Alastair Crooke: US-Israel Divide Deepens After Midterm Defeat

Alastair Crooke is a former British diplomat and the Founder of the Conflicts Forum based in Beirut. He was formerly an advisor on Middle East issues to Javier Solana, the EU Foreign Policy Chief. Follow the Substack of Alastair Crooke: https://conflictsforum.substack.com/ Follow Prof. Glenn Diesen: Substack: https://glenndiesen.substack.com/ X/Twitter: https://x.com/Glenn_Diesen Patreon: https://www.patreon.com/glenndiesen Support the research by Prof. Glenn Diesen: PayPal: https://www.paypal.com/paypalme/glenndiesen Buy me a Coffee: buymeacoffee.com/gdieseng Go Fund Me: https://gofund.me/09ea012f Buy Diesen merchandise: https://diesen-shop.fourthwall.com/en-nok Books by Prof. Glenn Diesen: https://www.amazon.com/stores/author/B09FPQ4MDL 00:00 How election results alter Trump and Netanyahu's leverage 04:07 Netanyahu's coalition crisis and the incentives for war 09:07 Iran's nuclear status and Israeli military pushback 11:55 Vance's proposed reset: Iran, costs, and Ukraine 14:51 The CIA's independent campaign against Russia 23:06 Israel's divided institutions and October 7 scrutiny 28:56 What a new Israeli government might change 33:01 Why another Iran war remains possible 38:11 MAGA's antiwar turn and the paleoconservative case 41:57 European austerity, Ukraine funding, and political legitimacy

#Glenn

Welcome back, everyone. We are joined today by Alastair Crooke, a former British diplomat and expert on the Middle East, who's also a prolific author. He writes on the Conflicts Forum Substack, and for the best insights into what is happening across the Middle East, I definitely recommend it. So make sure to check out the link in the description. Thank you for coming back on the program, Alastair. It's good to see you.

#Alastair Crooke

No, it's a pleasure to be with you again.

#Glenn

Well, we see now that the elections in Israel and the United States are over, and it appears that the geopolitical landscape has changed to a great extent. I was wondering, how do you think that affects the dealings between Netanyahu and Trump now? I mean, this is often explained as one of the key reasons why we had the Iran war and, indeed, the crisis across the region.

#Alastair Crooke

Every day, to press him to attack Iran. But the reality is that, as we've seen from the midterms, Trump is politically weaker than he was a little while ago. Politically weaker because, to a very great extent, he had made the midterms about him, saying 47 times, in fact, you know, that "it is all about me" and "this is an election about me," and that he was the one who was on the ballot. I mean, he did go to that extent. And, of course, now, with the results in, it's pretty clear that that has been a rejection of Trump primarily—a personal rejection, in the sense that if you put yourself out there like that so many times, saying it's all about you, and then you come out with results like we saw over the last day or so, then, you know, it clearly is.

I think Trump has moved, in a way, through a progression. When he started this term in office, he was still something of a novelty—at least a second-term novelty. A bit intriguing, you know, contrarian: what's going to happen? There was a bit of excitement to it. Then it moved into a phase where Trump was almost entirely entertainment. I mean, he was an entertainer, and he was good at it. You know, he's good at TV, at managing narratives and coming up with surprising initiatives and so on. And then, in this last stage, it seems he's moved to a different phase where there is active dislike of him. I think of his language, his conduct, the corruption, the lack of, if you like, rectitude—not only in his own financial dealings, but also in those of his family and the circles around him.

And then, of course, the war in Iran and the closeness to Israel. Those were the issues that have been highlighted. But nonetheless, I think Trump clearly is weaker than he was. Netanyahu is weaker, too—a lot weaker—in two ways: politically, but also physically. If you've seen any of the videos of him or looked at him recently, he's not what he was. He's obviously ill. And he says, you know, doctors accompany him everywhere, and it's fairly clear that they do. There's talk that he has a pacemaker and so on. So he's weaker. His number of seats slipped to 18 from what they are at the moment. Again, he made this election very much about him, too, like Trump. And he was defeated—not completely, but he was badly wounded in this election. And people can see it.

