

Alastair Crooke: Trump Orders EMERGENCY Meeting as Iran just WON — Israel LASHES OUT

Alastair Crooke joins the show to discuss Trump & Israel's growing panic as the war against Iran continues to spiral toward defeat. Why has Trump called a meeting at the White House? Has Israel lashed out at Lebanon to sabotage the deal? Alastair Crooke offers his expertise in this must watch show. 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 back to the show, everyone. It's your host, Danny Haiphong. As you can see, I'm joined by a friend of the show, former UK diplomat and geopolitical analyst, Alastair Crooke. He is the curator of the Conflicts Forum Substack. Alastair, good to see you again.

#Alastair Crooke

Thanks. Very nice of you to invite me.

#Danny

Of course. It's always great to have you on this program. Everyone, hit the like button as you come on. We are going to first begin with the latest developments. Donald Trump and his cabinet are holding a meeting in the White House. It was supposed to be at Camp David, but it's going to happen any moment now. And many are connecting this to the war on Iran, which has recently seen, in the last 48 hours or so, renewed U.S. strikes. But Iranian media has just published this as this meeting is about to occur, Alastair. This is The Guardian.

They say that Iran's Mizan news agency has reported the draft of the so-called memorandum of understanding that was talked about a lot over this past weekend. What they are saying is that these are some of the terms in it: the U.S. will lift its naval blockade, Iran will commit within a

month to return commercial shipping in the Strait of Hormuz to pre-war levels, the Strait of Hormuz will be managed by Iran and Oman, the U.S. will withdraw its troops from around Iran's surrounding area, and if this is reached within a two-month period, it will be endorsed in some form by a U.N. Security Council resolution.

What's going on here? Over the weekend, there was a lot of talk that this was going to be signed, and there were U.S. strikes. And now there's this meeting that's going to be held ostensibly in large part about Iran. Iran is saying that a lot of this is about domestic public consumption for U.S. audiences. But what do you make of this memorandum of understanding leak and all of the events that have led to it?

#Alastair Crooke

Of course, I haven't seen this memorandum of understanding. But what I would say is that, broadly, the memorandum of understanding has two sort of components to it. One component, one element to it, is a swap — the opening of Hormuz and the lifting of the U.S. naval blockade in the area, in the Gulf Sea. The second component essentially is that after a certain period, if all is well and the ceasefire holds, then there will be a discussion about enriched uranium and nuclear energy. But that is pushed far off. That is to follow at a later date and has not been discussed as far as we know. So these are the two elements to it. Now, so is there an agreement, or is there not going to be an agreement? Well, we don't know.

But the way it's presented, as usual, either by Al Jazeera or Doha or The Guardian, is that it's just there, just ready to be signed, and everything is, you know, it all could happen at any moment. And we've been through this about 11 times now in this last period. So what is it, and what is really going on? Well, I would say, first of all, in an agreement like this, to say the devil is in the detail is the understatement of the year. Because, you know, the question says, you know, Hormuz will be open. What does that mean? Does it mean that you go back to the 28th of February basis of Hormuz, or is it on the basis of the authority which Iran has constructed together with Oman, which will control the straits and charge no longer a toll? It's not called a toll any longer.

Following the Bosphorus example, for example, any vessels transiting the Bosphorus Straits are subject to fees payable to Turkey — fees for environmental measures, for safety, i.e. security, and for the maintenance of the waterway. Okay, it's not called a toll anymore, but it's going to be about the same thing. So the question is, are we talking about that, or does Trump mean something very different when he says Hormuz will be open? Well, you know, we don't know. Now, and then there is the question of the naval blockade. And here, you know, all Trump's zigzagging comes into play, because he says, no, even if Hormuz is open — at least one statement attributable to the Americans was that even if Hormuz is open — the blockade will stay and will prevent any Iranian tankers from passing through it.

