

# Alastair Crooke: Iran War Resets the Geopolitics of the World

Alastair Crooke discusses how the Iran War is transforming geopolitics of the world. 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](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](http://buymeacoffee.com/gdieseng) Go Fund Me: <https://gofund.me/09ea012f> Books by Prof. Glenn Diesen: <https://www.amazon.com/stores/author/B09FPQ4MDL>

## #Glenn

Welcome back. We are joined again by Alastair Crooke, a former British diplomat and negotiator with decades of experience in conflicts in the Middle East. Alastair Crooke is also the founder and director of the Conflicts Forum. So make sure to read his insightful Substack, and I've left a link in the description. Thank you very much for coming back on the program.

## #Alastair Crooke

Thank you. Thank you for inviting me.

## #Glenn

So you recently wrote an article, also published on your Substack, on the geopolitics of the world being reset by the Iran war. I was wondering if you could unpack some of this. Why is it that Iran is not just, I guess, a strategic defeat for the U.S. in the regional crisis, but also, again, the world of geopolitics is being impacted by this?

## #Alastair Crooke

I think there are a number of reasons. First of all, there are three countries that are being directly impacted by that. First of all is Israel. There is a crisis in Israel. I was just reading this morning the reporting from Israel that Netanyahu is in despair at the possibility of an agreement, completely opposed to it, in complete despair, and concerned about his future because, as you know, there are

cases pending against him which could end up with him having to go to jail—corruption cases, long-standing ones, but still ongoing—and for which legal authorities suggest, you know, if they do go to conclusion, he might be convicted.

And the other aspect of this is the elections and the pardon that Trump has been trying to produce for him. And so far, it hasn't produced a pardon. In fact, what many are asking for is the complete erasure of the cases against him—all of those cases that I've just described—that they should be just taken off the charge sheet and put in the garbage. And so far, that hasn't happened either. And so there is thought, and again, I emphasize, you know, this is Israeli speculation in Israel, that it may be preferable for Netanyahu to resign and to leave the government early.

## **#Alastair Crooke**

Than to raise the speech in an election, say, in September or October.

## **#Alastair Crooke**

It seems it's likely the election will be in September, not October, because October will resonate not well with many Israelis for the 7th of October. And therefore, he wants to distance himself from that. But it's looking as if he's desperate because the pardon is not coming through. A deal is not coming through that would allow him, even if he gets a pardon. He's refusing it as it stands because he's not going to admit guilt, and that is required under Israeli law. And the tensions are growing enormously because there are now Israelis who, having been hugely enthusiastic at the outset that America was going to come in and, you know, the greatest power in the world was going to join with Israel and effectively destroy Iran—that's what they want, the destruction of Iran.

And now it's being internalized in Israel that this isn't going to be the outcome. In fact, Iran has won the war and therefore has won the war for Israel in the sense that Israel has lost the war, as well as America lost the war—but Israel even more. It has lost the war and is calling into question deep, deep issues. People have said this is the collapse of the whole "Great for Israel" project because Israel is now stuck with—how many is it?—five, six unwinnable wars. And everywhere, they're not going particularly well. Gaza, West Bank, or Lebanon particularly is going bad. But all of these are not going very, very, very well. And as the chief of staff said, you know, if we were to manage this, we'd need six more IDFs—the IDF we have.

So, you know, they're stuck in an unwinnable war with not enough troops and no particular way out of this. You know, Iran was supposed to be the magic bullet that would take Israel out of this deepening, deepening crisis into a different period. So some people—and I'm not pretending that this is a majority or a large number—but you're starting to see quite serious, high-level people in Israel sort of saying, you know, at the end of this, we have to go back to what Ben-Gurion originally said, that Israel is a small country, territorial, few resources, small public, small population. We have to stay within our borders. And he also endorsed the Clausewitzian formula that war is an extension

of politics rather than politics an extension of war. And so Ben-Gurion's view was that Israel couldn't afford a big army.

