

Alastair Crooke: Iran Vows ALL-OUT Retaliation as Oil Crisis Erupts

Former UK Diplomat and Middle East expert Alastair Crooke joins to discuss the ongoing Iran war, now in a critical phase as the Trump administration sends mixed signals and Tehran declares full readiness for all types of warfare thrown at it by the US-Israeli regime. Alastair Crooke's Conflicts Forum Substack: <https://conflictsforum.substack.com/> Subscribe for more in-depth geopolitical analysis! Leave your thoughts in the comments below! Support the Channel: Patreon: <https://www.patreon.com/dannyhaiphong> SUBSCRIBE ON RUMBLE: Rumble: <https://rumble.com/c/DannyHaiphong> Follow Me on Social Media: Twitter: <https://twitter.com/DannyHaiphong> Telegram: <https://t.me/DannyHaiphong> Support the channel in other ways: <https://www.buymeacoffee.com/dannyhaiphong> Substack: chroniclesofhaiphong.substack.com Cashapp: \$Dhaiphong Venmo: @dannyH2020 Paypal: <https://paypal.me/spiritofho> #iran #trump #iranwar

#Danny

Welcome, everyone. Welcome back to the show. It's your host, Danny Haiphong. As you can see, I am joined by Alastair Crooke, former UK diplomat, current geopolitical analyst and expert, author, and just all-around great friend of the show. Alastair, good to see you again.

#Alastair Crooke

Thank you very much. Always a pleasure to join you.

#Danny

Welcome back. Thank you, thank you, thank you. Yes, jet lag, but definitely very happy to do this show with you, because since the last time we spoke, a lot has happened. But how about we get into these latest developments? First, we have Iran, as the United States mulls and declares essentially that a long blockade is going to be the step forward that it takes. Iran is warning of an unprecedented military response to the naval blockade, saying that patience has its limits and that they have many surprises for the United States should this continue.

Now, the United States, Donald Trump, is instructing his aides to prepare for an extended blockade, saying that he believes resuming bombing or walking away from the conflict poses a higher risk than maintaining the blockade, and that he hopes to continue squeezing Iran's economy and oil exports through this prolonged blockade. But, Alastair, we have now oil prices at \$115 a barrel for Brent

crude. That's likely to continue to go up and up and up. And I'm curious where you think things are now in the war, how we got here, and what you expect to come out of what it seems like the United States' position is, which is to just try to starve Iran into submission via this blockade.

#Alastair Crooke

Okay, well, can I just start off with the figure you gave for the price of Brent? Markets are completely broken, as you know, and prices reflect nothing. The markets, the prices are completely manipulated by percent and by insiders trading. Because, yes, that is the futures price you stated. But try and buy a physical barrel of oil anywhere for that price, and I'm sure people would clap you enormously, because actually it's nearer \$200 and sometimes above \$200 if you actually want a real physical barrel of oil.

I think Sri Lanka paid much more than that, \$248 or something. I don't know the exact figure, but a lot more than that, because they needed the oil, and other states are also needing it and paying a lot more than those figures. They're always manipulating those figures down for domestic American purposes more than anything else. Keeping the market high is key to the attempt by Trump to see if he can do—I think it's unlikely—but I think the aim is to do a turnabout on the economy. And one part of the turnabout in the economy, you've got to have the market up high because everyone checks their pension, their 401k or whatever it is, every morning, and they want to make sure that it's going up and it's not going down.

So I think this reflects the beginnings of the refocusing on the primary elections for November's partial parliamentary elections. What's happened? I think what's happened is, in the wake of the failure of the Islamabad talks—and it was a failure, and it was more than just a failure of the talks—it was a failure of the American negotiation structure. During those talks, Vance was being instructed 11 times from Susie Wiles or from the White House. It was one-day talks, after all, and then also from Netanyahu. And there was Kushner and Witkoff sort of minding what Vance did and said. Vance went there, I think, with the hope of trying to get some sort of solution.