And they have a feel for someone who is more vulnerable and more wounded. And they can see his decline. So he's in a difficult position. Trump had put a lot of pressure on the president to ask Netanyahu first to try to form a government. It is the president's prerogative to choose who he thinks might best form a government. And he hasn't asked Netanyahu yet. He might, but he hasn't. And he might ask Eisenkot, the leader of the other bloc in the Knesset. He doesn't have a majority either, but he has Arab parties in his coalition that he says he will not form a government with. But altogether, he is, if you like, somehow in a better position politically, because some of those Arab parties have said they will join with him if they need to, if it comes to it, in a unity government or a coalition government.

He set them four tests, sort of, of their adherence to Zionism. Four parties passed the tests and are regarded as being Zionist, pro-Zionist, although they come from a completely different demographic in Israel. So if he gets asked to try to form a government, whether he succeeds or not, Netanyahu goes into limbo for 40 days. I mean, he can give up earlier than that, but most likely he'll take it. In the middle of this is Lieberman, who seems to be playing a spoiler role both for Netanyahu and for

Eisenkot. So Netanyahu is much, much weaker. He needs the war, and he says he needs the war, which is why he keeps ringing Trump about it, because that is his best chance of forming a unity government.

If there's, you know, war, then people will rally around Israel, the state, and he will get a unity government. They had a unity government at the time of COVID. And again, after the 7th of October, there was a unity government. So it's possible people will come together and join then. So he needs a war and needs one badly. And so he's pressing. Trump's efforts at persuading the president to give him a complete pardon and cancel the corruption charges against him haven't succeeded. And it's not clear that Herzog is going to choose Netanyahu as the caretaker. If he's not caretaker, which he isn't at this moment, going to war on that basis is problematic, because as a caretaker, formally and legally, he can prosecute a war on his own behalf.

He can order and mandate the IDF and the military forces to pursue the war. If he is not a caretaker, then it's harder for him. And the chief of defense staff and others, like Amos Yadlin, the former military intelligence chief, have said they see no immediate reason for Israel to rush to war. There is no evidence whatsoever of Iran moving towards a nuclear weapon. There's no such evidence, and there is no particular reason why things couldn't wait several months and still be in the same situation. They point out that Iran has rebuilt its weapons arsenals, and so there's no particular reason for going to war.

So they're really pushing back. Of course, he has the support of Mossad. The head of Mossad was his private secretary, and he has the support of Shin Bet. So he's reduced at the moment to claiming that the elections were stolen by the Arab parties—that they were gerrymandered. But the head of the commission says there's absolutely no abuse and refuses to accept that the elections are corrupt or out of order. So that's where we are in the relationship between the two of them. Netanyahu keeps pushing Trump, and Trump, after the midterms... I think your viewers will be aware of Vance's tweet, in which he said pretty plainly, you know, the cause of this problem was and is Trump—the Iran war, but also Iran-Israel.

And he said the cause of this is basically the war with Iran. And therefore, there needs to be a quick rethinking of the agenda, and radical change is necessary. Otherwise, we're going to lose the MAGA supporters. We've lost them, effectively. I mean, he admits they're lost, and he says Trump admits they're lost. But then he outlines four points—what needs to be done. But the prospects of that happening, I think, are not high. First of all, it would be to accept Iran's memorandum of understanding—in other words, capitulate. I mean, in terms of unfreezing Iranian assets, lifting the naval blockade, returning all its assets, lifting the sanctions and tariffs on Iran, and agreeing to Iran's administration of the Strait of Hormuz.

That's quite a bit for Trump to digest, I guess, as we are where we are. I mean, maybe it would have been easier to do it at the time, but he decided to reject that statement by Iran. Then there are the other conditions that people have set out. Francis mentioned the cost of living—that would

have to be attended to. And also, of course, doing something about Ukraine. That too is quite problematic, because the implication of what some of the people close to Vance are saying is that he probably has to dismiss the director of the CIA, Ratcliffe, in order to stop, if you like, the continued attacks deep into Russia against refineries and other targets. So that would be, I think, also quite difficult.

And it's quite clear he hasn't been able to do that. Indeed, he was not even really able to put pressure on Zelensky to take part in a ceasefire by slowing, if you like, the speed of Starlink so that, beyond a certain distance, the drones and missiles wouldn't function because they'd lose their link to their controllers. And it only took two days before those links were restored. It was only a day afterwards that a missile was fired at a refinery, even though that was Trump's main request to Zelensky. He said, "Stop firing. Stop destroying their diesel exports, because we need them, because the price is too high here." And it was only a few days later that they attacked again, and quite clearly that was facilitated by the CIA.

