

Alastair Crooke: A New Middle East Is Born & NATO Attacks Moscow

Alastair Crooke discusses the defeat of the US and Israel, and NATO's attack on Moscow. Crooke is a former British diplomat and the Founder of the Conflicts Forum based in Beirut. He was formerly an advisor on Middle East issues to Javier Solana, the EU Foreign Policy Chief. Follow the Substack of Alastair Crooke: <https://conflictsforum.substack.com/> Follow Prof. Glenn Diesen: Substack: <https://glennDiesen.substack.com/> X/Twitter: https://x.com/Glenn_Diesen Patreon: <https://www.patreon.com/glennDiesen> Support the research by Prof. Glenn Diesen: PayPal: <https://www.paypal.com/paypalme/glennDiesen> Buy me a Coffee: buymeacoffee.com/gdieseng Go Fund Me: <https://gofund.me/09ea012f> Books by Prof. Glenn Diesen: <https://www.amazon.com/stores/author/B09FPQ4MDL>

#Glenn

Welcome back. We have the great pleasure today of being joined by Alastair Crooke, one of the great diplomats of Britain and Europe, who are sadly in short supply these days. That is the good diplomat. There's a lot I wanted to ask you about today, from what's happening in Iran to, of course, the massive strike on Moscow. The Western involvement is not very subtle. But to start off with Iran, again, we have this memorandum of understanding. From what I understand, it's been signed already, but we don't know. There's a lot of secrecy around this, and this has many implications. Will it be upheld by the Americans? To what extent does it shape the region?

We see the U.S.-Israeli relationship is also impacted by this. Indeed, Netanyahu appears to be in a much weaker position now, but if he's pushed out, you know, they're just rearranging the deck. I mean, most likely his replacement will be much more hawkish. Indeed, from what I understand, Netanyahu at least used to have some support from some of the Arab parties. Now, I don't know, it's... It seems like this memorandum of understanding, irrespective of whether or not it will actually be implemented, will nonetheless have a massive impact on the U.S., Israel, and the wider region. This is a huge, massive question. But again, the issue is huge as well. So I was wondering if you could address this.

#Alastair Crooke

Well, it is a huge question that you've just asked. So I'll explain two bits of it, perhaps, at least. First of all, I call it a framework because it's not really, you know, something that is a treaty. It's not even really a ceasefire. It's a framework for a ceasefire. And I've done five, I think, ceasefires with the Israelis and Palestinians and others, and the framework is actually often the easiest part. The hardest part is thinking about how to construct a protective zone so that things can move forward,

as they will be disrupted for sure. You know, a bomb in Abbas was one of the things that disrupted one of them, but equally, you know, someone going out and saying, listen, we don't believe they're serious about this hudna at all.

And as soon as they do anything, we're going to hit them hard. We already have some of these elements sort of visible, approaching in this context of the framework now. But let us look at those three headings that you talked about. The first one is about the Iranian one. You underline the controversy of this agreement in the United States, but it's important to understand that it is controversial in Iran. There is a certain tension in Iran, understandably, because they've experienced and lived through the JCPOA experience when peace was not upheld, and Iran was, in many ways—ordinary Iranians here—trapped in a stranglehold, which they are still in.

And however, yesterday, I think yesterday evening, the Supreme Leader issued a statement in which he said that although he was opposed to the framework agreement himself, he was persuaded by Raisi and, I presume, Khamenei, that he talked about the Honorable President, that there would be no backsliding on the terms of the framework or on Iranian interests. Iranian interests for the Supreme Leader predominantly center, I think, around Hormuz. I mean, he regards this as being the pivot to Iran possibly removing itself from the present situation and entering into a different geopolitical context.

#Glenn

It's as wide as that from his point of view. Not just, you know, tomorrow or the day after, whatever it is.

#Alastair Crooke

You know, Hormuz is crucial. We can go into the reasons why it's sort of geopolitical, but he sees that in those terms. What I think he was doing was to sort of put on notice, not just, if you like, the reformist wing in Iran, but also a skeptical public opinion. This is not going to go down the path of the JCPOA, that it is going to be that Iran is not simply going to allow, you know, precedents to be sort of established and then duly expanded and expanded and expanded until the whole meaning of the framework has gone. He's basically saying we're not going to allow them to sort of do some sort of precedent which will allow something to happen. The other element, of course, is Lebanon. And Lebanon is crucial.

And Iran has substantially changed its position because Iran did not, in the past, in terms of the axis of resistance, intervene directly against Israel until this last period. This was the first time they've gone directly and threatened to bomb heavily northern Israel if Israel went ahead with its threat to flatten Dahiyeh, a suburb of Beirut. And he completely said, we will go in, we will run ourselves in attack — the northern, that's the path right from the borders right through to the Galilee. And that was... of course, Trump then weighed in and the attack was stopped. So that is the other part. What

we're seeing now is the thing being put under test already. And then we go on to America, if you agree, just in a second.