He's very, very concerned about what this is doing to the Republican Party, and he's equally concerned about Trump—about Trump's state of mind, about his ability to make good, rational decisions. We can go back to that, but I'll just stop at that. And so he'd hoped to try and get the Iranians to agree to hand over the 430 kilos of 60% enriched uranium, and that they would give it. And Vance put a lot of pressure on this because this would give Trump a quick win. He could be like a footballer at the end of a match, holding the trophy up above his head—the shining trophy. "Here it is, 430. They can never have a nuclear weapon now. We've got it. Here it is." So he put a lot of emphasis on that and on promising a lifting of sanctions.

And then finally the Americans fell—fell back onto the pure Netanyahu-Israeli agenda. No enrichment, zero enrichment, no missiles, all the rest of it. We're pretty familiar with that agenda, and the talks collapsed. But it left Vance... In a sense, his credibility—it was seen by the Iranians

very clearly that although he was seen to be sincere and trying to take things forward, he just didn't have the authority to do so. And ultimately, the talks were controlled by Israel and by Netanyahu, who made it clear that these suggestions just were not possible. So in the wake of that, there was a reconsideration in Iran, and Iran came up with a really important change of strategy.

And there was the usual sort of misinformed nonsense that the Iranians had asked to meet Witkoff and Kushner again for a second time in Islamabad and Iran. They were on the point of leaving because Trump said, oh, they capitulated, they're going to give us all of the uranium, et cetera, et cetera. We're getting quite familiar with this. It's like an old record going on. And so, you know, they were about to fly out. All of this was nonsense. There was no intention by Arachi or any of the Iranians to meet with the Americans. In fact, policy had changed. The new policy was not to discuss the nuclear issue now with the Americans, but to refuse negotiations on the nuclear issue. And what they wanted was a sort of sequential process as the way ahead.

And the sequential process was essentially that there would be, as I said before, the lifting of sanctions, the return of the frozen assets, but most importantly, agreement on Hormuz. They would open Hormuz, but strictly on Iranian terms, which would mean that those states that had supported military action against Iran would not be able to use the transit of Hormuz. It was also about the fees, that they would continue to charge fees, and that they would decide who could pass and who could not, and that would be only arranged via the IRGC. So they wanted this to be discussed, and they wanted to do this, and in return for that, then more energy would come out of Hormuz, because, you know, Iranian energy would come up, but also others' energy.

Not necessarily all energy, because some of them may still be regarded as having supported military attacks. Some of the states bordering Hormuz might be considered to have been contemplating or facilitating attacks on Iran. So, nonetheless, it seemed to be a possible win for Trump, that this was a climb down from the ladder. It was, of course, a toughening up of the Iranian position, but it was also intended that he could climb down the ladder by saying, okay, we will accept that all sanctions can be lifted and you will be able to open Hormuz so that enough oil can pass through it under your control system, but enough to keep the economies of the world still afloat. And they said, well, you know, the nuclear issue, maybe we can discuss that at a later date.

#Danny

Maybe not.

#Alastair Crooke

And so that was their position. And that was what Arachi went, in fact, to Islamabad this last time and presented to the Pakistanis and told them this was the situation for now. And then he went to St. Petersburg and spoke to Putin. And Putin was very fulsome in his praise of Iran and said, you know, you've done a wonderful fight for your sovereignty. I mean, which was very effusive

language, particularly for Putin, for a state to be greeted like that. And so then there was the deliberation about this in recent days in the White House. So now we need to go to some of the background as to what's going on, because what the Iranians also see is a huge escalation of military forces in the area.

There has been a literal air corridor bringing in troops, bringing in munitions, bringing in—I mean, the number of aircraft coming in daily is fantastic. I mean, we're talking about a big operation. And so the Iranians, when I was speaking to them recently, or at least listening to them and speaking, the Iranians have a strong belief that escalation is coming. They thought it might be this weekend, or it might be any day. And the talk about negotiations on the new plan, Trump would be... would be another deceit, just like we've had several before, and that the real thing would be a massive attack on Iran in order to do a nuclear-style strike.