#Glenn

When you describe this need to fire the director of the CIA, it doesn't appear that the White House and the CIA are on the same page here. To what extent is there a competition for influence with the intelligence services? Because this is not a new thing in the Trump administration, if we think back to the Russiagate years. But to what extent is the CIA operating independently of U.S. foreign policy here?

#Alastair Crooke

It is acting independently of Trump's foreign policy. And they make no bones about it. In a recent article, they were very clear: "We're in the lead in the war on Russia. We're in the lead, and we're being very successful with what we're doing. We have people on the ground, and we're quite satisfied that we are making great progress in, if you like, attacking Russia, in undermining their oil exports and their oil infrastructure, and making Russians more frightened by the threat of missiles at airports and such like." So he is not operating according to the instructions of the president. He's operating according to, if you like, two things. One is—I mean, you had someone, I think, just recently on your program. I think Stephen Kinzer.

#Alastair Crooke

Kinzer, who's written a number of books, was with The New York Times. And he was talking about how there's been a long history of, if you like, particularly radicalized people who have come to the United States who were viscerally hostile to Russia. And you probably remember—I remember at the time—that originally they sort of settled in the Hudson Institute. I mean, these were, at that time, sort of Trotskyists and children of Trotskyists at the Hudson Institute. I'm talking about the '70s. And then Scoop Jackson, who was the senator for Washington—not Washington, D.C., Washington

State—took up this group and others, and he became a Democratic presidential candidate three times. And so they settled there. They were very much involved in the policy process on Israel, on Palestine. There was Uzi Arad, who I remember dealing with much, much later in Israel.

He was at the Hudson Institute at the same time. But basically, they were all radical revolutionaries looking for, as they used to say very clearly, permanent world revolution, as well as a Zionist state. So they've been very influential. And Scoop Jackson particularly made sure that some of these people were placed in the NSC, the National Security Council, and also in the State Department and other places. We refer to them as the deep state quite often, loosely, but that isn't the deep state. The deep state is something else. They are, shall we call it, the shallow state. These are the people, you know, who, if you like, are the technicians that operate for the deep state. And there's been a long war against Russia. Much of its roots lie in London, but it goes back to, if you like, the 18th century and earlier.

And, of course, it has had its roots in Western support for the Japanese war on Russia, which nearly brought down the Tsar. And then, of course, financial support for the revolution, the Bolshevik Revolution. What his people say about him is that he is, you know, absolutely clear on the threat that Russia poses to the United States and to all its allies. He doesn't sound like someone who's very open to diplomacy. It's said very clearly, you know, that this is Radcliffe. He's very much a man who understands the enormous danger that Russia presents to the United States.

And so the CIA operates quite often independently, in the sense that—you know how the European Union, you'd be more familiar with it, has its acquis, all the treaties and legislation that cumulatively come together and become the law of Europe? It's a sort of process of agglomeration of judgments and so on. It's a collective thing that takes place. Well, the same sort of thing has happened with the CIA, and they're called presidential findings. They go back a long way, you know, authorizing action against Russia. A finding may be years old, but it's still in operation today because it hasn't been canceled.

So the CIA has a lot of scope for maneuvering between various findings issued over time. And Trump has not—or cannot—issue a new finding that cancels the old findings, it seems. So it is operating very obviously independently. You know, on the one hand, as I put it in one article, you have Trump making nice with Putin. And then, two days later, there's a missile attack deep into Russia on a refinery. At the same time, Trump is pleading with Zelensky, you know, "No more, no more attacks on refineries. We want to get the price of diesel down." I mean, what one can say is that it's, shall we say, dysfunctional.

#Glenn

Well, dysfunctional is a good word when you have this kind of infighting within the state. I mean, in political theory and realist theory, this is usually how you define an irrational state. Once it doesn't act as a unitary actor, you have this internal fighting. But if the Americans have this internal fighting,

how do you see it in Israel? Because it looks as if Netanyahu is often quite capable of holding on to power longer than people think. But his political survival might now come to an end, and it looks as if his survival now depends on increasing the conflict with the Iranians and pulling in the Americans. But what happens on the Israeli side if Netanyahu goes down? I mean, would he face scrutiny over the events of October 7th? Or how do you see this drama playing out?

