# Alastair Crooke: Next US-Israeli Attack NUKES Iran? Tucker Carlson Exposes Their Plan

Renowned analyst Alastair Crooke brings his wealth of diplomatic experience and analysis to the pressing geopolitical developments in West Asia/Middle East, including Tucker Carlson's revelation on the dangers of a coming nuclear strike on Iran, why this next attack threatens to unravel the region and world order, and why the US and Israel are planning on launching it anyway. Alastair Crooke is a former British diplomat and the Founder of the Conflicts Forum based in Beirut. https://conflictsforum.substack.com/ PATREON.COM/DANNYHAIPHONG Support the channel in other ways: https://www.buymeacoffee.com/dannyhai... Substack: chroniclesofhaiphong.substack.com Cashapp: $Dhaiphong Venmo: @dannyH2020 Paypal: https://paypal.me/spiritofho Follow me on Telegram: https://t.me/dannyhaiphong #iran #trump #israel

## #Danny

Welcome back, everyone. As you can see, I am joined by former diplomat, prolific geopolitical analyst, and author Alastair Crooke of Conflicts Forum to go over the latest developments. Well, Alastair, I want your reaction right away to this. The midterm elections happen tomorrow, and that is the marking point for a potential strike on Iran by the U.S. and Israel. It seems like Netanyahu has been calling Trump almost daily to press for these strikes. And now Tucker Carlson has come out, and he is a very connected person within the Trump administration, or has been for quite some time.

And he has said that Benjamin Netanyahu has been pressing Trump to launch not just any strike, but a nuclear strike on Iran, using tactical nuclear weapons to strike Pickaxe Mountain in particular, and that Donald Trump is likely to decide by November 7th, days after the midterm elections. Now, I know you follow Israeli media quite closely. They've been talking almost daily about these talks between Netanyahu and Trump, as well as the fact that they believe the negotiations between the United States and Iran that are being mediated by Qatar are going nowhere. So, Alastair, what exactly are we facing here as we enter this election cycle?

## #Alastair Crooke

Well, fog, in a word. Quite a lot of fog is around. But turning first to the Israeli elections, I think what we're seeing is that the elections have actually weakened Netanyahu. He's not done so well, but he's not out of it. He's still in the game. At the same time, Eisenkot has not got the number of seats that the polls expected him to get. He's got 48, and they were forecasting about 53 seats. And he does have, if you like, a potential alliance with the Arab parties. Now, they're the people who did

much better than expected. They came up with 19 seats. It's unprecedented for the Palestinian Arab parties to come up with that many.

So, translating this into, you know, what does it mean for the present period? I think what it means is that we're going to be in a period of some uncertainty. The president has said he's going to start consultations, which, under the Constitution, he is obliged to do, and that he's going to start off with the small parties tomorrow. Then, on Wednesday, he will talk to Eisenkot and Netanyahu, and then he has to decide who he's going to ask to try and form a government. And, of course, Trump has been telling Herzog, the president, "Well, you've got to choose Netanyahu first. You must do that." But it's not clear.

And it's possible that he might select Eisenkot because Eisenkot has already tempted some, though not enough, of the Arab-Palestinian contingent to join with him. He laid down four conditions, which really were his attempt to say that his party is a Zionist party. And so these four parties had to sign up to four conditions, including designating one Palestinian movement as a terrorist movement. But they've done so. So he has some seats, and overall, he's probably more likely to be able to get some sort of coalition. Now, with Lieberman and Bennett, it's not clear. Lieberman has said he won't join Eisenkot. Lieberman really represents a big constituency of Russians in Israel.

He says he won't because a minority government—which is what it would be, a minority government depending on the Arabs to abstain rather than vote for them—will collapse very quickly, and then we'll be back to Netanyahu, and he doesn't want that. So at the moment, Lieberman is sort of standing aloof, and we will see what happens. From Netanyahu's perspective, really the only way he can move would be to have a unity government. And that's where Trump's telephone calls come in, because he's been telling Trump, "No, no, I want you to attack Iran on Wednesday morning after the results are out."