## **#Glenn**

It could have a small, professional army, and it had to rely on the reservists.

## **#Alastair Crooke**

And so people are going back and saying, you know, well, we've gone quite wrong in this. Now we're overextended everywhere on this huge project to turn Israel into the hegemon of the Middle East. And it's all going wrong. And now we're trapped in all of these wars we've started. And so there are people saying, well, we need to go back to the Ben-Gurion model. We need to stay within our borders. And there are other people saying, well, you know, look, this way of dealing with the Iranian problem is not working. It's not going to produce a solution. This attempt to get the United States to destroy Iran is not going to work. And so we need a solution.

And perhaps we need to rethink the whole of the Zionist project and look at it from a different perspective. Now, it's only, you know, these are things that are, these are currents that are surfacing, and they haven't reached fullness, I think, partly because of the huge uncertainty about what Trump is going to do and what's going to happen in America and what's going to happen to the world economy. So they're not there, but this is a really important inflection point for Israel. Because the polls show that Netanyahu is likely to lose for the first time. I've always been one who said, you know, he's Mr. Teflon Man. He will always escape. And people predicting he's about to disappear have usually been wrong.

## **#Glenn**

And I've always said, you know, he slithers around and gets out of these political problems.

## **#Alastair Crooke**

I'm not so sure. You know, the whole government with the problems over conscription and the Orthodox groups in Israel — I'm not sure he's going to get out of this this time. And I think the opposition is growing, and the criticism of this war in Gaza is getting really very strong and very broad. So, you know, the government might implode. And think about that — if Netanyahu was gone, who would you think of who could sort of carry the wide government agenda on his shoulders, from Ben-Gvir to all of Likud? Who would carry that on their shoulders? And maybe the whole project, the whole political structure that Netanyahu's built up over these 20 years or so, could implode, and everything would, you know, disappear into factions and internal divisions, I think.

I don't know, but I'm just saying there's a big question mark from that. And you asked me about why I said other things are changing too. I think it's very clear Russia is changing. I think we've seen an inflection point in Russia. And a very senior Russian figure who's been in the sort of shadows of power for 20 years or more, Sergei Karaganov, has said explicitly in a paper that he wrote, pointing to Russia needing to take the lessons from Iran. And particularly what he was pointing to explicitly was how Iran had used conventional missile weapons to hit vulnerable American and Western targets. And when Iran did that, the West backed off and withdrew. And he said, we need to learn from the Iranians. We need to take the Iran lessons into our backyard.

Originally, it came out when this became the center of his attention. And so this has moved his ideas. And he was saying, you know, we have to go back to nuclear deterrence too. You know, people don't believe in our deterrence anymore. We had it in the '50s, nuclear deterrence, and it worked. But then the Soviet Union improved it, and the West became, you know, euphoric. And, you know, now if you mention that Russia is a nuclear power, the neocons have a refrain which they pour out all the time: "Oh, Alistair, that's just blah. Putin would never dare. You know, NATO — and now we have the whole of NATO and its GDP and its military against Russia. That changes the whole question."

## **#Glenn**

No, it doesn't.

## **#Alastair Crooke**

And so Karaganov has said, you know, fear and the sense that there is, you know, that behind the conventional weapons — and he's clear, you know, the first line is conventional weapons — and he urges Russia to really press on with developing a conventional weapon. But ultimately, he says, as a last resort, when your survival is in peril, you need people to fear the nuclear weapon. And actually, I agree that that will be a European interest when Europeans are, you know, frothing at the mouth with, you know, war, war, war with Russia all the time, in a sort of increasing frenzy of talking about, you know, Russia and the European state, you know, and actually digging in even further and saying, you know, well, we can't talk, and what's more, we're going to put sanctions on anyone that uses Russian oil or gas, even if it's bought from third parties, from India or roundabout ways.