I don't mean literally nuclear, but I mean a huge military assault that would be the sort of final push to get Iran to capitulate to America. Iran has no intention of capitulating to America, even if it is attacked in this way. And in fact, they say they will have new weapons, new things to bring into the equation against naval ships, U.S. naval ships and others to deal with this. So they are fully prepared for all-out war. So we really have to now partly go into the sort of background. And one of the background things was that sort of—we can't call it a tweet, can we?—Truth Social that Trump issued, saying, you know, your civilization is about to end. You know, there'll be nothing, and it'll never come back.

And it seems, through reports that are quite credible, that not this last meeting but an earlier meeting, Trump seemed to be moving toward using a nuclear weapon, asking for codes and things like that. I can't completely corroborate it, but several people have confirmed the same. And the general came and said, "No, I don't accept that. That would be contrary to the instructions, the military orders, because this would be genocide, and that is a war crime." Anyway, so that sort of stopped things at that time. And then the result was Trump produced this blockade, a naval blockade of Hormuz, and no ships are able to pass. I mean, there is a blockade, but it's not watertight by any means, because the naval ships have to stand off well away because of Iranian drones and anti-ship missiles.

So they're a long way back. And they have been, because I can follow it. There's a site that tells you every day which ships are moving through and which are not. And it's reduced. It is reduced. But there are daily—I think yesterday or something—it was three or five inbound and about 10 outbound ships passed through. So it is functioning, but admittedly at a much lower level. So he's threatened that, and now he's doubled down. Why has he doubled down?

I think he's doubled down for two reasons. One was the effect—can I call it the Joe Kent effect—in that after the disaster of the attempt to seize the uranium from Isfahan. And it was a bigger disaster than we are being told about. We don't have all the details, but I think even from what has been said, it's quite clear that there were hundreds of special forces on the ground and many aircraft. And

they were ambushed, and they suffered losses. And so Kent has been saying very clearly across the media, he's saying, listen, Trump, you do this, you'll end up like Carter. You know, Carter in '79 lost the presidency because of it. It was a cock-up. And what's more, you do another military operation inside Iran, they'll take hostages, and you'll be back in a hostage situation. And that will be a disaster.

I think Trump has heard this and is frightened by what he said. And then, so as my understanding at the last meeting in Washington was, Trump was talking about, again, you know, massive bombardment of water, electricity, civilian infrastructure, transport, railways, all of those bridges — a massive attempt to force Iran into a shift. And his team, all but one, said no, this would be a war crime. This attack on civilians like this is tantamount to genocide under the UN definition. And we don't like it. I think there was one person, you can guess who it was, who sided with the idea — Hegseth. But I think pretty well everyone else firmly said no. And I think behind this is a sort of growing anxiety in the Pentagon about precisely this — that they could be getting close, after this war if it ends, to being prosecuted for war crimes.

Trump has said, I'm going to give pardons to everyone in the administration, just about. I don't know if there's a White House cat, but I'm sure that would be pardoned too. But he says he's going to do that. But of course, he can't do everybody, because we know from the Nuremberg trials that to say you were obeying orders is not a defense against war crimes. So I think there's a sort of nervousness which was inclining the team to say no to Trump in a way in which they hadn't said no to him so readily before. So you have these two elements. You know, the idea of putting troops on the ground, I think, was becoming less attractive and certainly would lead to heavy casualties. I mean, this is playing to Iranian strength. I mean, you've only got to look at the geography of Iran to see that.

I mean, you know... like the spider to the fly, "Come in, please do." That's what they've been saying, yeah. And then now these other pressures. And these are coming about also because of his mental capacity. And it's become quite clear that during the crisis in Isfahan, Trump completely lost his head and was screaming and shouting for a day and a half, according to all the reports. And they had to lock him out of the Situation Room. The general took the decision to lock him out because they just needed to sort it out and have a little bit of quiet without someone raving about. But he's become now, if you like, a danger because he says things—he is confabulating. That is, he's saying things that are not true, not because there is a purpose to it, but because he believes they are true himself.

He thinks it's true that the Iranians are begging him for a deal, that they're ready to surrender, and that they're telling him there's a collapse in Iran. I mean, one minute, by the way, before the opening—one minute before Wall Street's opening—he announced that the Iranians are about to collapse and they want to open Hormuz for him. So this is making it impossible, really, to have a negotiation. Or, you know, what would be the grounds of the negotiation? Well, the Iranians have

put it out very clearly in their 10-point plan. But, you know, Trump's reaction so far is, well, of course we've got to deal with the nuclear issue. I mean, you can't put that aside. You know, they cannot have nuclear weapons. And the King of England agrees with me now.