So, you know, again, all of these things have to be really nailed down in great detail before we move on. The nuclear thing is even more ambiguous, completely ambiguous. The last I've heard, the Supreme Leader has said there will be no export or, if you like, change in our nuclear stance, and we will retain the enriched uranium. This is part of their leverage, but this is also a principle — that they have the right to enrich, and they will continue to enrich, and therefore they have the right to enriched uranium. And so, again, there's talk that actually the Iranians are on the verge of agreeing to diluting the 60% and bringing it down to 3.67, or whatever it is, uranium, which is the one that they were permitted under the JCPOA accord.

You know, I have no idea what's exactly in it. Here are the two problems, the basic dilemmas underlying this and why we go backwards and forwards. One of them is the Americans change their mind every two minutes on this. They say one thing and then come back and say another on these things, with a slightly different nuance. This isn't Iranian propaganda. I mean, anyone who's been involved in this type of negotiation knows that the Americans feel entitled to shift on substance and on details pretty freely. So one, therefore, is that. The second thing is the mediators. The mediators, Pakistan and Qatar, have, of course, the mediators' flaw, if you like, of always wanting to present to one side that the other is on the verge of agreeing to the previous demands, and then go back to the other side and say, oh no, you know, the Americans, I think, are going to accept what you have suggested.

And, of course, it's not true. I mean, this is their supposition, trying to push the two parties together by somewhat, if you like, positively thinking that, you know, the other side — yes, the Americans are just about to agree to your Iranian position — and to tell the Americans that Iran, with a little bit more time, one more push, will agree to yours. And so mediators can actually confuse, and I've been involved in those sorts of negotiations with regional mediators. And I'm not saying in this case, but in the case I was involved with, the mediators flat out lied about what the position of the other party was in order to try, as they felt, to bring a conclusion.

This was a hostage negotiation involving Israel and Hamas. And the mediators really just lied, thinking that they were doing something useful. In fact, what they did was actually make it more confused, make matters more confused, and could have almost led to a serious eruption of violence. So mediators do have this innate tendency. So the third impasse, the main impasse, is, of course, that Trump wants something quick that he can show. Hormuz is open — undefined what that means. There is an agreement that they will, if you like, dilute the enriched uranium — undefined. Who's going to do it? How's it going to be done? Where's it going to be done? Have the Iranians really agreed to that? So he wants a quick win.

And probably, this is my speculation, but probably I think he's prepared to fudge things, even in the instance where Iran is actually, you know, gaining the upper hand in the negotiations, in order to relieve the pressure on him. Because when he attempted to put forward this sort of double proposal in which things would be not well defined, would be opaque, but, you know, it looks like a win,

suddenly there was huge pushback last Thursday by many, but particularly by the pro-Israeli, pro-Zionist elements, pushed back really hard. And at the same time, we've seen Israel, probably encouraged by the same actors in the United States, absolutely, you know, trying to reduce Lebanon to a desert — a complete attrition of Lebanon that is taking place — which, of course, breaks the ceasefire.

And as you pointed out a day or so ago, there was a 24-hour exchange of hostilities. First of all, the American aircraft attacked one of those fast patrol boats at Bandar Abbas, which is a main Iranian port. It lies due north of Qeshm, the eastern end of Qeshm Island. And it's a big port. It's a container port, a huge port of Iran. And these two boats were attacked there, killing their crew. And the Americans say they were laying mines. That inherently is unlikely, because, first of all, the main Iranian authorized passage through Hormuz lies between Qeshm and Larak Island. And that is clearly open and vessels are passing.

But the main passage, which people have tried to use, which is, if you like, the original passage through Hormuz, is well south of Qeshm and well south of Qeshm, closer to the Oman side. So they, I mean, why they would be laying mines just outside the main Iranian port is a little problematic. Anyway, after that, the Iranians fired some anti-ship missiles, not to sink but to damage American naval vessels. And the Americans then hit back by trying to hit the sites from which these missiles were fired. And the Iranians shot down the drone that was undoubtedly trying to spot from above where the sites from which the Iranians were firing were located.