"You've got to do it soon," because if there is, if you like, the beginning of a war with Iran, then he can tell the other parties, "No, no, no, there's going to be no other alternative to this government. It's got to be a unity government. This is about the security of the Israeli state. Everyone has to come together." And indeed, that has happened before in Israel, during COVID and after the 7th of October. There were unity governments in Israel. So that's why he's so desperate at the moment, because he did quite badly, really, in the elections. I mean, he says he won, but really he lost quite a lot of seats in these elections. So he's, if you like, down but not out.

And he's relying on Trump to bully others into joining a unity government. And Trump seems disposed to do that. Now, the question is, does the war start on Wednesday or not? And it seems that Trump is pushing back on that and saying, "No." And the Israeli defense and security establishment is saying that there is nothing that demands an immediate or early return to war with Iran. There is no evidence of a sudden move towards a weapon. We see no intelligence to suggest

there is a move towards a weapon. And therefore, to go to war in a hurry is quite unnecessary. Nonetheless, Netanyahu is a man in a hurry. And so we'll see where that goes. The next thing that happens is that on the 9th of November, the new Knesset assembles.

And when the new Knesset assembles on the 9th of November, Eisenkot has already said that he intends to remove the current Speaker of the Knesset, and he's going to introduce legislation to provide for a state inquiry into what happened on the 7th of October and Netanyahu's role in it. I mean, this is like poison, of course. This is very toxic for Netanyahu. And he's also suggesting that they may introduce another act, which has been there in the past but has become sort of defunct, whereby a prime minister cannot also be facing criminal charges. Netanyahu, as you know, has been charged with corruption. Those charges are still pending, and no verdict has been reached yet. So he has not been convicted, but the proceedings are still ongoing.

So that's more or less where we are in this. The Israeli intelligence and security apparatus, other than the Netanyahu elements of it, like the head of Shin Bet and the head of the police, have been saying there's no hurry. But what the Netanyahu elements have been saying, though not very convincingly, is that the Arab parties gerrymandered the election and fiddled the results—that the results are not true, they're not reliable. However, the authorities in Israel said, "We've detected no irregularities in the voting. It has proceeded correctly, and we are quite satisfied with it." But this is a narrative that he's pursuing, really, to undermine Eisenkot, because Eisenkot said he wants a Zionist government. Lieberman says he won't serve in a government that has Arabs in it. Others say the same.

So it's all something of a mess at the moment. That's the Israeli side of it. And that's going to play into, I think, the other side of this equation, which is, again, very opaque: what happens on Tuesday night and Wednesday morning. And that is the other aspect of it. I mean, you know, I have no idea, just to be clear, what is really going to happen on Wednesday morning. And I don't think many people do. And, you know, trying to put a sort of strategic framing on it is pointless because it will largely depend on what sort of mood, I think, Trump wakes up in on the morning after. If he's very angry and in a mood for, you know, sacking people and blaming everyone for what's happened, that's one possibility. Or maybe he will just blame Iran and decide to go to war quickly.

We don't know. I think, as I say, perhaps even Trump doesn't know at this stage. He'll wake up on Wednesday and think about it. But I do think that this is one of the things that might weigh in this whole equation, in that, according to people who follow things quite closely inside Trump's team, Trump is aware, of course, that the polling is very negative, very bad for the Republicans. And even in the Senate, it is doubtful. I think he's pretty much reconciled to the idea that the House is probably going to go to the Democrats, but he's hoping to keep a majority in the Senate. But some people who follow this in a way in which I cannot and do not say, you know, it could even go to 55 votes. The Democrats could end up with 55 votes.

Well, that's a game changer. That really would be a game changer for Trump. And I wouldn't be surprised if he doesn't emerge on Wednesday morning if that actually happened. And there's no evidence for this beyond what people who are on the ground say. But if it did turn out as bad as that, then, you know, who knows? I mean, maybe he'll cast around for scapegoats, people to blame. Hegseth might be one of the people who gets removed immediately. Well, how do you go to war if you've just, you know, that morning sacked the Secretary of War? I mean, I'm just posing it as one possible sort of outcome that might change the situation, because I don't think Trump has really assimilated the idea that it could be, you know, really much worse.

