

# Alastair Crooke: IRAN'S TRIGGER

## WARNING: 'Withdraw from Lebanon... Any Violations and We Strike

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### #Nima

Hi, everybody. Today's Friday, June 5th, 2026, and our dear friend Alastair Crooke is here with us. Welcome back, Alastair. Thank you very much. That's very kind. And I want to start with what has happened between Israel and Lebanon. Israel announced that they're going to hit the city they call Dahiya in the southern part of Beirut, and they announced that everyone should evacuate the city. Then we had the Iranian response announcing the same thing for the northern part of Israel — if Israel attacks Dahiya, they're going to do the same in the northern part of Israel. When it comes to this sort of support from Iran to Hezbollah, from Hezbollah to Iran, many people would want to know what is going on — what is the axis of resistance?

We know that you wrote a book in 2009, *\*Resistance: The Essence of the Islamic Revolution\**. And here you describe it — what does it mean? What is resistance? What is the essence of the Iranian revolution? What is the mindset of this revolution? But whoever is interested in learning more about Iran and what's going on in Iran today, you can go to this book. It's from 2009 — Alastair wrote it in 2009 — but everything he said in that book is still the same, and you can go and find it there. And the other one is the article, the new piece that you wrote on your Substack about "Iran Takes Its Chance with War." You mean the way that Iran is responding to Israel. And where are we right now with the case of Iran and Israel and Hezbollah?

### #Alastair

Well, there has been a significant shift in Israeli thinking. I mean, not just about Lebanon, but we have moved, first of all, to a new security doctrine. And we've moved also to a new understanding of Greater Israel — that Greater Israel should be a messianic project for some, not all in Israel, but for some it should be a messianic project to bring about, by force of arms, Greater Israel and therefore make redemption possible and become real, because this is the precursor, if you like, to redemption and the arrival of a new Messiah, according to that wing in Israel. But in the security element, things have changed dramatically with the adoption of the idea of permanent security.

So they moved away from the old style of security doctrine that existed, if you like, going back to the founding of Israel. And at that time, the prime minister said very clearly, we are a small country, small population, small resources. We have to stay within our borders, and we have a professional military. And we have to rely very much, therefore, on reservists to make up the numbers if we need it. But it was also a Clausewitzian view that was being expressed, in the sense that, you know, war wasn't an end in itself. It was a means to political ends, to political solutions, to political understandings.

And all of that by Ben-Gurion has been turned 180% around in this period, largely because of the 7th of October. And what the Israelis have moved to is the sense that they are claiming that what happened on the 7th of October was a Holocaust against them. It wasn't, but that's how they are seeing it. And it has been deeply assimilated into Israeli consciousness, I would say, that this was a Holocaust — not the Holocaust, but another Holocaust. And that has brought about the idea that the Holocaust, therefore, is not over, and that the 7th of October shows that Israel is always at the threshold of Holocaust.

That another Holocaust is inevitable, will come. That the Holocaust is not a past event, it's a present event and on our threshold. And to deal with it, we have to go to the root. Now, there's a history to this permanent security, which is that it goes back to basically the war, the Second World War. And the idea of permanent security and going to the root was that you could not allow a hostile population to remain and their children to grow up and be hostile to you. It was considered, first of all, in terms of the thousand-year Reich, and that there was not a willingness to allow, if you like, any challenge or enmity to this Reich to emerge.

And so the idea has come, therefore, and this is why we see and we understand this is the doctrine that lies behind the idea that there are no innocents in Gaza. The children are subject to target, the women are targeted, because we go to the root of this problem, which means the end of the Palestinians as a force that can ever last. Now, just to be clear, because it's important to understand this quite well, there is quite a lot of pushback within the Israeli military. We follow the Israeli Hebrew press quite closely, and serious Israelis are saying, you know, this is ridiculous. We are bogged down in seven wars for aims which are not clear.