I mean, the point I'm saying about these is, you know, this wasn't one incident. It was more complicated because it was an unfolding incident over 24 hours, which is much harder to control and much more easily expands into something much larger. And so you have a ceasefire, a breach of the ceasefire, with these attacks and the killing of IRGC naval officers on these boats and the fishermen also, apparently. And then you have the major breach, with Israel promising to go full desertification of Lebanon, just destroying cities and towns and killing and assassinating Lebanese, and that is much harder to control and is a complete ceasefire breach. So you have that situation.

Trump apparently would like to see, you know, even if it's a little bit fudged and it's a little fuzzy around the edges, some sort of agreement pushed through. And therefore, everyone's saying, well, we're on the verge of an agreement. It's, you know, maybe tomorrow, maybe today or whatever, just needs a signature. And on the other hand, you have Iran, who have had a long experience of trying to negotiate with Americans, and they want everything up front. They want the details spelled out very clearly, nailed down, and they want to have some of their frozen assets released in advance, half of them released in advance and half once the nuclear talks start.

And America has been humming and hawing, and it's not clear if they are. So they went off to Doha to talk about it. And Doha said, well, the Americans, you know, won't release them, but we'll give you a loan of \$12 billion until the Americans release them. I don't think, I think, and I think, you know, fundamental to this is something that Velayati, who is the advisor to the Supreme Leader,

said: you know, we're not interested in words and statements and anything. What we rely on is geography, and that geography is Hormuz, the control of Hormuz. I don't think it sounds likely they're about to abandon it.

#Danny

Yeah, all those are great points. And it brings me to actually, I wanted to ask you why you believe Donald Trump right now is so keen on holding this meeting at the White House, especially at this time, especially also given the fact that, and I wanted to pull up what you were saying in terms of Iran gaining the upper hand. Former Guardian, I don't know if you want to call him a journalist, David Hearst, has written in the Middle East that Iran has won the war. Now Trump and Netanyahu are having to face a reckoning. How much do you believe that this meeting at the White House and the overall situation is indicative of Iran winning?

I mean, I was listening to Smotrich, the finance minister, and the way that Israel is lashing out is so blatant and apparent, promising that for every Hezbollah attack, you know, a drone strike, Israel would level 10 buildings in Lebanon. And then you had Ben Gvir saying that no deal will be had between the U.S. and Iran that is bad for Israel. So it seems like a lot of very violent desperation from the Israeli regime. So what do you make of this in terms of the situation that the U.S. finds itself in holding this meeting? It seems like a lot of attempts to spin this and Israel's response.

#Alastair Crooke

Well, I think Netanyahu and his circles are desperate because the general view, I mean, in the Hebrew press, not in the English-language one so much, is that this whole construct of Netanyahu—the Greater Israel construct that was to be achieved by force of arms and just taking the land to create Greater Israel—has collapsed, is collapsing. They're now sitting on territory which does not belong to Israel, which is unfriendly. The chief of defense staff says, I mean, to manage the territories that we've taken, we would need another six or seven IDFs beyond the one we already have. We are overextended and we cannot continue.

And so the narrative coming out of the Netanyahu side now is, well, a bad deal is worse than no deal. So let's have no deal. Well, you know, this is nonsense. I mean, it sounds great, you know, no deal, we'll do a no deal instead of having a deal. Well, that sounds great. But the reality is, of course, no one believes that, because Israel can't, as they say, we can come back to this war in a year or in two years. Oh no, you can't, because you cannot do a war against Iran at all without the full support of the United States. And in a year's time, the United States may be a very different United States from the one that you have lived through during this period of Trump's tenure.

If things are changing in the U.S., the relationship with Israel is under scrutiny as it has never been before. And so, you know, to say, oh, well, we'll do it in a year or two's time, I don't think is believable. So I think that's all bluff. Now, when you ask me about Trump, I think he's partly

desperate to get something. I think there is a push for him to get something done because time is running on. I mean, we have Eid at the moment. Eid started today. Eid, and then the Hajj is starting. He won't want to do a military action during the Hajj, I think, because certainly this could cause Saudi Arabia incredible problems.