We're going to stop all of that. I mean, in this sort of suicidal, you know, run at the cliff for the Europeans to sort of follow each other over like sheep over the cliff into an economic decline as they find that energy from America is much more expensive than the energy they used to have. And so I think it's not just at the public level, but at the top level, there's a change of mood. And you've probably seen it, be aware. The Anchorage understandings are over, Lavrov made that clear, and said Europeans are part of the blame. And quite clearly, they are understanding this cannot go on, this ratcheting by Europe, more and more support for Ukraine in terms of missiles and drones. The

UK and ACORE announced it was going to send 120,000 more drones and long-distance missiles to Ukraine.

And they're using NATO's airspace and land in the Baltic states to fire them into St. Petersburg and other places, assuming that because it's NATO space, then Article 5 of the NATO Treaty would give them protection against any retribution from Russia. Well, they may be mistaken. Maybe things are going to change. But I think what Russia said was slightly different. They said, now we will attack the decision-making centers. And I think what they mean by that is the decision-making center is not in Latvia. They know exactly where it is. It's in Britain, it's in France, and in Germany. That's where the war plan of sort of ratcheting escalation is hatched, not in Latvia. Latvia is just a tool in this process. So I think that that is changing rapidly.

And I think probably in the wake of the summit in Beijing where Putin and Xi met, I think what we see is, you know, China does it not openly, not with missiles and not with a great deal of noise, but they're really pushing back against the United States in economic terms. Forbidding that Chinese or citizens can buy in the U.S. stock market, stopping, if you like, the other sort of ways through digital currencies that America is going to expand the dollar market. And they are doing the opposite. And with now the Eurotea saying that the bonds from China are effectively good collateral — good collateral in this case means equivalent to cash.

It becomes part of the deep bond market. So they're pushing back against the attempts by the United States to squeeze China in its capex, its capital expenditure, its availability of capital. It's just increased the Chinese bond market. Even European states now issue bonds denominated in yuan. And so it's pushing back on various fronts. It's not a lot of news, it's not making a lot of noise. But just as Russia has moved, I think, into a new sphere, China has moved into quiet but very forceful measures to limit American expansion. I mean, look what's happened to NVIDIA and its focus. The Chinese have just taken all of the Chinese market back again for themselves.

So those are the sort of areas. So everything is sort of heating up, seems to me, and is much more hard-nosed towards the West as a whole, Russia particularly against Europe. I mean, very, very viscerally angry with Europe. Not without cause. And then there is a sort of, I think, a Chinese really tough pushback coming on these sort of rather slight economic measures that were being imposed against China. So they've just, you know, they said, okay, bring it on. No more Mr. Nice Guy and strategy. You know, we will push back economically. Not a great deal of, you know, not a fanfare or anything, but that's, I think, what's happening.

## **#Glenn**

Yeah, no, it's a great point about how the Iran war has also changed Russia now and China as well. I had a comment and a question. My comment was, yeah, I was interviewing Professor Karaganov on this issue as well. And again, I get the impression in Moscow, it's not just him. What he's saying reflects well how the mood has changed fundamentally now in Moscow. And I think it's often

necessary to reflect a bit in the West because in the past three-plus decades under the hegemonic era, we've had this luxury, if you will, of what war meant. We can attack, we can invade small, weaker countries, and essentially then war becomes something that happens on other people's territory. We have full escalation control.

We decide when it starts, how it should be fought, when to finish it, and our adversaries always have this understanding that, you know, we can also use a bloody nose tactic where, you know, we'll bomb you a little bit. If you don't fight back, then it will be a little bit, but if you fight back, then we'll punch back hard. And I think this is, to some extent, what the Russians want — to have some restraint as well. They didn't want it to escalate into a direct conflict, so they tried to, well, try to wrap things up in Ukraine while they ignored the deeper and deeper Western involvement. But, as you said, in your conversations with these neocons, any restraint on the Russian side is seen as weakness.

It's not just the neocons, it's overall the Western media and the politicians. So I think they also reached a point now where they say it's not possible anymore. With this level of Western involvement, the audacity of striking from NATO territory, speaking openly about mass-producing weapons to hit and destroy the Russian energy infrastructure — this can't continue. So people keep telling me, well, they're not going to do anything. Then they risk World War III through inaction, because if they do nothing, the West will now continue this escalation of attacks on Russia.