We do not have the resources for it, and we are losing these wars. Maybe it's time to go back to the Ben-Gurion doctrine that Israel has to stay within its borders. But of course, and this is current, really what is happening is it is actually couched in that way, couched as saying the danger was that this military doctrine of permanent security after the 7th of October has become fused with a messianic view that we have to take all of this territory, that is Greater Israel, because this will bring redemption closer at hand. And so what they are actually saying, but not explicitly, is that we have to rethink the whole concept of Zionism. That's what it means when it says we've got to go back to Ben-Gurion, away from this messianic and from this permanent security concept — that Israel cannot go along as it is.

It is stuck. It is at a dead end. It's at a dead end with Iran, and it's at a dead end in all of these other wars that they have provoked and created at this time. So this is a long explanation, and I'm sorry for that, but it's important to understand the background. This lies behind what is happening in Lebanon. It is the sense, and this is why, you know, when people talk about ceasefire and so on, they don't understand permanent security precludes the existence of Hezbollah continuing adjacent to the northern towns — the northern towns that lie near the border with Lebanon but stretch down to the Galilee. And they say, you know, under this new doctrine, which is not just a military doctrine, but one that has been quite absorbed by Israelis generally, of permanent security.

Permanent security, at the root, does not embrace the idea of an armed Hezbollah sitting in southern Lebanon. So this was the start of this whole process. They've been trying to do it, first of all, by getting a part of the, not all of it, but a part of the Lebanese government, particularly the Christian, the Maronite, and some of the Sunni groups, to say they will take on the task of defanging Hezbollah, taking away its weapons and everything. And then it was concluded, pretty obviously, that this was impossible. The Lebanese government was not in a position to, even if they had the political will, which some of them did, they were not going to be able to disarm Hezbollah. And Hezbollah is part of the government and certainly part of the fabric of the state.

But the Lebanese government is trying to shift that and say, no, actually, the state that we want to represent is the old Lebanon, when it was founded by the French as a Christian, largely then Christian enclave. And that was before it became Greater Lebanon, which included all of the south and included, of course, Hezbollah. But that's the constitution. That's how it is. Even if they wish it were back, you know, to those early days when it was just a small Christian enclave, isn't. And Hezbollah is not going to accept that view at all. So what happened with that was then when they said, no, we're not going to disarm Hezbollah, we're not going to deal with them and destroy them politically, then Israel said, well, we'll do it.

And we're going to take southern Lebanon and make a buffer state. It's not a buffer state they're making. They're making a desert. I mean, they are, you know, this is attrition to the level of a desert. They're flattening everything. Not even a tree remains in some parts. And they are killing civilians widely in this process. And the Dahiya threat has a history. And I remember because I was in Lebanon in 2006. Now, I may have got the general wrong, but I think it was Eisenkot who talked about the Dahiya solution, even then, so many years ago. And he was saying, you know, the Dahiya solution is we need to flatten Dahiya. For those that are listening to the program, Dahiya is a major suburb of Beirut, a southern suburb. It is not a Hezbollah encampment. It is an ordinary suburb of Beirut. Yes, it has many Hezbollah living there, and it has enemies living there, but it is just a part of Beirut.

And it was badly destroyed. Many of the apartment buildings were all knocked down in 2006. But this is what they wanted to do again, and only sort of destroy it even more. Why? It's nothing to do with Hezbollah commanders being there. Of course, they're not sitting there. Everyone knows the

threat. And indeed, many people have evacuated. No, it is punishment. They want to punish Hezbollah, and they believe that if they punish the civilians of Lebanon sufficiently, they will turn on Hezbollah. This has been an old refrain of Israel: you know, we just have to make it so painful that they will drive out all the terrorists and then everything will be fine. So this is the background. So this is what it was. And, you know, Iran reemphasized something that was in the ceasefire agreement from the time of the Islamabad talks.

You know, it's a ceasefire for all or it's a ceasefire for no one. And so Iran has said from the beginning it has to be a ceasefire for all the elements of resistance to Israel — Yemen, in Lebanon, even in Gaza and in the Green Zone. So this was proclaimed, and Hezbollah said very clearly, Iran said very clearly in this, all right, if you start attacking Dahiya — I mean, already in Lebanon, I think 3,000 people have died, a million have been made homeless by these constant attacks. The IDF are still in Lebanon, in the south. The forces are there. But what has made it particularly difficult from the Israeli and American perspective is Hezbollah has been pushing back, and pushing back really hard against the IDF forces inside Lebanon as they've invaded it and started knocking down houses.