But then there's the World Cup starting fairly soon. Then there's the 250th anniversary of the independence of the United States. And then there are the midterms. And so it's getting a little bit short of time, especially as Trump's approval ratings are really down to seriously dangerous levels if you're going to contend the midterms. I mean by that, when you're in the sort of 30s, you know, it's a very low base to be able to really recover sufficiently to win the midterms. Trump has just shown that he can't impose conformity on Congress and on the candidates that he chooses in the elections and in the primaries.

But the popular vote is not looking at all promising. So I think he's driven by those concerns, and also because of the pushing in another way — those big donors that financed him for his presidential attempt. Those big donors, the billionaires, the Jewish billionaire class, are necessary to win elections in this upcoming period. Look how much AIPAC and others had to spend to stop Massey. I mean, it was one of the heaviest donor outpourings for a primary, I think, ever in the United States. It's sort of more than \$2,000 per voter spent on advertising. I mean, so those big, if you like, Israel-first donors are going to be important.

#Danny

The founder of The Times of Israel, David Horovitz, he just published this — that the terms of Trump's Iran deal would confirm the war as an epic failure. And I think one of the interesting things that he cites right away is that in this proposed memorandum of understanding pertaining to peace with Iran, he's also mused that Iran would perhaps join the Abraham Accords. And he posted on Truth Social, Donald Trump did, that the Gulf countries — all the Gulf countries, all of the countries in the region that participated in this phone call that occurred last weekend — would be required to join the Abraham Accords if any deal were struck with Iran. I mean, what do you make of this attempt for Trump to dictate terms in this situation? The Israelis are not so enthusiastic about what is transpiring right now.

#Alastair Crooke

Well, I mean, the tone in which you express it suggests deep disbelief. Well, of course, because, I mean, first of all, it seems to be—I don't know if he thought this would sort of appease some of the donors, the big donors, to demand this—but its reaction was counterproductive because, if anything, it sort of pushed Saudi Arabia and the Gulf states, except the UAE, towards an absolute determination to try and push through an agreement, and to do so, you know, paying attention to Iranian demands. Because, I mean, the idea that they're going to join the Abraham Accords, I think, is just... Apparently, it was met with absolute silence by the Saudis when it was put to the point. He

said, "Is anyone still on the line?" So I don't know. You know, this is why I'm saying one of the difficulties the Iranians face is you get these things suddenly thrown into the mix.

It doesn't seem to have been properly thought through. I suggest, and this is just my guess, that if there's a meeting scheduled to take place, I guess that Trump is having a last look at seeing whether there is a military option available that he could use as a sort of Hail Mary before he bows out of the whole thing. And I think that it will possibly be disappointing for him because I think new things have come into the picture. One is, and you've probably seen it reflected—I think it's even been in The New York Times—that the Pentagon has observed that there are new, if you like, radar signatures, I mean targeting radar signatures, of air defenses that they hadn't seen before, that they hadn't seen at the beginning of this conflict, or they didn't see during the first four or five weeks of it.

So there are the signs, and indeed, Iran claims to have used a new air defense missile in bringing down a sophisticated U.S. drone. So that's one thing. The other thing is the Pentagon is concerned that actually the Iranians have been studying and learning a lot about the detail of U.S. tactics—what they are and how they work, how they go about an attack, in what way they come in, how they fly, what they do to avoid radar, and so on. And so they've adjusted. And as I think one U.S. commentator said, you know, actually they've learned a lot from how we do things. And perhaps he may not have used these words, but he might say, well, they know too much about how our methodology works. So there are new elements, and they now admit that most of the missile cities are functional and are functioning. Their exits have been opened.

They are producing new missiles. And Iran has said they have surprises, and it will be a very harsh, intensive reaction should America try and declare or begin an attack on Iran. I think, and I should underline this because it's very important, it seems to have fallen off the horizon for many of the commentaries you see in the Western sphere at the moment. Iran and Russia expect there will be a military attack, or at least they did expect it, and they are fully sort of prepared for that—on full alert, prepared for it. America has got many planes in the area. It has got troops. I mean, it could happen.