#Alastair Crooke

Well, first of all, there is dysfunctionality, if that's what you call it, because Mossad operates within an entirely different command structure. It reports directly to the Prime Minister. The head of Mossad was his military secretary, and he was chosen directly to go to Mossad, allegedly for his loyalty to the Prime Minister. And then you have, if you like, the police, who report to Ben-Gvir. He literally has a small army that he commands, which is quite separate from the IDF. And the IDF are very frightened of the settler army. They're armed, trained, and probably about 10,000 strong. So they're quite a formidable force.

And then you have the courts, the Supreme Court, which Likud—or at least the government—is trying to deconstruct and strip of its jurisdiction over much of politics. Israel doesn't have a constitution. So it's mostly what they call a Basic Law that governs that. And then the court has a say in whether things comply with the Basic Law. And Trump and the justice minister are trying to end that. So there's quite a big degree of dysfunctionality in Israel, too. Now, what's afoot at the moment in Israel is that Eisenkot and the new members of the Knesset, without any government involved yet, are due to assemble on the 9th of this month.

And I don't know if he'll do it on the first day, but Eisenkot has two objectives: to remove the Speaker of Parliament, who is a strong Netanyahu ally, and replace him with someone else, and to do two other things. One of them is to launch an investigation into Netanyahu and what happened on the 7th of October, with majority support. He won't have formed a government at that stage, but he assumes that he will be able to command a majority in the Knesset. I don't have the numbers, but my best guess is that he will get a majority for that because the Arab parties will certainly support it, and other people will also support him.

This, of course, is absolutely toxic for Netanyahu. And if it does happen that, you know, Israel moves to another round of elections, it's going to be very bad for him if all the events of the 7th of October are aired: when he was informed, what he was told, and what he did about it. He's already been panicking about that. You remember he flew to the Gulf, to the UAE, specifically to make sure that MBZ didn't repeat his allegations that he'd warned Trump 11 days prior to the 7th of October that this was going to happen. And he wanted to make sure that wasn't said during the election process. And MBZ didn't repeat it.

And he also asked Qatar not to stay silent on these issues. So we are already seeing moves towards a new administration taking place. Netanyahu is therefore on the back foot politically. Where is this

going to go? Well, I think, you know, ultimately, Eisenkot has a good chance of forming a government eventually. I don't know that it will happen. Some of the Arab parties will probably agree to be part of the coalition. He will lose Lieberman in the process because Lieberman has refused to have anything to do with the Arab parties. He will not be in a coalition with them. Is this going to change things?

#Glenn

Maybe it won't really change that much.

#Alastair Crooke

I think if you look at Eisenkot's policies, they're not much different. I mean, on Gaza or the West Bank, they're exactly the same. On Iran, they're not that different, except that he's not in favor of a war with Iran that would put Israel at risk. But he certainly would be in favor of America being at war with Iran. And I think one could ask: if a government is formed, where is Israel going? I would say that it is much more fragmented. It is changing radically, but radically means moving hard right.

#Alastair Crooke

In Israel, all the polling shows that the electorate is moving hard right. And that's particularly noticeable among the young. Young Israelis are quite often further to the right than their elders. So, I mean, what will change in policy terms? And what will change in their relationship with the U.S.? I mean, I don't think much will change from the Israeli end, but I think something will change from the American end, because it's quite clear that the question of the relationship with Israel is a big issue in the United States and will be for the foreseeable future. It's going to continue to be in contention, very much so. And of course, I mean, there's a lot of sleight of hand going on here. Trump announced that, oh, well, you know, they won't receive any more money from the United States.

You probably saw that—the $4.5 billion that they receive—and that Netanyahu agrees to that. Well, that's true. But if you look at the bill that advances the fusion of Israeli and American security, defense, and intelligence structures—the merging of the Israeli security and military sides with the Pentagon—I think it's called Section 212 or something like this. It's still proceeding through the Senate and may well be approved by the Senate. Well, that bill alone will give Israel an extra $1.5 billion a year. So they lose the four and a half over 10 years, but they get one and a half billion a year anyway if this bill goes through. And they've got to do that by, of course, the third of January, when the new Congress assembles in the new year.

#Glenn

Well, I was wondering what this means for a possible renewal of the war with Iran, because on the one hand, I would think that Netanyahu, or Israel in general, would see a two-month opening to go back into a deeper war, or at least entangle the Americans more deeply in Iran. On the other hand, what you're arguing is also very reasonable: there's obviously now much greater concern among the Americans about Israeli intelligence, both the information they receive and the cooperation.