You know, what I understand is there are times when he does acknowledge the internal polling is bad. And then he says, "Well, I'll get out there. I'll do a few more, you know, speeches supporting candidates, and it'll all be all right in the end." That's his psychology, and that's probably true. So that's one element of it. So what is going on at the Pentagon? We don't really know what's going on at the Pentagon. I mean, another senior general has been sacked—Sylvia? And he was in charge of two things, as far as I can establish.

Maybe you have more accurate information, but, I mean, he was in charge of planning. At least some people say that also broadly encompassed the question of nuclear policy, although my understanding really is that that is entirely in the hands of Elbridge Colby and not anyone else. But perhaps they're both involved in it. I don't know. So I think that they have provided Trump with a sort of menu of alternatives. And this is where the story has come from: that he was given a menu of options, and he chose a raid or an invasion of Kharg Island in the Hormuz waterway.

Now, Kharg Island is interesting because I recall—I don't have the exact date, but about 20 years or more ago—Trump wrote an article in the American press saying, "I don't see what the problem is. We should just go in and take Kharg, and then we'd have all of their oil for ourselves." And that was long ago. So, you know, he's always been hankering after this. And you can perhaps imagine—and this is purely my speculation—if Brad Cooper, the head of CENTCOM, presented that as one of the options, Trump's eyes would light up and he'd say, "Well, you know, it shows I was right all along. I'm a genius. You know, I saw this 20 years ago."

"Yes, Kharg Island, let's do it." I don't know. You know, this is just guesswork, nothing more than that. There's nothing substantive except what we've heard from people who have been briefed. There's been a briefing that indicates an option has been chosen. The Gang of Eight, the sort of senior leaders in Congress who are heads of certain committees and so on, have obviously been briefed. We've heard that from one senator who sadly subsequently had a stroke and is in hospital, but he said the ideas were insane. And so that's where we are, coupled with a continuing misunderstanding of Iran that is culturally deeply embedded within the Pentagon.

## #Danny

Quickly, just on this before I ask you a different question, I want your thoughts on what the implications would be if the United States were to carry out a tactical nuclear strike on Pickaxe Mountain. Because we've heard, I feel like for many months, that this might be the case. And now it's coming out as maybe one of those options that has been briefed to Trump. What would be the implications of that?

## #Alastair Crooke

Well, it will be a performative act because a tactical nuclear weapon is not a deep-penetrating weapon, and it certainly isn't a deep-penetrating weapon against a mountain made of granite. I think the main weapon that the United States has—and I'm not a technical expert, but I think it's called something like the B61-11—is the most effective conventional deep-penetrating bomb available. But because of its weight, it has to be dropped from something like a C-130. And even that can probably penetrate only to a maximum of 10 meters in granite, as opposed to earth. And the facilities at Pickaxe Mountain, I think, are at least 100 meters below the surface, if not much more. And it's all granite.

Other than the rumors—and we've heard, I think, Tucker Carlson say, you know, Trump wants to use a nuclear weapon, a tactical nuclear weapon, and he may use it on Pickaxe Mountain—well, is it going to be effective? I think the answer is no, it won't be effective at all. It will probably mostly sort of bounce off the granite wall. It's quite hard to bomb a steeply sloping mountain anyway, but I don't think it's necessary. I may be wrong, and maybe they have developed something, but essentially, nuclear weapons spread. I mean, they cause huge devastation in an area. I think for a tactical weapon, it's about a 20-kilometer radius or something like that, and they do a lot of damage there.

Now, the other one that keeps getting mentioned is the mother of all bombs, MOAB, and that is basically an air-initiated explosive device, one that is detonated in the air, not on the ground and not adjacent to a mountain, because it works quite differently. It was designed for Tora Bora in Afghanistan and elsewhere, where it would create this huge pressure wave. The pressure wave would kill people in the caves and in the canyons and things like that, not by explosive power, but by a pressure wave. Would that destroy a nuclear installation meters down in Pickaxe Mountain? I think that's highly doubtful. But that doesn't mean he can't claim it. I mean, it's quite likely. I think the great attraction of the mother of all bombs would be that there'd be a huge visible, you know, ball of fire.