## **#Glenn**

This becomes existential. And at some point, the Russians would have to respond with nuclear weapons. So, you know, it seems very rational, sadly, but it seems very rational to begin to hit back against NATO countries. And that's a very dangerous thing to recognize. Sorry, my question—sorry if you had...

## **#Alastair Crooke**

I'd just like to say that, you know, the crucial thing, and, you know, I've spoken with Professor Karaganov directly about it. It's about what he's trying to do, and what they are trying to do is change the psychology in Europe — that psychology of complacency. It's a threat that could lead to the Third World War. That's what they have to get at. That's why fear — it may seem sort of contradictory — but that's why fear is important to deterrence. If you don't have fear, if you think it's all a bluff, you can make bad mistakes. And I think, you know, they don't intend to be, you know, a boiled frog in this — you know, the metaphor, you put a frog in cold water and then you heat the water, and eventually it dies unless it chooses to jump out of the pan.

And I think Russia is jumping out of the pan and doesn't intend to be boiled. So my main concern is the word you used — recognize. And I don't think it's recognized. It's not even noticed in Europe. They're so oblivious to what is happening, to what is going on. And if they do, if they're not

oblivious, they think it's good news. Oh, this is good news — you know, this attack on Russia, and the Ukrainians were fired, and they threatened to do this on the 9th of May, the Remembrance Day in Moscow, the Ukrainians, and they were restrained by the White House. But now the St. Petersburg Economic Forum is coming up — this month, I think, later this month. Are you going? You're probably going to it.

So beware. Because I think it's, you know, who knows? I have no inside information, but who knows after that first attempt. And they're regularly attacking St. Petersburg now. And with all this British-, French-, German-made stuff, maybe they're disassembled and then reassembled in Ukraine. But it's the same difference. And then they are used to kill Russians in Russia. And the West thinks this is fine. And why should there be any retribution from Moscow? Well, because the mood is changing there. I think both at the leadership level and also, certainly at the popular level, people were really angry as a result of that attack on the dormitory that killed 21 people.

## **#Glenn**

Well, I saw the same in the media all across the West. That is, now they're saying, well, the attacks on the Russian energy infrastructure are beginning to be felt in the Russian economy, and there's a big celebration toward this end. But they don't seem to appreciate that when there were small pinpricks, the Russians could afford to essentially absorb the Western attacks masquerading as Ukrainian attacks. But once they reached significant punching power, you know, why are we celebrating? This means the Russians can no longer look the other way. Now they're going to have to find a way of retaliating against Europe, and of course, stepping up the war on Ukraine.

So now I would expect more hitting against Kiev or brutality. And also, Europe will have a big target on its back. So it's just, there doesn't seem to be any appreciation that actions will have consequences. But again, as you said, they celebrate. So it's very strange to see this, the lack of any strategic thinking in terms of what we want to achieve, how exactly this can be achieved, because they can hate Russia all they want, they can hate Iran all they want and destroy it, but if there's no pathway, what exactly are we doing? I don't understand politics anymore because I don't think it makes sense. Yeah, I think they abandoned reason quite a while ago.

## **#Alastair Crooke**

When you ask that particular question, I don't know what they're trying to do. I don't know, but my feeling is that they have really pinned everything on Ukraine. It is the *raison d'être* of Brussels, in fact, in an extreme way now. Everything is about Ukraine, Ukraine for them. Now, we can't go through all that. I mean, Europe hasn't the money, it hasn't the munitions to go to war with Russia. So what is it all about, apart from preparing it? I think it's all about still the hope in Brussels that somehow Trump will soon be off the scene, and that then there will be a new administration coming

in whenever that happens. And then, you know, we go back to the Second World War era, which people have never forgotten—persuading Roosevelt to join Europe in a war against Russia. And so I think ultimately they... I don't think it'll happen.