I don't know that it's safe, given Trump's predisposition to doing surprise attacks when everyone thinks negotiations are going on. He's quite noted for liking sneak attacks, decapitation, and assassination attacks. So I don't think anyone can completely—and certainly the Iranians don't—rule it out. And until very recently, I don't know what their present position is, the Russians were very, very, very cautious in thinking that, you know, these forces that have been amassed could be the basis for an attack, yet another attack on Iran. So it's still very much everything is in the air. However it's defined, you know, Hormuz is open. It's not. It's going to be under Iranian control.

I mean, there's absolutely no sign the Iranians are going to concede anything. A great deal, certainly not in the head of events. And so the thing is that, you know, the basic, the bottom line is Iran is not going to give up any of its leverage—its leverage over Hormuz, the leverage they established by dominating in the military sphere, and the support that they're getting both from Gulf states and

from Russia and China—without seeing something absolutely tangible coming from the United States. And I believe that's probably where the problem lies, that they haven't seen anything convincing and completely watertight from the Americans.

#Danny

Yeah, that wouldn't be a surprise after everything you just noted, Alistair. Now, I want to ask you about Hezbollah because, of course, Israel, as we spoke about before, is definitely lashing out at Lebanon. But there's been, for just days after the February 28th strikes on Iran by the U.S. and Israel, there's been fighting—heavy fighting—between Hezbollah, the resistance there, and Israel. And I'm just curious, how long can Israel engage in this? Because there are some who are observing that they are taking heavy military losses, and there are still voices, even voices in the Israeli establishment, especially those opposed to Netanyahu, that are viewing this as another losing venture.

And Israel, of course, is still bombing Gaza. They recently did. There's still a lot of, I think, examples of how Israel is continuing to produce this image of just, like, an unhinged, you know, kind of mad state that's just willing to kill anyone and everybody to try to get what it wants. But here we have Hezbollah continuing to fight. How long can this really last, in your opinion? What do you make of the situation here? Because it is a big factor in these U.S.-Iran negotiations, if we can call them those.

#Alastair Crooke

Well, absent a victory over Iran, a concession by Iran to the United States, which we've just agreed is probably unlikely—absent that—Israel is desperate to cling on to the conflict in Lebanon as a means of their leverage over Washington, because they know that this is in breach of the ceasefire, and they know, and Iran has made that very clear, that they will not abandon Hezbollah or the Shia of the south of Lebanon at all. You know, whatever the government in Beirut are suggesting, they are continuing. And as you rightly said, you summed it up well, Hezbollah are inflicting heavy losses every day. Seven or eight men are being killed.

They are using these weapons—fiber-led drone systems—which have got night vision and thermal targeting, and are killing individual soldiers and destroying tanks. And it's hurting Israel, deeply hurting Israel. But at the moment, Israel seems absolutely determined to try and prove that it is going to continue with the killings in Gaza and in Lebanon to underline that they disapprove of any agreement which isn't a complete indication of their position, which doesn't leave Iran weakened and capitulating. And that's not going to happen. So how long it goes on, I don't know. As I said to you, there are dynamics in Israel that are quite hard to work out exactly what they are, because they are so complicated.

The government seems almost on the verge of collapse over the Conscription Act, which would mean the Haredi, the Orthodox Jews, having to serve in the army, which they refuse to do and which they've always refused to do. And so the Haredi might leave the government, or they might negotiate new terms. Others are moving. For the first time, polls are showing the opposition is likely to win an election if it's held in the near future. And an election is likely to be held certainly by September, because Netanyahu certainly doesn't want to do it in October, because it will remind people of the 7th of October. So it's coming earlier and earlier.