And, you know, it will look good on television. And, you know, look, this is what we've done. We've taken out the Iranian nuclear capabilities. So I think it wouldn't be very effective. However, one aspect of it which we have to think about, which we don't have any details about, is, of course, that Israel has nuclear weapons. And if Trump is the first to use a weapon, Israel has nuclear weapons which can be loaded into the various submarines that they have and pre-positioned off Iran if necessary. They are Tomahawk missiles, but Tomahawk missiles are nuclear-capable. And the only

thing about these missiles launched from a submarine by Israel, in my understanding, is that the submarine has to surface. It's not one of those that can fire from beneath the sea's surface.

So I imagine that the Iranians and others will be keeping an eagle eye on their satellite images to see any signs of these being loaded into submarines or of the submarines surfacing. That doesn't give much time because once they start surfacing, there's only going to be a short window in which Iran would have to fire a missile to destroy the submarine. So I would only say it would be, at best—I'm not an expert in these things—50-50 whether they could do that in time. So that's a possibility, too. So, you know, I'm surprised that this great sort of excitement about tactical nuclear weapons has come out. I know that Elbridge Colby has been changing the regulations, the protocols for the use of tactical nuclear weapons. Maybe they've been agreed. I don't know.

I mean, the last I understood was that they were still being formulated and needed to be, you know, authorized and accepted. But maybe that's happened, because they certainly wouldn't tell us if that was the case. So we really wouldn't know what is happening. Kharg Island is quite different. I mean, I don't know. I would rather think Chris Murphy has it right on that when he said, you know, it would be crazy. How many troops are there in the area at the moment? Well, as far as I know, there were 10, and then there's another 20, and maybe more when these carriers arrive, which is said to be not till later in November. But we're not talking about many people, I mean, for a land operation. How do they get to Kharg Island? Do they have a base, and do they go from that base?

What would they go in? Helicopters? C-130s that can only carry about 100 troops at a time? That would mean they'd need about 50 runs of C-130s. And C-130s are going to be vulnerable to Iranian air defense systems. And then they have to supply them every day: water, food, ammunition, what have you. And they would be landing under fire because the Iranians have fire control over Kharg Island, with ballistic missiles, but artillery as well. So, you know, to seize an island in those sorts of circumstances, with a few troops, under hostile fire control, would certainly be, can one say, at best a tall order. But anyway, that's what we hear is on the list of options. Maybe he won't choose it. Maybe something else will be chosen, and it will just be an intense bombardment of civilian infrastructure, houses and schools and things like that. I don't know.

## #Danny

Yeah, well, you know, what you just described reminds me of an old film. Well, maybe not so old: Magnolia, when there are frogs raining from the sky. That seems to be what will await the United States if they try to occupy Kharg Island. There will be lots of things raining from the sky, and it will be, as you said, a tall order to survive that. Nevertheless.

## #Alastair Crooke

But Alistair, you know, by the way, I was going to say, I think I've actually been on Kharg Island at one stage. And, you know, it's very flat and pretty barren. It's not got the terrain that is suitable for

finding positions, and it's mostly rock. You know, even digging your positions would not be very easy, in my view. But you'd have to ask the military experts.

## #Danny

Yeah. Well, Alistair, everything that you just laid out does feel a lot like war. The Trump administration is waiting to see if they are going to trade one potential bloodbath electorally in the midterm elections for another with Iran. And I guess what's confusing and what's interesting—and I think some of this might be a psychological operation—is that there are all of these preparations being made, all of this hardware being sent to Israel.

All of these calls happening between Netanyahu and Trump, all of these reports about war coming at the time of the midterm elections, the day after, or sometime afterwards. But then you have this disagreement that seems to be surfacing now: Trump may want to wait and see if diplomacy, quote-unquote, can take hold. Well, Reuters just reported that the Qatari mediation is not going so well. So what do you make of the way that this is being, I guess, operationally advertised to us? Is this all just a way to misdirect us and get us running in all kinds of different directions before the war actually starts?

## #Alastair Crooke

Yes, I think probably that is the case. Because what I understand—and I'm speaking from second-hand information, not first-hand information, from people closer to Trump's team—is that they are very concerned, even if the outcome is not so bad. It will be bad in the House, that's pretty clear. But, you know, perhaps they think it's containable in the Senate. But the problem, I think, is that they are saying to Trump, "Look, you know, you can't recover from this with your approval ratings in the low 30s. You know, if you go on and you attack Iran now with your approval ratings as they are, they'll only go down more. And, you know, sooner or later, your own party, the Republican Party, will wash its hands of you, and they will start looking for someone else to lead it."