So where does he go from here? I mean, we kind of go back to where we started with J.D. Vance's tweet, where he lists all the reasons why they lost. He mentioned Israel directly, of course, saying the relationship with Israel has to change. He also mentioned the Iran war and failing to put America first. I mean, the common denominator in all of this is Israel, it seems. So how will this affect things? Do you think Trump will be more restrained, pulling away from the Israelis, or do you think they will go all out?

#Alastair Crooke

I think there's a high possibility of a war, which could happen at any time. It is a high possibility. Now, the only thing that has sort of changed the calculus slightly, I think, has been the midterm elections. Because, first of all, that has meant that people like Vance, but others too, have been saying to the president, "Look, your approval ratings are down the drain, at about 30% or something like this. And, you know, if you're going to recover at all over the next two years, you need to get those ratings up to about 40%. And even then, it's problematic."

But otherwise, you may find that you've lost the Senate and you've lost the donors if your approval ratings stay at that level, because they'll be looking at 2028 and thinking, you know, you're no good. I mean, you're not going to be a worthwhile investment for us if your ratings are that bad, especially as they see what's happened, you know, with the clean sweep by the Democrats. So what people like Vance and others are clearly saying to Trump is, "Listen, to go back and attack Iran now, I mean, this is crazy because your approval ratings are bad enough. And you yourself say that the cause of this debacle in the elections was the war in Iran. Well, now it's time to get out of it, isn't it?"

Now, the question is, you know, he still is not convinced. He still says—or he's compelled to say—that he was right to go to war with Iran: "And if it came to it, I'd do it again. And I may do it again. And the war with Iran only ends when I say it's ended." So this is what he's saying. So it's clear that he's leaving the door open to another attack. And then he follows all of these statements with the same thing: "Iran may not have a nuclear weapon. It may not have a nuclear weapon." So, I mean, it hasn't all gone away, even if Vance and the others are saying, "You know, this is not a good idea if you want to try and revive the Republican Party, because it's not just about you."

I mean, you know, the people who abandoned them in these midterms were the young people, the demographic between 18 and 49. I mean, it was only the boomers who stayed with the Republicans, and they're a vanishing constituency. So the young, I mean, were the most viscerally opposed to the

war in Iran. And this is what I think, you know, Vance must be worried about: how do you actually remake MAGA? How do you give it a sense of purpose? Because I think the other part of this, which is less spoken about but which is obvious from the results, is that it wasn't just Iran and Ukraine and these wars. It was quite clearly, from the language of MAGA, about the propensity of the United States to go to endless wars, one after the other, after the other, after the other.

And so I think, in a certain sense, what we're seeing is a paleoconservative section within MAGA, within the Republican Party. I mean, it's too early to say that it's actually taken shape in this way, but we're seeing a return to the ideas of Pat Buchanan and also, importantly, Pat Buchanan's economic structures, which were America-first economic structures, about building economic infrastructure in America. And there's the famous Buchanan saying, you know, "The United States is a republic, not an empire." And so I think they feel they've landed a blow on the neocon constituency, which is mostly a Democratic constituency. But of course, there are people like Rubio and others in the Republican Party who are neocons too. But I think they are going to interpret the elections also in terms of that important divide—important in terms of what may come from America, from the Republican Party—of discrediting the neocon faction, maybe existentially, and bringing back what they call paleoconservative ideas, going back to Pat Buchanan and that period of economic thinking. That was then, of course, completely overtaken in 2008 and all of the subsequent periods by the financialized approach, the debt-led approach to the economy, which has eaten away at precisely the jobs that the Republican demographic used to have, because all that manufacturing was offshored by America to Asia.

And those jobs—if you speak to young people, I mean, they remember the time, particularly with their grandparents, but even with their parents, when they worked in, you know, plants and assembly and manufacturing, and they got good incomes. They could afford two cars and a decent house and holidays. Can they do that now? Can they even dream of getting a job, I mean, of any sort other than, you know, helping out at a hamburger joint? I mean, where are those jobs? What are they going to do? So I would say the other thing that's so important from this election process—and dare I say it, because I'm sure there are many Americans who watch your programs too—but I mean, think about Europe.