So I don't think that we can see an easy path ahead, or any path ahead, because not only are those conditions that I've outlined, but then there's Israel. And Israel is also in a deep crisis. Netanyahu is in a psychosis because he is being accused that all he promised the Israelis—the earth—that Iran would be eradicated immediately, America would come in and destroy. Very interestingly, we put it up on our Substack for those who would like to see it: two leading Israeli political-military commentators, Ronen Bergman and Nahum Barnea, have put out a full record of the war that didn't happen, and why it didn't happen. And I would, to all your listeners, suggest you read it. It's fascinating how they thought the timeline would play out, how the Kurds would take this role, that it was all ready to go.

And then suddenly Erdogan said something to Trump, and Trump said no. I mean, I have to qualify this by saying this is the Israeli narrative of the Mossad's success. I have a different narrative about what happened to the Kurds than that, but nonetheless, it's very important to understand how disillusioned and disappointed such prominent people can be. You know, they thought this was a brilliant plan. It was all set to start in June. It had been planned beforehand. Mossad had all these agents in place, and the uprising was going to take place, and they lay out the whole plan, thinking, going right back from before Netanyahu's time to Olmert's time, when first the idea of destroying Iran became current in Israel. And now they are completely disillusioned.

That was the title of their talk: "The War That Never Happened." Netanyahu promised it, it seemed that America had green-lighted it, and it never happened. Actually, it probably never was going to happen. That's the truth. But they are in denial of that—that it was based on faulty intelligence and faulty analysis. It wasn't simply that there were all of these triggers that stopped it happening; it was much deeper. And so, from Netanyahu's perspective—and I don't mean just Netanyahu, and I don't mean just the right, because 93% of Israelis favored war with Iran, wanted to see Iran destroyed, I mean completely destroyed, not just its nuclear capacities—they wanted to stop it functioning as a viable state. And they were clear about this.

And so now all of their effort is to try and persuade or press Trump into continuing the war. Because they say, you know, any deal now is going to be bad for Israel. Anything, any compromise, if possible, would be bad for Israel and therefore unacceptable to them. And this is, you know, now becoming an existential crisis within Israel because the whole of this, you know, the whole of this idea of Greater Israel, the, you know, forcing territory, forcing the military control of territory, was about, you know, what I call an eschatological end. It was to try and force the coming into being of redemption, to force on Greater Israel. That's what the right came into power to do — to remove the Palestinians from the area, to institute halakhic law, and to establish Israel on the land of Israel, and that this would bring about redemption and a Messiah.

And they believed this. And I mean, many of them, even secular Israelis, began to believe in this apocalyptic idea. And they believed that a war was necessary. I remember listening to Smotrich seven years ago, six, seven years ago, and he was saying then, listen, this is the plan. We're going to get rid of it. We're going to change the Supreme Court. We're going to do this and that. But I have to tell you one thing, that it will only really be unfolded in the wake of a huge crisis or a big war. So the Israelis were wanting a big war. I mean, most Israelis thought this was the only way to do it. And why I'm saying all this is not to try and, you know, sort of be clever about them or say they've got it wrong. It's not that. It has important policy implications that have to be understood and thought through.

The importance of what I've just told you is that that whole idea from Reagan onwards, that what America needs to do is to sort of constrain Israel and pull it back from what it's doing, to restrain it, that it could cut off some of the funding and restrain it — this was it. And many people are saying, you know, what's important now is they've got to, America has to find a way of restraining Israel. That might have made sense when we were talking about a more secular, rationalist government in Israel. It doesn't make sense when you're talking about an eschatological, messianic government that is insisting on trying to physically bring about redemption in the world, because it doesn't make sense for them to restrain. They are not frightened by the apocalypse. They welcome it.