And Netanyahu himself looks a shadow of his former self. I mean, it's not me just saying that, but Israelis are commenting he just looks tired and weak and sick, very sick. There were stories that he'd gone into hospital last night. They're probably untrue. I don't know. But he certainly gives that impression that he is seriously ill. So the question is then, you know, the whole machine that has been built by Netanyahu over 25 years could collapse. I mean, you know, the political machine I'm talking about could collapse. If the government collapses, who would run? If Netanyahu is taken to hospital, who would be running Israel in that time?

You know, not Smotrich and Ben-Gvir, I suspect. But would the opposition take over? I mean, Netanyahu has been busy putting people into place to stop that happening. Even suggesting—some suggested, not Netanyahu, but people around him have suggested—that if there is an election in which the government is defeated, they may not accept that outcome. And what would happen then? It could turn very, very ugly in Israel. So the answer is really yes, Israel is defeated by this war. They are still in denial and won't accept it. And so they go on in Lebanon and elsewhere because they are unable to accept this defeat, which puts into doubt the whole of their strategy, the whole of their Greater Israel strategy.

And so it's a major defeat, and therefore a major defeat for all of their allies in the United States, because those allies, I call them, if you like, the Jewish predominance party—those who favor Israel on grounds of wanting to keep predominance. Israel as the tool is a mechanism for largely controlling U.S. politics. It is controlled through these institutions like AIPAC and others. We saw visibly how they controlled it in terms of these recent primaries—removing people, putting so much money in that they are not able to be elected. I mean, it's a massive machine. But it depends. If you like, its *raison d'être* is Israel. And if Israel is in trouble in that way and is, you know, in danger of imploding, and that's what, you know, I mean, it's not just me saying alarmist things.

The chief of defense staff has said, you know, I'm telling you, red lights—telling the cabinet the IDF is on the point of dissolving, of imploding. It hasn't the manpower. And not only that, its morale and its discipline are imploding. You can see that. Look at what's happening in Lebanon, where the IDF forces—the first thing they do when they get there is loot. They loot from the people, from the wrecks of their houses, and take it away. I mean, this is in the Israeli press. It's not propaganda

from outside. It's a major discussion going on in the Israeli press about how the troops, I mean, are saying, you know, not only is it allowed, it's becoming standardized. So, you know, there's a lot going on that may, you know, change the whole equation.

#Danny

And Alastair, what do you make of the maybe broader world situation as the war of aggression on Iran and, of course, the regional situation in West Asia continues to develop? You know, we still have the Ukraine conflict raging on, and there were massive escalations there by the Ukrainian side, by the European, NATO, U.S. side, in the deadly strike on students in Lugansk. That led to pretty massive strikes by Russia itself. And then, since the last time we spoke, we did have this kind of flurry of meetings that happened in China, in Beijing, where you had Trump go—you could comment on that if you'd like—then Putin went. And now I believe Xi Jinping is going to be headed very soon to North Korea, the DPRK. So a lot is happening worldwide. There are, of course, a lot of fronts that don't get as much attention as Iran right now because it is an ongoing war with such broad global implications. But what do you make of these other fronts and how they may be influenced by developments that are happening with Iran right now?

#Alastair Crooke

Well, I call it the Iran effect. I mean, some of the changes that we're seeing—because we're seeing huge structural changes in global geopolitics—there's no doubt about that. Things are reassembling, revamping in different ways. And I call it the Iran effect, even if Iran isn't causally the trigger of all of these changes. Nonetheless, it is around Iran that these changes are taking place. What's happening in Russia is really an extremely important and dangerous change, partly out of articles and comments that have come out, which have been saying explicitly—and this is by Russian political commentators, senior ones, political figures—saying we should learn from the Iranians how they used missiles to send a message, carefully choosing assets of the United States and hitting them with missiles, and then the United States retreated.

And I think now they have come to the end of their patience on the question of the Europeans supplying missiles and drones to the Ukrainians and permitting them to fly through NATO airspace, be it Finland or the Baltics, to attack St. Petersburg or Moscow and to kill Russians. I mean, the Europeans—for example, Britain—I think in mid-August the government announced that it was providing 120,000 drones and missiles to Ukraine precisely for this purpose, some of them being long-distance missiles, others drones, shorter ranges, various types. You can see it in the government handout about it, saying that they're doing this. And I think this is the point. People say, you know, this has got to stop. It can't go on like this because it's a ratchet every time.