But first of all, the Israeli press this morning, the Hebrew press, has again run riot with complaints and anger. I mean, Israel is in real turmoil — psychological turmoil, emotional turmoil. It's not something small, little, come together, but it's in deep turmoil. They see this as a huge defeat. They see that the whole, you know, great victory narrative of the government, to which many Israelis bought into — this narrative that, you know, there would be America flying, as they put it in their words, wingtip to wingtip with the Israeli brave airmen to destroy Iran completely — and that they were going to destroy Hezbollah and annex and steal half of Lebanon with the permission of certain proxies in Beirut.

And that is still going. And yesterday there was an attack on a ridge near Beaufort Castle, I think. They started to try and take more territory in this region, these hills, Israel. And Hezbollah attacked them with an anti-tank missile, and four soldiers died, including a lieutenant colonel who was the commander of the 82nd Brigade. Real turmoil in Israel. Everyone is saying, you know, this can't be allowed. I mean, four dead in one day — this is outrageous.

As Ben-Gvir said, Lebanon must burn with us. And others have been saying similar sort of extravagant things — that Hezbollah has to suffer, we have to go in, and we have to teach them a lesson. Lebanon must burn. I don't know what is going to happen, but the pressure... And as you rightly say, Netanyahu is under huge pressure because the polls were showing, you know, the odds that he was going to win the election in March were, I think, at about 49 or 50 percent. I can't remember the exact figure. And they're about half of that — 34 today. So, I mean, it's hard. If Trump has got problems with his poll standing in America, Netanyahu has got more.

And as you know, I mean, that could imply that he ends up going to prison because this election looks as if he is his columns. But that's on the basis of him doing nothing. Because in fact, I mean, the politics of Israel at the moment is that if Netanyahu does nothing about Lebanon, i.e. doesn't go on the offensive in Lebanon, his election will be lost and he will lose it. I mean, this is war-to-war consensus. This is the situation. So that is what is facing the United States. The Israelis also... because there is a lot of question and turmoil about what this whole thing means, because even if it's not widely understood in the West, the Israelis see this as a huge turning point.

You know, a glass ceiling has cracked and broken — that Trump actually took sides on prioritizing an engagement with Iran over supporting Israel's right to take half of Lebanon and occupy it, and to continue with its policies throughout the region. And then Trump said things that had never been heard in Israel before, in the press conference after the G7 meeting. I mean, things that he never said before — he said, you know, you're just too heavy-handed in Beirut. I've seen the photographs. You want to kill someone, and so you knock down the whole building with people living in it. This is

not acceptable. It's not acceptable. We all thought it was acceptable to Trump, mind you, a month ago, if you'd asked people. But now, apparently, it's not. He said, you're not handling it very well. And then he made the most sort of derogatory statement.

#Glenn

He said, maybe we should hand this over to Sharaa.

#Alastair Crooke

He would be more sophisticated in managing Hezbollah and the Lebanon situation. Otherwise, he would say, you know, maybe an ex-ISIS leader could do better than you, Netanyahu, and you, Israel, in Lebanon, which was, I mean, an unparalleled sort of slap to the Israelis. So they are shocked by this. But they also say, and this is in the Hebrew press today, it's in Maariv, and you can see it on our Substack because it will be out later today, I think, the sort of comments. But it's also clear that the Israelis understand this is the Middle East that's changed. It's a new era.

There is no way that they are going to destroy Iran. It's not going to have a regime change. There's no way that they can do it without the United States. The United States provides everything. They cannot attack Iran without U.S. facilitation. We're doing all of these things. Impossible. They understand that. They know that it's over. And it is a huge psychological defeat for the whole project. And equally, the stance that this Greater Israel project, by which they are assuming they can bring about Greater Israel by force of arms, irrespective of legal norms, everything. They will just do it. Whether it's legal or not, do it.

#Glenn

They will do it.

#Alastair Crooke

And this was a huge change that was introduced after the 7th of October, this idea of permanence of security. I mean, what it means is Israelis believe and have come to accept, you know, that what happened on the 7th of October was somehow a Holocaust. It wasn't, but that's what they think now and feel, and that they now live, you know, on the threshold of a future Holocaust. And therefore, Hezbollah cannot exist. It must be eliminated completely. So they understand that actually Trump's words mean that the United States may be serious this time in imposing penalties, severe penalties on Israel if they go ahead and respond or retaliate in Lebanon, because this will be seen to be undermining Trump and his great achievement of getting Hormuz opened.