Of course, you know, he can't be physically removed. I think it's unlikely. Of course, there can be impeachment and removal proceedings, but I don't think the Democrats really want to do that to a sitting president. But they can effectively, I mean, completely tie him up, and there can be impeachments and investigations. But more likely, it's going to be investigations of just about everyone on his team. I mean, that's what I hear is being prepared: there will be investigations of Hegseth, and perhaps he will face some sort of punishment, with proceedings against him and others too. And also those in the outer reaches of the Trump, if you like, environment—the ones who have seemingly been making lots of money on the basis of his administration.

Maybe there will be impeachments. Maybe there will be investigations. I mean, what I'm saying is it could actually be pretty chaotic on Wednesday. It could be quite chaotic, with everyone, you know, reaching for their lawyers, everyone cautious about, you know, where they're going to go, what their

future is like. It will affect everyone, I think, if the outcome is one of the worse ones. Because if it isn't, and we're all wrong, and the polls have got this badly wrong, and, you know, the Senate is more or less still in his control, then we are in a very different situation. So really, I think everything is going to hang on, you know, what he feels when he wakes up on Wednesday morning.

Because I think, you know, they are right. And they're saying, you know, one of the reasons your approval rating is in the low 30s has a lot to do, of course, with the economy and the cost of living, but Iran too. So, you know, if you're in a hole, don't dig deeper. And they will probably be saying, you know, look, just declare a victory in Iran and walk away. And you do see some people who look as if they might have been doing a little preparatory work in that area. You've probably seen recently that Bessent, the Treasury Secretary, has been saying, "Oh, you know, the oil is flowing through. There are no problems. It's coming through." And then the other thing he said, which was interesting, was, "Kharg is finished. It's over. It doesn't matter at all because, you know, they're not exporting any oil, and it's just a lump of rock, and it doesn't matter."

"In two years, we won't even remember its name." So it sounded to me, you know, that at least there's a sort of precautionary narrative there, which they may offer on Wednesday morning: "You know, here we are. Why don't you take it? Why don't you just do that? But don't dig yourself deeper, given your low standing, because, you know, that's going to be hard to rescue. You need to be up in the low 40s to really be able to negotiate with the leadership of the party and with the big donors." You know, because the big donors too will be looking at this and thinking about '28. Can you get back from the 30s? Well, it's going to be a tough thing. But I mean, it's not that he's going to stand in '28. But, you know, they don't want a lame duck to be leading the party into a presidential election.

## #Danny

Definitely. And it's difficult to imagine what kind of outcomes could actually change that last part that you just mentioned, Alistair. Given all of these developments we just talked about, how do you completely reverse that? What you said about Bessent—I remember recently, this had to be within the last week, he put up a scorecard, right? Zero oil coming out of Iran, and then whatever number they keep throwing out there—millions, hundreds of millions, whatever it is—of barrels coming out of the strait because of what the U.S. is doing. And that definitely does seem like some kind of attempt. And CENTCOM has been in on it, of course, coming out with videos almost every week talking about how well they're doing at pushing the oil out.

But then there are the reports, Alistair, that say that whatever is coming out—and those numbers are very likely not accurate at all—the operation itself is not sustainable in terms of cost, military resources, what they're using, all of that. I don't know, Alistair, what are your thoughts on the historical side of this? Because we're talking about nuclear taboos potentially being broken, a war like this, with all of its ramifications, continuing and reigniting in a much bigger way than it has over the last month or several months or so. In all your years covering wars and diplomacy, can you think

of anything in history that this situation reminds you of, or that gives you any kind of indication of how all of this might go?

## #Alastair Crooke

You know, certainly from long ago, when I was involved with Afghanistan and elsewhere, I've always been struck by the momentum. That was Charlie Wilson's war. They were undermining, they were destroying the Soviet Union in Afghanistan. And, you know, it was impossible to say, "Actually, it's not working. It's not working very well," which was the case. They didn't defeat Russia in Afghanistan. Russia imploded because of its own internal dynamics, quite separately from what was happening in Afghanistan. And in fact, they were doing quite well in Afghanistan in the last year.