And I think it's a fantasy of Europeans, but I think they fantasize, you know, just as Israel fantasized about bringing the United States into war against Iran. Europeans fantasized about how they're going to show America that Russia is weak, so that we can bring it in to join. And you remember, King Charles said precisely this after Congress when he went there. He said, you know, now America must prepare with Europe for war with Russia. I don't know how—I mean, it was an extraordinary thing to say. Why should this be in the European interest? But bizarrely, nonetheless, he said it. Obviously, his speech got partly written by the government, but nonetheless, he said it. It was a really extraordinary thing to call for an American-European war on Russia.

### **#Speaker 03**

What are they thinking about?

### **#Alastair Crooke**

I think, you know, so much is going on.

### **#Glenn**

Yeah, well, all of this would have been unthinkable. Imagine during the Cold War, you would have Charles standing there saying, "Let's prepare. Well, we have to go to war against the Soviets." I mean, this is lunacy, but it's become normalized. But this also reflects, I think, a commonality between Russia and Iran. That is, when you're in a strategic situation where everything is on the line and the outcome will be either all or nothing, countries are willing to take incredible risks and do very foolish things. But again, that's why, you know, the objective should be to look for some solution which isn't all or nothing, especially when defeating the opponent is not an option. And as you said, you know, I often, with reference to Russia, should make the point: be careful what we hope for. I mean, if Russia's losing...

If you have the world's largest nuclear power in a war, and it believes it is losing and that this is an existential threat, you don't want to win this war. This is how you end up in a nuclear exchange. But the same can apply to Israel and Iran, though, because they can't defeat the Iranians anymore. And as they realize, even in loss, even if the war doesn't end, as long as the Strait of Hormuz is under Iranian control, it changes not just the region but global geopolitics as well. But is there a third strategy? Because I don't like to see Israel in an all-or-nothing situation, because, you know, if there's this high risk, they might go all in with a nuclear weapons strategy. But on the other hand, is there a possibility with a third option, that is, to transform relations?

Because I remember when the Chinese were trying to manage or negotiate improved relations between the Saudis and Iranians. Then the former head of Mossad, Efraim Halevi, he came out and said, maybe we should do the same. There's no reason why we can't have fundamentally different relations with the Iranians. And indeed, I know you also mentioned in the past when we spoke that this kind of ongoing extreme war is draining the ethos, the soul, or the future of Israel itself. So is there a path where the Israelis can do... well, the Europeans could pursue a pan-European security architecture with the Russians. That seems simple. But would it be something similar that the Israelis can do to, well, as Halevi suggested, fundamentally transform relations? Because it seems the Palestinian issue, everything is plugged into the same problem here, though.

## **#Alastair Crooke**

Yes, indeed. And I think it is possible. It's not ready yet, certainly. This is not the moment. But recall, after the Iranian Revolution, Israel had good relations with Tehran for quite a period of time. I mean, partly they were selling weapons for the Iran-Iraq War. But then there was a change in Israel because the Labour Party came into power in Israel, and the Labour Party of Israel wanted to change the equation, because the equation at that time was that it was the periphery that were the allies of Israel and the near Arab world was the enemy. And they wanted to invert it and make peace with Arab states. And so at that time, everything inverted, and the periphery became the enemy, and the Arab states became where we see them now, trying to be herded into the Iran Accords.

But, I mean, this was there at that time. And, of course, suddenly Iran, from having not been seen as an existential threat in the way that Netanyahu has cast it throughout his life. But at that point, then, to keep the flow of money and to keep everything ticking over in the United States with their pro-Israeli cluster lobby, they needed a Lenin. And so from that date on, really, Iran began. Iran's always, you know, it's a week away from a nuclear bomb. How many times have we heard that? We've heard it for 20 years from Netanyahu from this period on. You know, Iran is the enemy. Iran is going to have a nuclear weapon. It's going to use it against Israel.