They have been attacked, and Hezbollah have got new drones, fiber-linked drones, and they are using them to attack military targets inside those northern towns of Israel. So actually, they are creating a buffer zone in Israel equivalent to Israel's attempt to create a buffer zone in southern Lebanon. And it's killing a lot of troops, a lot. There's no formal numbers given. It's all censored. But probably eight to ten a day casualties. Not all are killed, but eight to ten. I mean, they're losing a lot of troops, and this seems intolerable to public opinion in Israel. And so when Netanyahu, after the telephone call from Trump, said, okay, we won't attack Dahiya, Beirut.

We won't attack Beirut. There was a tsunami of protests across Israel at him for saying this, for suggesting that Israel was no longer going to, was not going to be allowed to attack Hezbollah in Lebanon. This is permanent security. This is a change that has taken place in these last years, away from the old concepts of security, which were fairly conventional, to this concept of permanent security at the root — that you cannot allow any threat to exist. And so this was a huge pushback, which I think is going to, you know, this is not going to go away. I mean, it's not going to just — I think the consequences of this are going to continue. There's no way that Israel will back down.

So what they've done now is they've had a meeting with those particular members of the Lebanese government who are sympathetic to Israel, or were sympathetic to Israel and hostile to Hezbollah, and had a meeting and said, okay, well, let's have a ceasefire and you agree that Hezbollah will have to be rooted out. And they say, the government says, no, we can't, you know, we will make a few little spots, perhaps, where Hezbollah won't be present, but we can't do it in a full way. And in any case, Hezbollah says, forget it. We don't agree with the ceasefire that's been negotiated in Washington between Aoun and the others. So I think, you know, all I'm saying is this isn't something that's about to disappear. This is a major issue in any question of what happens next in the relationship between the United States and Iran and Israel and the United States.

## **#Nima**

When it comes to this sort of rhetoric that Hezbollah is a proxy of Iran, Yemen is a proxy of Iran, and these... what is your understanding of the sort of relationship between Iran and Hezbollah, between Iran and Yemen?

## **#Alastair**

Well, yes, I've seen this. You know, there's a sort of suggestion that somehow, you know, the Shi'a in the south, the blow-ins that arrived there rather late. I mean, it doesn't reflect history because the whole of that area was in fact for many years, and it was only subsequently that it became partly Sunni in certain parts. And people don't realize that actually it was from the south of Lebanon that the Safavid state structure was constructed. They took the families from the south, the learned families from the houses and from the institutions, to construct the Safavid state in, I think, 1501. So, you know, I mean, all of this about their little proxies.

Well, if according to history, it's the Safavids that became the proxies of the Lebanese sheikhs, if anything, rather than the other way around. But my experience was, I mean, certainly when I was there and saw it, I think particularly in the case of Hassan Nasrallah, Iran not only respected him hugely as a statesman, a true statesman, but as a wise person. And so more often than not, I think it was Hassan Nasrallah giving advice to Iran rather than Iran telling him what to do. That certainly didn't happen. But they did look to him to give them political advice.

## **#Nima**

The other point, Alastair, I know that you're aware that we have some sort of rumors about Iran achieving nuclear bombs. They're going to use them, they're going to do some sort of bombing inside some part of Iran in the desert. They're going to experiment, some sort of experiment there. When it comes to the situation with Iran, my understanding, as I follow Persian media closely, I haven't seen any sort of sign that they have changed the fatwa of the former Supreme Leader of Iran. There is no sign, and nobody—I think that fatwa is still in place. And that's why I'm somehow skeptical about what's going on. And what is your understanding of, and what is the necessity of Iran going after nuclear bombs at this particular moment, when they have achieved conventionally on the battlefield what they wanted to achieve against the United States and Israel?