So, I think, you know, these covert operations, these big operations—everyone gets overexcited and very caught up in them. And analysis is the first thing that deteriorates. I remember when I was in Afghanistan, congressmen used to come and ask me what was happening because, you know, it was very difficult to get into it, and it was a very confusing place. So they'd come and ask me, and I would sometimes say things which perhaps I shouldn't have said. I'd say, "You do know that of the donations and equipment you're giving to the Afghans, one-third is immediately sold and the proceeds pocketed by the groups, one-third is kept, and the other third goes to Kashmir for the war against India."

And eventually I was told I shouldn't say these things and should shut up. Probably that was right, but I'm just trying to say this gives you an idea, you know, how to push back against the type of thing Bessent is saying: "We're in there, we're defeating Iran, we're winning the war, the oil is pouring out." We all know it's not true. There's no oil coming out that isn't authorized by Iran. Of course there's oil coming through Hormuz, because Iran is selling it. I mean, you know, there are people who are desperate for some oil, and Iran is authorizing certain amounts.

It doesn't say it, it doesn't put it in these words, but, you know, there's almost no unauthorized passage of vessels. And the ones that have tried have either hit mines or been hit by missiles. And so there's a lot of wreckage around in the Gulf, as you've probably seen in many videos. But there's this process and the conviction that, you know, this momentum is unstoppable. I mean, you know, the war in Afghanistan was going to be unstoppable. It was going to defeat the Russians. Films were made about Charlie Wilson's War and so on. Fine, but, you know, then when you want to ask someone what's really happening, what can they say?

They can't tell you the truth. This is the problem with Ukraine to a certain extent, too. You know, the CIA are running this covert military operation with paramilitary forces, both inside—I mean, not fighting, but running things, you know, facilitating the missiles going to the right destination, working with the intelligence services and the other sides of it. And someone who gets up and says,

"Well, actually, you know, it isn't as successful as you say," will very soon be squashed. So the first casualty is really hard intelligence: "This is the real picture." This is what intelligence services used to be about.

This is about bringing bad news to governments, saying, "Look, I'm afraid what you think is a great success is actually not what you think it is." And that has become less and less possible, if you like, as intelligence becomes much more militarized, by European services as well as American services. And so the casualty is the person who gets up and says it like it is, because that isn't popular and isn't what people want to hear. And even his colleagues probably say, "What are you saying? We're working our backsides off. You know, we're beating Russia. I mean, we're firing these missiles. We're destroying their refineries. It's affecting their economy. And you're telling us that the economy is okay? Come on."

So this is the problem with these things, and that's undoubtedly partly a factor in this. They cannot grasp it because I think one of the things you can see about the way in which they approach Iran is that they are convinced there's a divided leadership in Iran, and that they've got to find a sort of Delcy Rodriguez in the midst of it to just come in and take the reins, and it'll turn into a sort of pro-United States state. You know, there would be a decapitation strike, and then there would be a revolution, and they would all become secular, rationalist Westerners. And all these things, you know, are deeply held.

This is what I call, you know, the adverse culture of intelligence services and, to a certain extent, the military, but less the military because they have to get on the ground and they have to account to families for, you know, dead soldiers. So they tend to be more realistic. But people cannot understand that when Iran says, “Look, we are open to diplomacy,” that is immediately interpreted as meaning they’re ready to make concessions, and we just have to increase the pressure—more pressure—and we will get them to back down and capitulate. But that isn’t what it means in Iran. Iran is quite clear in saying, “Yes, we’re open to negotiations, but first of all, you have to undertake and implement the preconditions that we have set out before any negotiations begin. All seven preconditions need to be met.”

And then, yes, we could be open to diplomacy. Is that likely to happen? Is Washington willing to meet all the preconditions? We know what they are pretty well. I mean, you know what they are, I'm sure: a complete return of the frozen assets, a lifting of the naval blockade, a complete ceasefire that includes Lebanon and the region. The Iranians have been consistent in saying from the beginning that all of these need to be met. All of these things have been said from the beginning. But there's still a view that, you know, if they say, “We're open to negotiations,” we've only got to put more pressure on, and then we'll find our Delcy Rodriguez. Apologies to Delcy Rodriguez. I'm only using it as a metaphor rather than implying anything about her actual circumstances, because I don't know about her circumstances exactly.

