shattered economically, and the Russians are very close to saying that, in the Ukraine war, there's not going to be a settlement. The moment has come simply for them to dictate terms.

#Danny

Well, Alexander, we had one question from the audience: “Why do we never talk about Crimea’s previous attempt at rejoining Russia 20 years prior to 2014? That proves what they wanted all along, no?”

#Alexander Mercouris

Well, indeed, the Russians talk about it a lot. Of course, in the West, we don't. There's a very big difference between what we say and what they say. But nobody wants to talk about that in the West, because if we did, then it would be an admission that Crimea maybe didn't really want to be part of Ukraine. And what happened in 2014 was different, let's just say.

#Danny

Yeah, for sure. Well, everybody, this was a great show, so definitely show your appreciation. I want to first thank everyone who became a new member and gave Super Chats. I put you all up on the screen. Hit the like button before you go. And in the video description, you can find both The Duran's YouTube channel and Alexander's individual YouTube channel, where you can subscribe and follow all of their daily reports, including Alexander's very thorough daily reports on all of these conflicts, particularly in Ukraine. So, Alexander, thanks so much. We'll head out together. Everyone, hit the like button and check the video description for all the resources, Alexander's channels, and where to support this show. I'll be back at 2 p.m. Eastern tomorrow, on Halloween. So see you then. Thanks so much again, Alexander.

#Alexander Mercouris

Delighted to have joined, and looking forward to doing so again.

#Danny

Yeah, yeah, things will definitely be getting a bit hotter, I think, in the weeks to come. So for sure, we'll be back at it.