Don't think about it in the usual way, you know, because Americans regard Europe as, you know, “Oh, we don't bother about Europeans.” Not that, but look at Europe burning. Look at Europe from afar. Look at Poland, look at Belgium, look at France, look at Italy. Look across the whole of Europe at the anger and sometimes quite widespread violence that is taking place. What's that all about? And are you completely unaffected? Does it not matter to you because that's Europe? I suggest it isn't, because what you've seen in Europe is that the whole idea of Europe, the whole myth of Europe, was the idea that it would bring a prosperous way of life to most people.

Prosperity was part of the message, and prosperity, social services, and welfare provisions were part of the myth of what Europe is about. But the myth of America was rather similar. And this is completely broken. It's broken because it can't be afforded. Europe can't afford itself any longer.

Look at what's happening with the budget. I mean, the European budget—they need a huge increase from member states. The mandatory contribution that member states give to the Commission is going up by about 80%. Huge increases are required. So Germany is expected to increase its contributions from about 40% to 70%, and France from 30% to 40%.

All the states are going to be asked for big increases in their contributions just to stand still. No extra expenditure. And of course, not included in any of this is the putative expenditure on Ukraine. Ukraine is not in the EU budget as it exists. The 90 billion that the EU gave is off-budget. You try and find it. You can't even find it as a line item. You can't even find it under the expenditure and spending item. It's under a thing called "headroom." That's where it comes in, and it's a debt that is guaranteed under this process against the future EU budget. It is guaranteed by member states, with several member states refusing to provide the guarantee, because if Zelensky, or whoever is president of Ukraine, doesn't repay it, then it falls on these states to repay it. And that is separate.

And people are asking: at a time when hospitals are being shut, the number of hospital beds is being reduced, schools are not being adequately maintained, and welfare and basic services like buses and trains are getting worse and worse because of a lack of maintenance and new investment, you know, how are we going to increase this expenditure? They can't. So if France and Germany want to keep funding Ukraine through the EU, and they want to keep funding the EU at levels to which it has been accustomed, then they have to impose huge austerity. We're going back to that period in Europe when austerity was imposed, and things will have to be cut and cut more, and taxes raised and raised more.

So taxes will be raised on the states, and then individual states will raise taxes. That whole modernist idea of a prosperous Europe, of prosperity in Europe, has collapsed. It can't afford it. It has to cut back drastically on services. I mean, you know, we're not talking about just immigrant services. We're talking about mainstream services and higher numbers in schools and all these things. All of this is collapsing. And at the same time, America says, "Well, you've got to pay for Ukraine now." And Zelensky's told you, "I need another 70 million immediately."

#Glenn

Actually, I need 155 billion, please.

#Alastair Crooke

Very shortly. And as the more frugal member states are saying, no way is this going to happen without first reaching agreement on the budget. There's no more of this sort of smoke and mirrors, you know, where we're funding Ukraine off-budget under headroom in the system. It can't go on like this. It's got to stop. So, I mean, I've spent a little time detailing the situation, but it doesn't matter who wins this next election. I mean, the Democrats will have the same issues. They may be a little different in America because it's not exactly the same, but the same thing is there.

Jobs, jobs, well-paying jobs are vanishing. AI is contributing to the vanishing of jobs. Most manufacturing jobs are not going to native-born Americans. They are going to people who've immigrated to America instead, because quite often they can be paid less. And even technical jobs are mostly going to people coming through a special visa provision from places like China. There's a special visa allowance for people who've got the right technical qualifications to work in Silicon Valley. So, you know, Europe will no doubt be smiling broadly, saying, "Oh, Trump is gone."

We were always expecting to wait out Trump, and then the Democrats would be back and everything would be fine. Well, look what's happening in Europe. And then, what are the Democrats going to do about that? Because these are big structural problems. A little gerrymandering here and there isn't going to do it. You know, a change in central bank interest rates, 1% up or down, isn't going to improve the situation. It would need a structural change to end the bipolar economy. And that's very, very difficult. And the plutocrats in Europe and America would fight that tooth and nail.

#Glenn

When political leaders in Europe are asked, "What will you prioritize: stabilizing your own country or funding the Ukraine war?" people like Chancellor Merz openly say, "We'll go with Ukraine." And now he's down to a 10% approval rating. I mean, that's historic in Germany. So this economic irresponsibility is translating into a political legitimacy crisis. It's just wild to see this happening live. You see where this is headed, and they're doing nothing to correct course. Anyways, Alistair, thank you so much for taking the time. I appreciate it.

#Alastair Crooke

You're welcome. Always a pleasure.