## #Danny

Right, right. No, no, but I think it is somewhat true, though, to find compliant leadership, regardless of the circumstances—whether they're desperate or they're colluding or whatever it may be. But I totally understand the point, Alistair. My question to you, then, you know, as we enter the last 10, 15 minutes or so of our program: I wanted to ask you your thoughts on Iran's approach to this mediation, in particular the reports that they are willing to—and I find this actually quite entertaining in some respects.

There are reports that they will reduce the time it takes to reopen the Strait of Hormuz from seven days to two days if the United States meets all of the conditions. And if you read the conditions, they align almost exactly with the Memorandum of Understanding, which, since June of this year, has been essentially abandoned and torn up right after Trump signed it. But what are your thoughts on the way Iran has been navigating attempts by countries like Qatar to mediate the start of negotiations? Because it's all indirect at this point.

## #Alastair Crooke

I think you shouldn't pay too much attention to those sorts of statements because they are quite at odds with what has been laid down by Rezaei. He said very clearly, and he's repeated it, "We're open to, if you like, a negotiation after all the preconditions are met." Well, those preconditions are not going to be met in two days. I mean, that's absurd. One can only assume that the person who made that comment, probably Araghchi, is trying to sort of gain some momentum in the negotiations. But it actually confuses things, I think, to say something like that. Because, first of all, as the Supreme Leader has said, they intend to keep complete control of Hormuz.

They're not intending to open it in the way in which Washington and the West understand it: everyone just free-for-all, up and down, no money. No, I mean, they're not going to do that. And so I think that some of these statements, you know, may not have actually been made as such by the Iranian official. I don't know what he said. But one of the problems throughout this process has been overexcited mediators. There are several mediators, you know. You know who they are. And, of course, they want to impress Washington by showing that they can, you know, come up with new ideas and new proposals, and one of them possibly may one day fly. But that also can be very problematic.

I used to negotiate ceasefires in the Palestinian-Israeli context, and one of the problems was the mediators. Sometimes the mediators would get involved and, you know, Israel would turn to a mediator because they thought they could put more pressure on the opposite number to moderate their demands. But in the end, I had to say to them, “You know, actually, your mediators are lying to you, because that isn't what is being proposed.” They're trying to, you know, lie to both parties and then see if they can turn that somehow into an agreement—that somehow it will all fall into place as an agreement. So, you know, there are certain perils in mediation. And so I think you should be quite cautious about that.

I mean, it's quite clear that, for now, you know, the authoritative statement comes from the Secretary of the Supreme National Security Council, Razai. And he's not saying that. But what he is saying is quite important, and he did say it just recently. He said, "Look, we do feel a different atmosphere from America. We do feel there's a different state of mind there, and that's good." That's what he said. He didn't say that means we're on the way to an agreement at all. He said, "We do feel, for the first time, you know, a constructive state of mind." He said he'd received a letter from Vice President Vance, but he hadn't replied to it at that point. But he said this was good. But that doesn't translate into an agreement.

You know, the details of those seven points would take quite some time to discuss. You don't just go there with an envelope in your hand and write on the back of it, "I agree: one, two, three, four, five, six, seven," and you've got an agreement. I mean, you know, all of these things, like the ceasefire—what would it mean? Who would it extend to? What would it mean in Lebanon? Would it mean that Israel stops attacking Lebanon? Would it mean that Israel withdraws from Lebanon? What does it mean about, you know, Iran's authority over the Strait of Hormuz? I mean, all these things, from my experience, need a lot of work. And if you don't do that work, then they break down very quickly.

## #Danny

Great points, Alistair. Well, maybe we can close with your assessment of how Israel is doing right now. A lot of people are looking at what's going on, and they are seeing a heavy shift, an intense role that Israel is playing right now in terms of escalating again with Iran, but really in this entire process of what's happening in the region. And so, what is Israeli media saying right now? And what do you believe Israel's real role is in bringing us to what is, I think, a very knife-edge kind of moment in this war, where it does feel like the U.S. does have a different mood? I can see that. There were satellite images that just came out of 24 different installations in the region. There isn't much left for the U.S. to conduct operations with after the 40 days, as well as the couple of restarts that we had. So, your thoughts on Israel's true role here?