I mean, and that was done explicitly to facilitate the switch into the near abroad, to make peace with the near abroad at the expense of the Arab front. And as a consequence, Iran was demonized and demonized and has been demonized ever since. So theoretically, at least, Israel could choose to switch back, and to switch not to making the Arab states the enemy, but simply to switch back and understand. You know, if you ask me the question at the bottom, how—and I think this will happen sometime—but how does Israel get out of this situation? Well, the one thing they could do would be to talk to Iran. It wouldn't be that hard. In fact, someone suggested that in Israel. He was the head of the Atomic Energy Commission.

He said, you'll see. First of all, you know, Iran—Israel will stop it. The Americans will come next, and the Europeans will come onto it at the very last. But, of course, you know, if you want to have a settlement, there's only one, I mean, address that could change the whole situation in the region. I

know this is complete heresy to even suggest it. But, you know, when people get into existential difficulties, like Israel seems to be getting into existential difficulties. And I remember, you know, at that time they were saying, well, you know, to get a solution on the Palestinian front, we need to talk to Iraq. Well, to get a solution on the regional level, you would need to talk to Iran. And this is happening in a sort of roundabout way.

Saudi Arabia and other Gulf states, not perhaps Abu Dhabi, but other parts, are looking to a new security architecture for the Gulf. Gulf-led security, not American-led security. Not including the Americans, but a new security architecture. It's been in the works for a little while. It's not that new. But it's suddenly got great impetus now because Gulf states are frightened, you know, about the future and what's going to happen. You know, is this another attack on Iran? What will be the consequences of that? So it's moving in that way. And Iran has at times made it clear that if Gulf security without the Americans—Gulf-led security—was to take place, Israel could be part of it.

## **#Glenn**

Why not? Well, this whole goal, as we've seen, that is allying with Gulf Arabs in the near abroad against Iran, it looks as if this might not be sustainable anymore after this war is over. So it looks, you know, like change could be forced upon the Israelis. Because it doesn't seem like the Iranians actually do need—they don't necessarily need a political deal with the Americans, because if they hold the Strait of Hormuz, I think—well, if I was an advisor to the Iranian government, I would say what they already know, which is: if you control the Strait of Hormuz, you don't have to return to crippling sanctions and all this endless threat from bases around you.

You can just put tolls on the countries—higher tolls on the countries that put sanctions on you—create incentives for them to drop it, put a higher toll on those who threaten you by hosting U.S. bases, put tolls on those countries who use the dollar for energy sales. So essentially, dismantle the petrodollar connection to the region. And, you know, after all, these bases have now been largely destroyed as well—the American bases in the Gulf states. At some point, you know, maybe many of the Arab states would then think whether or not it's a good idea to even have them rebuilt. I mean, they have to adjust to new realities if they saw that the U.S. presence brought them war instead of security. And essentially, there's no going back to the old status quo.

Indeed, you saw now with Oman, there are discussions with the Iranians to participate in this toll. I think that's a good idea if the Iranians want to facilitate Gulf cooperation, a security architecture to collectively deal with this as opposed to living under Iranian dominance. But Trump responded by saying that if Oman does this, he will blow them up. But at some point, you know, you can't keep this whole show together with threats alone. So you follow, you and your wife, you follow both Israeli media, especially the Hebrew media, very closely in your Substack. Do you see any reaction to the sustainability of the regional security architecture and whether or not there could be any fundamental change to the architecture, such as, you know, outlined by Hal Levy?

## **#Alastair Crooke**

I think that the architecture is going to change anyway—the financial and economic architecture. Because if the Iranians continue, and they insist on controlling Hormuz and receiving payments in line with the Bosphorus—you know, if you have vessels transiting the Bosphorus, you have to pay environmental fees to Turkey and other fees, which are fixed on the financials of the vessel parties. So if they do this, I think it will be the end of that sort of petrodollar economic architecture. The Gulf has always been based, since '73, on a sort of financialized Western architecture, and more recently on an AI-based architecture, with these huge data centers being built in places like the UAE. And the Iranians said, well, you can't go on having that sort of data center.