So to say it's not in your interest to do it, it's not in America's interest, doesn't make sense to them. So this is the important, I think, lesson to draw from all of this and why it makes it so difficult, and why I think probably at the end of it, for now, we may be proved wrong and that tomorrow, you know, the bombing will start or there will be some big major military action. But I think for now, Joe Kent's warnings, the sense that many in the—there's a sort of mini-revolution in the Pentagon—has made him decide, well, I can, you know, I can easily win this by putting an economic blockade. They have only 12 days to 22 days before everything is full, and then it will all explode. They'll have no revenue, and they will crawl back to us and ask if they may be allowed to capitulate. And of course, it's not going to be like that.

#Danny

Well, certainly you gave us a lot to chew on there, Alistair. And that makes me wonder, from what you just outlined here, makes me wonder about the—you know, there were reports that, and I'm wondering if this kind of goes along with your assessment here—that U.S. intelligence agencies, this is according to Reuters, are studying how Iran would respond, and this almost made me chuckle a little bit, if Trump were to declare a unilateral victory against Iran and potentially pull back from the war. And then, of course, earlier I noted that the Wall Street Journal, through their sources, was saying that Trump himself was very concerned about the risks of resuming bombing. So are you saying that what you outlined there are those risks? And do you see any validity to what supposedly U.S. intel agencies—which I'm not sure if this is very intelligence-based—but studying whether Iran would respond favorably to the U.S. declaring victory as things stand now?

#Alastair Crooke

Well, I do think there is a possibility of this. Yes, I do think the things that I outlined, you know, the Joe Kent thing had its effect, his statements. Yes, I think the sort of pushback against bombing that would be predominantly on civilian infrastructure had its effect too. My feeling, though, is rather we're moving—if that isn't, I mean, because there is a reality that huge forces have been placed in the region. I mean, and now with naval forces and with the others, I mean, there's no doubt that a big deployment is there. It doesn't mean that it will happen. Is it an attempt to put further pressure on Iran?

It's not clear, but it would not surprise me if we go into a period of neither peace nor war, that we would have a period where Trump and America do not agree with the Iranian propositions about opening Hormuz, but somehow it's allowed to happen because the timeline, I believe, for the pain to start happening in the West is actually much shorter than the timeline for Iran to get into difficulties in terms of storage of its oil or selling of its oil. I mean, there are different views. I mean, the one that Bloomberg puts out is just one view. It doesn't take account of sort of very large tanker storage.

And also, Iran is opening corridors. I think they've just agreed on six corridors through Pakistan. So I think it's quite possible we could not go, though that is the settled view from Iran—that military action, they believe, is the most likely. But I'm saying that I think, given the state of affairs, and I include in this, you know, Trump's accelerating failure in the polls and, you know, the midterm elections, I mean, are getting closer. And it looks in the primaries that the Republicans are doing very, very badly across the board. You're there, and you'll be more familiar with this.

But it's, you know, I mean, the situation is, politically, the storm—the political storm—is worsening, let alone the storm in the Middle East. But the storm in the United States politically, for Trump, is getting worse, and I think there are calls amongst his team and others to say, listen, we've got to rotate. I mean, we've just got a short while to make Americans believe that the economy is great again and that everything is rosy. I'm not sure if it's possible, but I think that's what they're saying to him: look, forget Iran, we have to concentrate on the midterms, and that is about convincing Americans that, because they're paying four dollars—whatever it is—for a gallon of gasoline, and that fertilizer isn't available, and food prices are going to shoot up because the farmers can't afford to continue, that, you know, somehow that should be disregarded against the great achievements that Trump will be promising them.

So I believe that sort of political side could be pushing Trump towards saying, well, if I can't pursue my Venezuela model—in, boom, out, three days, war over, everyone dead, good, I've done it—then maybe it's best just to say, no, they can't ever have a nuclear bomb, not acceptable, but actually sort of slide towards allowing the Iranians to control the Hormuz. Of course, that carries huge implications for the Gulf states. But this is part of the Iranian strategy, too. I mean, I sometimes say they're like in a cage. They've been caged for 47 years.