## #Alastair Crooke

Well, first of all, I would say we can't speak about Israel in that way, as if it's a coherent, cohesive element. I think that the elections have not produced what many Israelis hoped for: a clear direction for the future. If anything, that has been muddied in this process. And there is also, I think, a certain degree of fatigue in Israel. I mean, some people regard it as Bibi fatigue, Netanyahu fatigue, or they regard it just as fatigue with the endless wars that are continuing. If you like, Israel is in a state of some uncertainty about who it is or what direction it's going in. I think there is a large proportion of Israelis who feel that somehow Israel is on the wrong track and that this needs to be reexamined. I mean, senior people like former generals and others are saying these sorts of things.

So I think the mood can't be summed up in one thing. But the one thing you can say, I would say, is that even if Netanyahu didn't do as well as some people projected, nonetheless, the direction of

travel of the Israeli electorate is to the hard right. Israel is becoming harder right, and that is going to be a reality for the future. If you look at the candidates in these elections, what is the difference between them? There's a difference in some respects: will you deal with an Arab partner or will you not? But in terms of actual policy, you know, they are all hard right. And so that is the direction that Israel is going, even if we'll be in a muddle about whether there's going to be a unity government or a coalition government, and who's going to form what. So that's what I would say. Thank you.

## #Danny

And no real change within Israel in terms of how it approaches Gaza, Lebanon, and Iran—those, I guess, existential arenas that have caused so much pain and bloodshed?

## #Alastair Crooke

A continued hard line, continued aggression in the West Bank, continued aggression in Lebanon, various maneuvers in Syria, continued talk, at least, about Iran. Hard right. It'll stay hard right. Exactly how that will play out, we don't know. But that's really where things stand. Yes, Netanyahu didn't do as well as people expected. He's not out of the game. Many people in Israel would like him to be gone, but the population is not turning to the left or becoming more liberal. If you look at all of the polls, it's quite clear, particularly among the young, by the way. Unlike young people in Europe and the United States, young Israelis tend to be harder and less forgiving than their elders.

## #Danny

Well, you know, in the two minutes we have, why do you think that is? Because it isn't as if the U.S. and Europe don't have a lot of blood on their hands in terms of wars, expansionism, and, of course, all of the reactionary ideas that justify them. But what is it about Israel that has made this trend among young people so different from the trend among young people in the countries that back Israel so strongly?

## #Alastair Crooke

I think because Israel, for some years now, has moved into a different sort of culture. It's gone away from the sort of Ashkenazi European style of thinking, which was much more liberal, with people who thought of assimilation as a policy, towards more of what I call the messianic, Talmudic sort of view of Israel. You know, this is the word of God, this is the destiny, this is what has been promised, and that is what is going to happen. And we are in a position to make that happen. So it's a complete change in the 10 years I've seen it, away from when it was possible to think of the politics of Palestine and Israel in sort of secular, rational, Western terms. But then, as I said, you have to change now to an eschatological understanding of what's happening in Israel and what's happening to the young in Israel.

## #Danny

Yeah, there was a clip, as the votes were being cast, of a young person at a Ben-Gvir rally. And she was asked about Gaza, and she said, "Well, you know, they all need to be kicked out. They should go anywhere, I don't care, or we'll kill them—except for Lebanon, Jordan, and Syria, which are ours." I mean, this was, you know, someone who was Gen Z at the very most. So, yeah, this poison is certainly spreading, Alistair. And I really appreciate you coming on and spending the hour with me.

I want to make sure that everybody knows the Conflicts Forum Substack is in the video description below, where Alistair puts together all of the incredible developments that are happening in the region, following especially what Israel is saying and doing in the background that we don't always get to see. Everybody, hit the like button as you leave the program. You can go to the video description below to find the Conflicts Forum Substack and all the places to support this show. I'll be back tomorrow at 2 p.m. Eastern time. I'll let you know what's going on soon. Until next time, see you November 3rd, 2 p.m. Eastern, Election Day. All right, bye-bye.