## **#Alastair**

Well, one of the pieces that I've written was really just about that — that Iran has now moved to a new phase of deterrence and a new phase of being ready to respond to the United States, for example, in the Hormuz area with a naval blockade. You know, any disruption to the infrastructure of Hormuz or any disruption or attacks on Iranian shipping, they escalate. And they escalate, as we saw in these last days, against Kuwait, against the bases from which those attacks have occurred,

because what had happened was that a tanker belonging to Iran had been fired on with a Hellfire missile that struck its engine room.

So it wasn't a warning shot. This was aimed at the engine room to disable this vessel. And so Iran responded immediately by escalating against the airport and helicopter base of the Americans in Kuwait. And so we are seeing a sort of escalationary policy coming into being now, whereby there will be no change. And I think equally, part of what we've just discussed — the question of Lebanon — is part of this escalatory policy. You go on killing and not observing the ceasefire in Lebanon, we will not observe the ceasefire in Israel. We will attack Israel. You claim that Lebanon is not part of the ceasefire. Well, then we will accept that Israel is not part of the ceasefire.

And we will escalate with missiles and a heavy — I think what was planned would have been an enormous barrage of missiles into the northern towns of Israel. So there is a sense of escalation, and it's also reflected in the cutting off of negotiations. There are no negotiations. There are, since that period, since it was announced — I mean, there's not even messages being passed, is my understanding. It's gone silent. There is nothing there. So... so your understanding about the fatwa seems — I mean, you would know better than I — but my understanding is there's been no change to the fatwa, and we would know about it. I mean, it's not something that is a secret. This is a state document, a religious document.

And so the fatwa, as far as I know, would still be valid. And to change it, you know, there is a sort of sense among many in the West that you could change it just by going to the Majlis, the parliament, and then there'd be a vote and they'd change it. No. No. This is a religious matter. Iran has, if you like, in Shi'i Islam, a doctrine of just war, just as Christians have the Augustinian doctrine of a just war. So there is one in Islam, and it is very clear on certain things about attacking. Can you attack innocents? You're not even allowed to attack without forewarning. I mean, this was very clear from the Prophet's time, and many of these date back to that episode when he was in Mecca.

So it would need not to be discussed in parliament, but it would need to be discussed by mujtahid — that is, people who are qualified to change law or to interpret law in a juridical way. And so it would need to have, to borrow the Afghan language, a sort of jirga of mujtahid to come together and discuss it and advance arguments about whether it was appropriate. Unlike Sunni Islam, Shi'i Islam does have what they call ijtehad, which does allow for changes in law, provided they meet certain criteria, such as that the old laws are no longer appropriate because time has moved on, life has moved on, or because events have changed that made the previous rulings inappropriate. But that, I believe, would have to be negotiated by the mujtahid before it could come into being.

It's not just at the whim of the Supreme Leader, his decision. His decision would be the final decision, of course, but it would be first discussed and aired. And I haven't seen any of that happening, I have to say, which might suggest that it isn't happening, because even if the Supreme Leader is not making an appearance, having that discussion in Qom, for example, would be quite possible. What is the balance? I mean, because this is a long discussion. I mean, you know, I've

been involved somehow or other with this discussion about, you know, the JCPOA for 20 years or something like that. Far too, far too, far too long. And, you know, it's a huge question about whether there's any advantage to Iran to have a weapon.

I think one has to put that in the context, though, of what's happening generally — that the Western counterproliferation policy is actually moving states towards weaponization. I'm not talking about Iran specifically, but I'm just saying everywhere one can understand, you know, many states sort of say, well, look at North Korea. You know, can't you see? I mean, you know, Korea — does anyone touch North Korea now? No, it's all gone silent. So, you know, it does, you know, it can provide deterrence. And interestingly enough, this is a debate that's now going on in Russia, where Russia — they have nuclear weapons — but the debate going on in Russia is, you know, the West doesn't fear them. It's lost its deterrent effect.