But the cage is not just the cage of sanctions and military bases surrounding it. It is about the petrodollar. It is about the whole Gulf region—neoliberal, highly financialized structure that has been embedded in the region. The Gulf from '73, when they kept the price of oil up so the money could go—excess savings could go—to Wall Street and then fund the financialized structure, the world that underpins hegemony. The petrodollar, the dollar hegemony, the military, the financialized control, and then the control of the IMF and World Bank—all of these are the sort of things. And that sort of resonates, I think, across the world.

You've just come back from China, and I believe it resonates not only in China but in Russia too. Hence Putin's compliments to Arash. So I think it's having a big impact. And I would say the last thing why I would expect this is because the change in atmosphere in Iran is huge, visible, it's tangible, you can touch it. It has become a revolutionary state again. And it's the young people, it's the very young that are really fired up by what's happening. And, you know, they're the ones saying to their elders, you know, but why are you even negotiating? What do you think you're going to get from the Americans—back into the prison? You know, you've been on sabbatical.

Now you can go back into prison and we'll shut the doors for 15 years on you. I mean, so that is changing the ground internally, but also, I believe, having much wider impact in the Global South as well as China and Russia—the sort of sentiments of a new sort of period of the wars of independence, if you like, that we saw in the post-war era, which largely failed. The Bandung Conference that set up the Non-Aligned Movement, the principles, the values—I think they're somehow coming back into focus. And at the same time, I think Trump is very dangerously edging this whole thing towards a world war. The action taken against China, I think, is extraordinary.

By Biden saying that he will sanction, or indeed he has sanctioned, people who trade with Iran—Chinese companies, Chinese banks who have Iranian money that is derived from Iran. One of the teapot refineries has been sanctioned. And, of course, Chinese vessels are being blockaded from Venezuela to Cuba and now to Hormuz. This is, I'm sure, something the Chinese—you can comment on—but see this as a very aggressive attack on the supply lines of China, to try and cut it down to size and to give America more room to be a big export power again, forcing the Chinese to export less and to consume more at home. That's what was in the NSS, the National Security Statement at the time.

#Danny

Yeah, no, I mean, when I was in China, definitely the feeling—it was almost like there's an obvious acknowledgment that a big part of what's going on with Iran and the U.S. posture is to certainly isolate China. But there's almost like a—there's a feeling and a lot of expression of just imminent failure of this attempt, in large part because, one, I think everyone I spoke to believes that Iran will eventually come out of this stronger and has already come out of it stronger. But then there's also, I think, the underestimation of China's capacity and a lot of talk about how, you know, no matter how much the U.S. is trying to corner oil markets and trying to monopolize trade routes and dominate

them, the U.S. just can't acknowledge China's own resilience and its own diversification, its own ability to not only produce—I mean, many were talking about how China's preparing to, you know, pump even more of its own oil.

They don't have as much as other countries but can certainly increase production significantly. Also, you know, continue on the path of what they've already been doing, which is replacing a dependency on certain fossil fuel oils with renewables, which has been a booming industry, especially during the war. So it's a... you know, I think it's so interesting to watch the United States right now, Alistair, because you have, as you said earlier, on the one hand, you have lots of influence from Israel to kind of finish Iran for this greater Israel project. And then you also have the U.S. side, which has its own set of objectives here that appear to be more and more difficult to accomplish the deeper it gets into the nuts and bolts of how it's trying to accomplish them.

So I think for China, there's still a lot of the same feeling as there was throughout the Trump administration, from the beginning of the tariffs of, well, you can keep trying to hit us over the head with various policies that are meant to weaken us, but we feel like we're stronger the more you do that—especially politically, especially on the side of, well, any elements, any forces you thought would be sympathetic to relations with the United States in the future are all being absorbed into the larger, as you said, trend of a kind of new independence movement now led by countries that are actually very strong and actually have a lot of resilience to them, unlike in the Bandung period where everything was so early and nascent and, you know, of course the imperial powers were a lot stronger than the early states that became independent. So, yeah, in China, the mood is it's a new day, you know, and they're kind of at the center of it and are feeling good about Iran, as much as there's opposition, of course, to an attempt to make the world a lot less of a free place economically, which is seemingly the byproduct of U.S. policy. Yeah.