If you want to be in the region, you've got to mesh in with the region. You can't just be, you know, serving as a base for data centers, which were probably meant for intelligence purposes anyway, against Iran and others. So I think if the petrodollar goes—and the petrodollar, I mean, this was the original intent of the Gulf states—to take advantage of the high price of oil, keep it high, and then send the proceeds, in terms of their savings, back to Wall Street. And that money has been basically the leverage for the great financialization that took place in the West, particularly after 2008, with the rich elite becoming a huge transfer of wealth to the elite minority at the expense of the real economy in the West.

So to sustain that is... And I think Iran is... I'm taking aim at that whole, you know, financialized, Wall Street financialized economy in the Maghreb. It's not at the top of the agenda, but it's there. And if Hormuz is... there will have to be an economic shift. Because if they want to export their oil and gas, then they have to have relations with Iran. And then Iran will also question their economic postures. Some states will actually react badly to that, but many will not. And we see that already, the number of states that are trying to open relations with Iran. I think it's about 30. I don't know, I've seen about 30 or something like that. I mean, tentatively under-the-table relations with Iran. But, you know, that will become more open and fixed. And I think that will change and could change the whole complexion of this region.

## **#Glenn**

Well, with this massive distribution of power shifting, it should be common sense that the former status quo can't work anymore. Even the US, I think, must surely reprioritize as well, because it seems that the Trump administration is still very wedded to this idea of global primacy. But again, it introduces a lot of self-harm when it doesn't reflect the actual distribution of power anymore. Because we saw this with all these wars. First, it sent all its weapons to Ukraine to fight the Russians, and then when it was time to fight the Iranians, it didn't have enough weapons to defend the Gulf states.

So it began to pull the weapons from South Korea, divert the weapons to go into Ukraine to send to the Gulf and to fight the Iranians. And at the end of the day, they haven't defeated the Russians.

They didn't defeat the Iranians. They haven't defeated—well, they can't defeat—the Chinese in the future. Meanwhile, its allies, be it the Europeans, the Gulf states, the East Asians, they're all now worried that the Americans can't defend them when it comes down to it. So, you know, you can't be everywhere at the same time. They're going to have to also learn how to prioritize and, again, maybe introduce some strategic thinking again. However, I'm a bit hopeful that the U.S. can adjust.

My greatest pessimism is at the moment Europe, though. I just don't see anything. I mean, I don't understand why we could, a few years ago, recognize that the NATO expansion, or as Angela Merkel said, that this would be interpreted by the Russians as a declaration of war, and now suddenly we're in a place where we can't imagine any European security architecture that's not based on the dominance of the West. Even as the Americans announce they want to go, even as we know we can't defeat the Russians, even as all the sanctions fail, still, there's no political imagination for anything besides going back to some Cold War bloc. It's extraordinary. Anyway, do you have any final thoughts before we wrap up?

## **#Alastair Crooke**

Well, only just one to say that we also have to see how closely intertwined the AI is—and may I call it the bubble, because that's what I think it is—in the U.S. with the Gulf. I mean, the Gulf has been putting trillions and billions into sort of AI projects in the U.S. and has hosted, you know, 30 billion worth of these centers in the UAE. And I just think that, you know, inevitably, the architecture—because the United States walked away from securing the Gulf States, from supporting them militarily during this war—so they've already, at least, and the Gulf States understand that there's been a ban by the U.S. So that puts into question this whole nexus between the tech brothers and the Gulf brothers on AI and that whole sphere, which, without American protection, who's going to go on putting in trillions and trillions into projects, whether it is in the UAE or in Qatar, without a stable relationship between those people and Iran?

## **#Glenn**

Well, thank you, as always, for taking the time and sharing some of your insights. And for the listeners yet again, I would very much recommend visiting the Conflicts Forum Substack. It's full of great insights. So thanks again.

## **#Alastair Crooke**

My pleasure. Thanks.

## **#Speaker 03**

Bye for now.