Psychology, you know, has taken over. The neocons have all said, listen, you know, Putin would never do that. I mean, you know, it's all blah. We don't have to pay any attention to that. Anyway, we in America would win a nuclear engagement, and we're ready for it. So, you know, even with Russia, which is a nuclear power already, they are having to go back and look into that. So, you know, the proliferation process is actually prompting people in that direction. But again, I think one would ask, in the specifically Iranian case, if there were an admission of weaponization that had been done surreptitiously and without a change of the fatwa, how would that be seen, and what would be the reaction?

I think it would not be well viewed by Russia and China, who, to the best of my knowledge—I'm obviously not in the circles on this—but Russia and China have generally not encouraged states to go down the nuclear weapons road. But also then, I suppose it would provide, initially, you know, for people to say, well, Tulsi Gabbard and the intelligence services were wrong. Iran was plotting a weapon all the time, and we told you so. And Trump warned, you know, if they get a weapon, they'll use it. They'll strike at America. Israel will no longer exist.

What will come out of this? What will be the outcome? So I think that one has to look very carefully at how this—it's not just a question of the demonstration—but how will this play out more? How will it play out in America, and how will it play out not just in Israel, but in the Jewish financial cadre of America, which has such extraordinary influence over the US? What will be the reaction? Where will that take us? Will it take us to an agreement, or will it take us away from any sort of— I don't, I actually, I mean, I better change my words, because I don't think there is going to be an agreement between—I don't think it's possible, an agreement is possible between Iran and the United States in the present circumstances. I think there are too many reasons why it won't, it can't happen.

And maybe it's okay if it doesn't happen, and we'll, you know, we'll have peace without peace. But I mean, you know, maybe people can live with that. That would be better than the alternative of going to all-out war to settle any disagreement between Iran and the United States. So those are the sort of questions that I think we have to look at very carefully, because, you know, at the

moment, all the talk again, yet again, for I think the 12th time now, is, oh, a deal's around the corner. Well, what deal? And, you know, is really Trump ready to say, yes, I accept Hormuz under the control of Iran, and Iran will charge certain types of fees for passage through the Hormuz? Is that really the case?

Because that's a huge thing. It would change the geopolitical complexion of the Middle East because, you know, the Gulf states eventually would have to come to terms with reality—and that reality, this is the reality. And increasingly, Iran is fixing that reality on the ground in Hormuz and making it work. The administration has been set up, the law has been set up, and so the Gulf states and many European states will all have to start rethinking their relationship with Iran. I mean, this is Iran's huge leverage, plus the fact that they sit adjacent to American bases on their doorstep and to infrastructure on their doorstep. So, escalatory, if you like, deterrence—it's quite possible.

So they have control of Hormuz, and they have escalatory possibilities in the Gulf of striking targets that are more costly to the United States' interests than the damage being inflicted on Iran. These are difficult questions to sort of get to the bottom of—you know, what exactly is that sort of balance, and where is it? But then you come back to the final thing, which is Palestine and Lebanon. And Iran's saying, no, you have to stop the attacks on Palestinians and Lebanese. It's just got to stop. But that isn't going to, of course, satisfy the Israeli demand for permanent security in their understanding of what I've just described to you—what that means. So it's...

## **#Alastair**

It seems to me, you know, we're moving in another direction, that Iran is moving towards escalatory deterrence. Now, will America react by military means? I don't think, actually, because I think they've discovered that they don't have the means to do anything. I mean, yes, they can do like Israel is doing—bombing, you know, Dahieh, bomb Tehran in the same way, kill civilians, knock down civilian apartment blocks.

## **#Nima**

But this is a war crime.

## **#Alastair**

And I think that matters a lot more in America than it matters in Israel. And so I'm not sure that this is going to get so much support in the Pentagon. I mean, Trump seems to me to be trapped in this. He wants something that can appear to be a win for him personally, a big success, which is why I think, you know, he talks so much about getting back to uranium, although he's now said he doesn't care about uranium after all, after making it the central thing. He says, well, it's buried, it's

entombed, it's finished. Well, okay, then just leave, go. If there's no nuclear threat, what are you staying for? Why would you—what would be the purpose of an attack? And what would it aim to achieve?