#Alastair Crooke

I think, I mean, I was in China at the end of the year, this last year in December. I concur exactly with what you're saying. I mean, actually, I was astonished, particularly at the way in which China has made itself so self-sufficient economically. They took this lesson from the sanctions on Russia and have translated it into an economic model. They are self-sufficient in nearly everything except a few items like airliners and so on. But the other thing was the way in which they've used AI, diluted it, and provided a sort of weak AI to the factory floor, to where manufacturing is actually done.

And they've cut costs enormously by that means, so that they have price deflation in China, unlike us, which has price inflation. And I mean, we are becoming even less competitive. I mean, we, the West as a whole, in manufacturing, are becoming less competitive against China. I mean, to a crisis point—it's not just a tiny bit. By my calculations, when you look at the cost of electricity, if you're running a data center or something, it's six times more expensive in America than in China per gigawatt hour. I think that's right. And, I mean, you'd have to devalue the dollar by about 150% to even it up and make it sort of competitive again.

And that's politically impossible. So, you know, I think it's a really important and serious question, and the Chinese are going to manage it. They have no concerns about their resilience. It's America that should have concerns about resilience and its ability to take this on, and the Europeans even more, because in their 20th round of sanctions on Russia, they included sanctions on China for the first time, which seems to me an extraordinary mistake for Europe to make. I mean, now they've made enemies of everybody in this period. It's extraordinary, absolutely extraordinary. Yeah.

#Danny

Yeah, and to that end, too, it's the—you know, there's this—I think as I was talking to various people, you know, the experts, the people who are really studying this stuff in China, they really are almost taken aback by the U.S. It's almost like an outdated model of, like, okay, well, let's make the world eat oil, right? We'll try to isolate the entire world from various oil markets, and we will control the whole thing without any understanding that the world is, you know, moving toward wanting more quality, which is what China provides, and isn't—China's not seeking to just make itself dependent on the United States simply because the United States is trying to unearth and disrupt trade routes.

Simply, China's like, well, we have a lot of quality. Even the Chinese population is trying to adjust to this idea of, well, we're not just going to grow fast anymore. Things are going to get more quality. Everything will become higher quality. Every part of the development process will become higher quality. And so you visit, you know, I was visiting all kinds of places, like Anhui, others, Unitree, these robotics factories. And yeah, China has the capacity to really cut costs in all of the important areas while increasing the quality of life for people at all levels, which is different from how we do it here. If there's any automation here, of course, we know quality of life gets a lot worse.

But this whole energy dominance theory of like, well, the U.S. is going to control everything, cut off everyone, everyone will starve—it's just, it doesn't conform with the realities, especially given that Russia will never let China starve industrially. And I think China really knows that because of how important China is to Russia as well. So there are still many avenues for China to not just survive, but to continue growing. There are no estimates, even in the next quarter, that if this Iran war continues and China faces an economic depression that might lower growth a bit, there's no idea that China will suddenly be growing at half of what it is now—half of the 5% or anything like that. Everyone expects things to at least be where they are, and some people aren't even satisfied with that.

#Alastair Crooke

They have a hard time...

#Danny

Acknowledging that, hey, it's no longer the days of 10% growth. Everything is new and fast. The government and the economy are in a place where they are focusing, need to focus, and want to focus on making things better with what already exists. And that... that's a different place than where the U.S. and the West are. I think the West and the U.S. are operating on a—the mindset is just so different and the aims are so different that it does feel like worlds apart. And I don't think the Iran war is going to really change that at all. And that's the feeling I got when I was there. Not a lot of panic about that at all.

#Alastair Crooke

I just think that they understand that there are such structural contradictions in the West at the moment. This economic model has moved away from real economics to a politicized, financialized trading world of insider trading and corruption, as the people get poorer and poorer overall. And there's no answer for them. They go and vote, and they have Tweedledum or Tweedledee parties and believe nothing will change. Or they protest and they get hammered. It's obviously a joint decision to hammer any protests, for example, in Europe. And so if you can't vote and change things, if you can't protest and change things, what do you do? Well, you go to the more violent parties as a means to try and bring about a shift. I suspect that China can see the West is heading, unfortunately, in these sorts of directions.