It starts off in a small way, and that these were attacks just across the border. It was Kursk, and then it goes up a level. Then it was Russian refineries. And now it was the threat to attack during the 9th of May, the Victory celebrations in Moscow. And now the St. Petersburg Forum, I think,

comes up at the end of this. Is it in June or the end of this month? I think it's in mid-June, but not a long way. And then, you know, we had these massive missile attacks. And so, I mean, the Russians then have sent a very clear formal warning that their attacks on Kiev are on decision-making centers. "Decision-making centers" is used quite clearly, because what they are hinting at is that they're not going to just do a little retaliation into Latvia or Lithuania, because these are just the agents.

They are not the decision-makers. They are not the architects of the strategy. The architects of the strategy sit in London, Paris, and Bonn. And so they are warning them, giving a clear warning: get out of Kiev. If you don't listen to the warning and you decide to stay, it's your responsibility, but you may be killed. And the Europeans at this moment say, oh, it's all bluff. And what has happened in Russia is something very significant, because the argument has turned and been won by those who say we have lost deterrence. You know, the West does not fear us. It used to in the '50s. It feared us. Then there was the implosion of the Soviet Union.

And we lost deterrence. And since then, the neocons in Europe and America say endlessly, it's all bluff. They'd never use a nuclear weapon. Putin would never do it. They'd never dare to attack NATO or a NATO state. And so Latvia and Finland rely on Article 5 for their airspace to be used as a sort of immunity, granting them immunity to allow their airspace to be borrowed by the Ukrainians for firing missiles deep into Russia. And Russia says the attack on that school, that building, that boarding building, mostly of teenage girls and boys—21 dead—really has angered the Russian people enormously. And as Lavrov said, it's the last straw.

If the Europeans don't wake up, then they may find that our list—because he issued a list of those factories and plants in Europe that are producing munitions used by the Ukrainians—and Medvedev said very clearly this could well be considered a targeting list. And no doubt they'll say, oh, it's bluff, we don't have to pay attention. But I think the Europeans should understand strategic patience has come to an end. The Russians are taking the gloves off. And if they don't manage this well, the consequences could be quite serious. When you turn and you ask what happened in China, I'd love to know exactly what happened, but it looks as if Russia and China have decided that this is a key moment, a turning point.

#Alastair Crooke

And China is taking the gloves off.

#Alastair Crooke

Not in the Russian way, but we've seen in these recent moves, I mean, clear moves against the attempt by the United States to try and take over the savings and the local currency reserves of ordinary people through these two acts that they've instigated. And they are moving to, first of all, in many ways, they are now—Euroclear is going to come to China. They banned Chinese products,

using Hong Kong to buy American stocks, and they are making various measures to make Chinese bonds, panda bonds, more attractive than American treasury bonds, and as a means to finance your business. So you have European companies now, European states issuing panda bonds, because interest rates in Europe and America are so high, it's cheaper to get them in China.

So China is taking, I think, the gloves off to fight the U.S. dollar hegemony war more effectively now. So there is a sort of concert of actions taking place across the region, and I think it all constitutes sort of a new era. And I think that era was set iconically. It will be like one of those images from Vietnam that we always remember years and years afterwards—the picture of a defeated-looking Trump standing alongside a very dominant-looking President Xi. So I think, yes, things have changed. We are in a new era. I call it the Iran effect era because it certainly had an impact on Russian thinking, and it's had an impact on Chinese thinking.

And they are not prepared to put up with aggressive U.S. geopolitical actions, and they will push back. How effectively remains to be seen. It really is something that needs to be managed. But when we look at the state of Europe, I mean, there's no confidence—we have no confidence that there are any leaders who understand the peril they've got themselves into and how they're going to get out of it. And they don't understand the economic condition they've got themselves into and how they will manage that. They still, you know, refuse to have—they put a new ban on any state buying gas, even in a roundabout way, from Russia.