I think those are the questions that would have to be asked, will be asked, certainly in the Pentagon. What are we trying to do here, Mr. President, if you say the nuclear thing doesn't matter anymore because you've finished it, that even the enriched uranium doesn't matter? What are we trying to do? Well, my final point is I just cannot see Iran going back into sort of long negotiations on the JCPOA agreement. So I think, you know, effectively, the other pillar to the sort of change of policy is to sort of give up on negotiations and to say, you know, that whole idea of going down to a negotiated nuclear settlement is just not possible, because it's not just a nuclear deal that you say, oh, well, you know, we'll do this or we'll do this.

You know as well as I do. The Israelis will insist, you know, that there have to be, you know, unprepared visits. They have to take place whenever they choose. Most of the inspectors will belong to Mossad and the CIA, and they will go in everywhere they can. And what they will also do is identify all of Iran's scientists and technical experts, just as they did in the previous one, insisting on interviewing the people who were working on the Iranian nuclear project, all of whom have been subsequently, by coincidence, assassinated. So, I mean, you know, I find it quite difficult to see how Iran would go back down that route.

## **#Nima**

Alastair, when it comes to Israel, I think there are two problems right now for Israel. One of them is the use of drones and rockets. And as you mentioned, they're taking casualties because of these drones. They cannot control it. As you've seen with the Israeli ambassador to the UN, he said how effectively Hezbollah is using these drones to hit their targets—air defense batteries, communication systems, gatherings of soldiers. They are attacking everything in the southern part of Lebanon, and the rockets are going to the northern part of Israel. This is the reality, the new reality of Israel. That's why they need to escalate it to, as you mentioned, the Dahiya Doctrine—to destroy everything—because they are not able to defeat Hezbollah in the southern part of Lebanon.

You have to do something else. You have to escalate the situation. And the other point, on the part of the Israelis, is they don't want the United States to leave the region. They want the United States to stay in the region because those bases that were destroyed mean the United States can stay in the region with this sort of conflict, with this sort of, some sort of blockade that is going on right now. This is a conflict. It's not a war of attrition. It's a conflict of attrition between Iran and the United States. And the other point, when it comes to the United States, is that we see that they have a shortage when it comes to the stockpile.

The meeting Donald Trump had with Xi about rare earth minerals didn't go well. That's why we've seen Rubio going to Armenia, making new deals with minerals, because they want to replace those

weapons, those missiles, interceptors that were used during the war. And now Donald Trump, as you mentioned, is in a trap for Donald Trump. But how do you see all these vectors coming together and some sort of calculation happening on the part of the Trump administration? What is the off-ramp for Donald Trump? If there is no deal, there is no— you've mentioned the main, the most important point here is that there are no real negotiations happening between the two sides. Nothing is happening.

## **#Alastair**

I don't see an off-ramp. I don't think there is one. Nothing that would give him, you know, something to boast about as a big victory for himself and for America. And what you said I would endorse because, you know, what is equally happening, which is extraordinary, is that Israel has made a big—Netanyahu has made a big play that, yes, maybe we can do without the \$3.5 billion annual subsidies that we get from the United States. Well, actually, passing through Congress is a bill to merge the Israeli and American militaries, completely fuse them together in data sharing, AI sharing, technology sharing, research and development, missile technology, building of missiles.

I mean, a complete fusion of the two so that, you know, Israel and America would be interchangeable in the same way. I mean, if you were in business, you'd say, you know, really, this is a reverse takeover bid. The Israelis are bidding to take over the United States because the military is, I mean, a crucial institution and crucial also because it generates so much money. I mean, you know, the budget for the military is huge, and portions of it spread around states and politicians and other people so that it is, you know, the military structure is really almost—I mean, you know, this is the business model of America: the military-industrial state. And so, you know, the consequences of this will be huge if it continues.