#Danny

Yeah, yeah, which is, I think, the trend too. I think from Iran, what we've seen—and we also see it with Russia and China—this obviously, I think a lot of people were surprised by how Iran prepared. But I think it's more openly seen with a country as advanced as China, and then Russia too, militarily, is prepared. There's a heavy, heavy emphasis on preparing and being able to defend oneself when the shocks come, when the U.S. continues on this path, and the U.S. and Israel. I mean, I think that in China, you'll see that both of these states are kind of bound together in, I think, a plunging downward and a psychotic, like chaotic, situation—just an explosion, and certainly no underestimation of that, because that is certainly what's happening.

But, you know, in the last six minutes that we have or so, five or so minutes that we have, Alistair, you know, I was talking to Professor Morandi yesterday, a good friend of both of ours, and he mentioned to me, you know, about the work that you've done. And you wrote a book, you know, some while back about the essence of the Islamist revolution. And you wrote that back, you know, years ago, relating to the developments of Hezbollah, Hamas, and Palestine, and of course, Iran. And I'm wondering if you had any insights about, you know, given that Hezbollah is still fighting against Israel right now, given that Iran is seen now as this, of course, beacon of the resistance in the region and how that's influencing things worldwide, where do you see things now based on your thesis in that book? And what might we be able to glean from this current moment from those writings that you were engaging in at that time?

#Alastair Crooke

I would say, first of all, that the whole of that—what you've just outlined, Iran and the resistance movement—was, in effect, a revolt against Western modernity. What do I mean by Western modernity? Well, at that time, it was enforced secularization in Turkey. You weren't allowed to wear Islamic clothes. You had to obey secular laws and secular modes of conduct. Same in Iran. This determination to create a nation-state where old legitimacies, old priorities were squeezed out, to try and force everyone into the straitjacket of a national identity controlled by a government with a monopoly of violence to coerce people into supporting it.

It created a revolution based on Qutb's vanguardist thinking, which had a huge impact. And so Khomeini would say, and said, I think in 1979 at that time, look, I don't think it's possible to have a nation-state structure in the Middle East. There are lots of different groups, different legitimacies. You can't just force them, coerce them into a single passage. So I think it has to be a civilizational and an Islamic structure. And ultimately, this will not work with Western-style democracy. So at its apex, there has to be spiritual guidance—in other words, the Supreme Leader, Velayat-e Faqih. And that was really how it came about.

And I think that we are now... I mean, the nation-state still has a huge grip, but it's lessening because its unsatisfactory elements are apparent even to nation-states in Europe, who are all, you know, finding this yoke too heavy and wanting sovereignty, to have some sort of form of community, national community, that is not just a nation-state autocratic structure. So I think that it's starting in the Middle East and starting in many parts, perhaps in the Global South, but it is actually finally going to come to the West too, and we will find that things we've taken for granted, like the European Union structures and NATO structures, are going to come under increasing criticism and pressure and ultimately may break.

#Danny

Yeah, no, I mean, I think that's a great place to end. I think it really does spell out the trajectory of where, you know, the U.S. Western-led order is heading and where the rest of the world is heading. Alastair, I want to make sure everybody knows the Conflicts Forum Substack, where they can find your work and the work that you are looking into, and all the good reporting and analysis. People should go and support that.

That link is in the video description below here, and I want to make sure everyone knows it. To ensure that this video goes far and wide, hit the Like button — that keeps things going far after we are done. And then, of course, all the places for this channel are in the video description below too. So, Alastair, thanks so much for joining. Anything you want to say before we depart here together? No, well, just nice to have you back. Yeah, it's good to be back, actually. It's quite difficult — I was doing work out there. It's a 12-hour difference, so I was going live at midnight each night. That was a challenge. But nonetheless, the wars, geopolitics — these things, they don't sleep. So neither was

I when I was out there. So it's good to be back here. All right, everybody, hit the Like button as we go. I'll see you again hopefully tomorrow. I'll let you know when that is. All right, bye-bye, everyone.

#Alastair Crooke

Bye, everyone.