Okay, so we all have to pay seven or eight times the price in LNG gas. But how long will that go on for? Look at what's happening to the German economy. It is really, I mean, you know, starting its collapse. I mean, industry is shutting down—take the chemical industry, if you like, the car industry. The Germans are desperately trying to make Volkswagen produce tanks instead of cars. But, I mean, you know, this isn't going to work. And it doesn't provide ordinary Europeans with jobs, with a means to a reasonable life. It doesn't produce, you know, actually the common things, the real economy that Europeans need to survive. In fact, it makes them increasingly impoverished.

#Danny

Yeah. And Alistair, to that economic point, I wanted to ask you, you know, Americans are reporting to NBC News that because of the effects of the Iran war, these are people that had, they say, never felt poor in their lives. And now, with the massive inflation that's happening in the U.S.—the gas prices, of course, have been the talk—that's exactly how they feel now. How much of this big push by the Trump administration to strike a different tone with China, to try to wrap up the Iran situation, how much of this is accounted for by the disastrous economic situation that already exists in Iran, that would likely get to real, just absolute crisis measures by, I don't even know how long, not too long from now? So what's your take on these economic changes and how they pertain to the West side and the United States side, given all of these developments that are occurring?

#Alastair Crooke

Well, the contradictions in the economy are so profound—the European economy, the American economy—and date back to 2008 and earlier, in the sense that the move, if you like, in 2008 gave birth to really the sort of rip-roaring financialized economy that has proceeded at the expense of the real economy, so that you have 70% to 80% of Americans, same with Europeans, who are getting poorer and poorer and see the chances of buying a house or starting a family just disappear, and they don't trust either party. For them, it's Tweedledum or Tweedledee, that someone will not come and correct the economic system because the economic system has turned into something so lucrative for the elites.

The transfer of wealth from that period toward the financialized trading elites at the expense of the real economy is phenomenal. And so I think, to a certain extent, those elites are not that concerned about what happens to what they see as the unproductive 70% of the economy. They regard AI as the only productive part of it. At this time, they have accumulated enough assets and enough wealth during that period that they believe that if there is a crash or a recession that makes things worse, they will benefit. They will be on top. And so, as the farmers go bankrupt—and as you know, American farmers do seem to be going bankrupt at the moment.

They will clean up, just as they did in 2008. They cleaned up buying mortgages that were underwater, houses that were underwater. Now they'll buy up farms that are underwater. And they will emerge richer and more powerful. And yes, they probably expect there's going to be trouble—trouble on the street, trouble in America. But hence, you know, this is what we're seeing with these AI companies being integrated into the Pentagon system and these big data centers. I think they believe that if they do go through a period of quite some civil unrest, they are reasonably confident that they will be able to control it through a sort of totalitarian tech system that will enable them to identify opposition and deal with it very quickly.

#Danny

Well, sir, this was a great conversation. I want to make sure that everybody knows where they can find you and your work, and they can support your work. You can do that at Conflicts Forum Substack. That's in the video description below. And I can pull it up here. Alex, do you have any final words before we head out?

#Alastair Crooke

No, I think just that, you know, we are in an era, you know, when I sit in Rome, everyone's at their tables in the cafés enjoying themselves. They don't have a thought for the situation that we're all in. They don't think about it. And all I would say to people is it's really important to try and get a grasp on the situation and where we are, and to think about it more strategically.

#Danny

Well said. Everyone, hit the like button before you go. Alastair Crooke's Conflicts Forum Substack is in the video description below. You can check it out and subscribe. You can also support the channel in the video description below, all the places. Thanks to Gabe Superchats, Harry Theywood, and thank you to all who watched, everyone who moderated. And I'll be back tomorrow, 2 p.m. Eastern time with Scott Ritter. See you then, everyone. Bye-bye.