I mean, at the moment, it's just been the—I think the committee have just passed it and agreed it should go to the next stage. Of course, you know, it's not over yet, but I mean, these are extraordinary things that seem to be taking place in the US, which, you know, will effectively change the whole question of sovereignty, American sovereignty. So, you know, yes, I mean, this is, you know—and are all of these things connected? You know, this is a big question. So, you know, is it possible, therefore, in these sort of circumstances, for Iran or for Trump to find his off-ramp, or for Iran to even think seriously, contemplate seriously, that there's, you know, some deal possible, that there is a deal that could be had?

Beyond, you know, there could be one where, you know, simply both sides say, okay, you know, you go on with almost as you choose, and Hezbollah will do what it wants, and, you know, a sort of laissez-faire, let everything be, and we'll just, you know, pretend we haven't noticed. I mean, that sort of outcome, I think, is quite likely. But actually, I'm not even sure we'll get there, because I think the next thing which will change the whole pattern of this is when the West falls over the

economic cliff. And it's likely to start falling off the cliff this month. No one knows exactly when—it could be longer—but June, mid-June, we may start to see real effects of Hamas on the European economies especially.

## **#Nima**

I think that's the point right now for the Trump administration. If they continue with the conflict in the Strait of Hormuz, how is that going to influence the U.S. economy? Because the U.S. economy is totally connected with the global economy. It's part of the global economy, a big chunk of the global economy. And Donald Trump has used the oil reserves of the United States to balance the markets. So how long can he continue with the same sort of attitude to balance that? And is that going to be sustainable for Donald Trump?

## **#Alastair**

No, inventories are at the bottom. They've bottomed out. I mean, even the strategic reserve in America is down, you know, it's completely running on empty. It's like if you have an oil tank at your home, you know, you don't take the last, you know, 10 centimeters of it because it's sludge. And so the strategic reserve is basically down to sludge at the moment. So they can't take more out. And the inventories in Europe are in dire straits. People are pretending, you know, pretending and extending that, you know, everything is fine, nothing is really changing. It's about to change. And so what will happen? Will that prompt, you know, Trump just simply to capitulate? It's not in his character. I mean, he's never done that. You know, Trump is increasingly in a strange medical, mental condition. And, you know, it seems more likely that he will do something unpredicted, unpredictable, and maybe very stupid in this time, because undoubtedly he's under huge stress because of these things, and his reasoning is not really that...

## **#Nima**

Do you think that this move on the part of the Senate and Congress, that somehow they're limiting Donald Trump's sort of power when it comes to the war with Iran, is that going to help Donald Trump, to give him some sort of political off-ramp? When the Congress is asking for that, the Senate is asking for that, I have to follow them. Is that going to help him?

## **#Alastair**

No, he's not saying that. He's saying the opposite. He's saying they're traitors. He's saying the four Republicans that voted with the Democrats are traitors. So he's certainly not saying, oh, well, this is a message to me and I ought to take it seriously. No, he's saying, you know, those people were traitors. So I don't think that, you know, that's his character. Again, you know, he will go at it and he will blame, you know, everyone is to blame but not him. He will blame someone. It might be Hegseth or someone else, or it was Massey or whoever it will be, but someone will no doubt be

blamed for the situation. So I don't think that will be the way out. I don't really see a way out. And he seems to have dismissed, or in the words that the New York Times uses, not heeded the warnings about the economic consequences.

And, you know, not just on oil and gas. I mean, you know, oil isn't a single substance. There's light oil, there's heavy oil, and, you know, you can't make diesel from light oil. And heavy oil does certain things. And also there are all the other elements, petrochemicals that are critical to supply lines, technical things, helium and fertilizers and things. Fertilizer prices are shooting up in Europe. This is the planting season. At the moment, you know, you can still get things, but, you know, in a month or two, it may be very different. I mean, it is a very serious situation that is growing. And is he capable of, you know, just turning around to Ghalibaf and saying, look, let's just call it quits and let's get out of this. Finish. No deal. I don't know.

## **#Nima**

I think that could be the point. That would be the point. At least on the part of the Iranians, they don't see any sort of... That's why Ghalibaf came out and said everything is decided on the battlefield. It's not by negotiations, because there are no negotiations happening. And whoever comes out with some sort of deal or agreement, the one who wins is the one prepared for the day after any sort of deal, who is prepared to fight back, to fight on the battlefield. This is the mindset on the part of Iran. I have never seen, I have never heard such a thing from Iranians. You may remember something from the IRGC, but none of these... you know, the head of the Iranian parliament, who was the head of the Iranian delegation, talking this way is a huge strategic change, in my opinion, on the part of Iran.

## **#Alastair**

Well, this is what I just wrote about, was to say, you know, we are in a new phase, and this is the phase which is escalatory deterrence, principally as a pressure point, waiting for Europe and the West to fall off their economic cliff. And then we have to see what happens. But at that point, does the United States sort of say, okay, let's call it quits, let's fold this whole thing up and go? I don't know. Or something else happens in America. It's in a very sort of—there's huge instability, I think, in the West at this point, because, you know, whole layers of ideas and doctrines and things are suddenly being exposed as hollow and empty, and they've got nothing ready to replace them.

So whole, you know, strategic views and horizons are suddenly, you know, collapsing. And, you know, Brussels has no idea what to do now and thrashes around. And they face, you know, other problems because we didn't touch on it, but, you know, when I mentioned Russia and its nuclear weapons, Russia is changing its position to something closer to the Iranian position in terms of saying we need to have escalatory deterrence against Europe. So, you know, the whole European project, which was to sort of, you know, implode Russia by pressure and particularly by the sort of drawing America back into Europe so that they can threaten, you know, war with Russia.

I mean, Europe isn't capable of doing war with Russia as it stands. And now they've lost, you know, at least Trump's America. Maybe they hope that, you know, the new administration, whatever it is or whoever it is, would bring America back to NATO, back to Europe, and there could be the familiar love-in between, you know, the Brussels elites and the new elites emerging in Washington. I don't think this is going to happen. I don't think it's going to happen at all. I think there's going to be a tough reaction against the establishment in many of these countries.

## **#Nima**

Alastair, just before wrapping up, you mentioned that Russia is reassessing its strategy. Does it mean that if Europe decides to escalate the war, they're going to, with these drones—we know how they're using these drones to hit targets deep inside Russia—is that going to change the Russian strategy to hit some American bases in Latvia and...

## **#Alastair**

Well, I don't know what the targets will be, but that is precisely the strategy. They have been struck by the way Iran has, if you like, targeted some of their targets—a vulnerable target—and their adversaries struck it, and the United States withdrew from that as a consequence. It pulled back. So the methodology of a conventional missile strike on some European—well, you know, it's not the Baltics, because the Baltics, I mean, they're not decision makers. Russia says very clearly, you know, we are going after the decision makers.

The Baltics, you know, snappy dogs tugging at Brussels. But the decision makers, which are Britain, France, and Germany mainly, in terms of, you know, the drone and missile attacks deep—and Russia is saying, we've had enough, you know, this is the last straw, particularly after the killing of all those children at the dormitory by drones, mostly young girls, teenage girls. I mean, that has outraged Russians. And they've said, you know, we can't go on. I mean, the Europeans have—you know, we are going to send a message to Europe. And if the only way to send it is by sending a missile into... And that's why Russia actually announced and provided details of all the sites in Europe that are providing missile assistance to Ukraine. It said, here they are. This is their location. This is where they sit geographically. That wasn't an accident.

## **#Nima**

Thank you so much, Alastair, for being with us today. Please go to [conflictsforum.substack.com](https://conflictsforum.substack.com). You can find the article that I've just mentioned. Here is the article—let's bring it up again. Alastair wrote it on his Substack, and there are many other new pieces. Let me bring it up—here is the Conflicts Forum. You can see it here, Conflicts Forum Substack. And the latest piece here is "The Serious

Warning of Political Violence in Israel.” And I was just mentioning the previous piece that Alastair wrote one day ago. Thank you. Thank you so much, Alastair, for being with us today. Thank you, Nima.

**#Alastair**

Thank you.