That's why I underlined that point about Hormuz and the Supreme Leader in those opening comments, when I said, you know, Hormuz was the most important to the Supreme Leader and to

the leadership in Iran, and Lebanon was the second. Well, they're both connected, of course, because it's a moment we are moving towards Hormuz being open. But if the situation in Lebanon constitutes a breach of the ceasefire, and that's certainly the Iranian perspective, as evidenced by their refusal to go to the talks on Friday—they're declining to attend the negotiating session on Friday—then that part of it also comes into question. And how is Trump going to respond? Because he said it out loud. It was quite surprising.

Trump said, you know, listen, you know, we have to do this deal because we're running out of the reserves. I saw figures yesterday saying that in Khushi, it is down to 20 million barrels in the Khushi strategic holding. In other words, they're down to the sludge at the bottom, which is, you know, it's got no particular use anyway. It has to be treated and everything before you can use the, you know, the bottom end of a reserve like that, especially one that's in natural resources. So then it moves on to that's really, I think, where we are with the framework. The framework, I think, more than many Iranians expected, more than I expected, has triggered this change in the United States, partly because of Hormuz and partly because the economic cliff is here.

And Trump said it: we have to do this because we were four weeks away from running out of oil. So it has produced this change and has produced now a contentious battle in the United States, a huge battle between China, the pro-Israel Zionist groups, and the Trump supporters who are insistent on what they describe as America first and not Israel first. How did they get to that point? And the midterms are coming up. Now, the question is, the general consensus, the normal consensus is, you know, this is going to be so damaging for Trump. You know, he's going to lose, he's going to lose, and the Republicans are going to lose. I must say, I had thought that, but now I'm not so sure. Firstly, because I think... you know that the election process for the Senate is rotational.

#Glenn

It's not all at once.

#Alastair Crooke

It's one part, and then another part goes up for election, like that. So actually, the figures may not be exactly right, but there are about 20 Republican seats that are in contention at the moment, the Republican seats. That is, you know, in the House. This is, I mean, yeah, this could swing the midterms for sure. But also, it's not irretrievable, at least in the view, I think, of Trump and his team. You know, 20 seats, not all of them will switch. And also, it's not clear. There does seem to be a sense in which the solid base of MAGA hasn't defected from Trump because of a personal loyalty more than anything else. Not because they like the war in Iran or anything else, but as a personal sense of loyalty to him, which has these emotional overtones that it's very hard to define exactly, but he does have a considerable hold over people.

And in many respects, because of this debate, which, you know, prominent people are pointing out — that, you know, is America in control of its own foreign policy, or have we, if you like, delegated our foreign policy to a foreign power — is gripping the MAGA base in the aftermath of what happened, the assassination earlier of the Christian spokesman in Mecca. And Joe Kent also, and others, are raising this issue. So I think there's a feeling that it may not be as catastrophic. In fact, there will be some in the Republican component that actually may think that, you know, this is no bad thing, and therefore be more supportive of Trump than we thought. But it was — I hadn't realized that, you know, the number of seats is actually not huge that will be up. I mean, it may be exaggerated or not enough or whatever. Of course, it'll be in contention. But now, if Netanyahu goes in and attacks Lebanon, I think it will now shift to being seen as not just slapping Trump in the face, but slapping America in the face.

It will be seen by MAGA. Maybe not by, I mean, obviously not by the neocons and the ardent Zionist government, but by many Americans themselves, who don't understand all the nuances of it, but see that there was a framework that was signed by Trump visibly at Versailles, and Netanyahu and Israel are blowing it up. I mean, if you see it in those simple terms, it wouldn't be surprising if actually this rebounds to Trump's advantage politically. May not. Too early to say. And, you know, there's undoubtedly going to be major efforts to overturn this by those that are committed to Israel's supremacy in the region and regional domination.

And that, I mean, we don't know how that's going to turn out. Will they succeed? It'll be the first time that, you know, a president has gone up. But Netanyahu essentially — not Netanyahu personally, because this is coming from all of Israel, all of the leaders, whether it's the opposition leaders across the board — all of them are saying, you know, it's not just Ben-Gurion. They're saying, you know, they must pay. They've got to suffer. They've got to pay for these four people that were killed yesterday.

So if that happens, it is going to further, I think, increase the distance between the United States and Israel. It is going to push it further away and could push it towards some sort of measures — absolutely tense to begin with — but some sort of measures are imposed on Israel for attempting to blow it up. Particularly if the Iranians respond to this by, if you're right, restricting — not completely, but restricting to a certain extent — the Hormuz passageway. Who knows what they will do, but this would be one. I mean, very clearly they understand this is the thing that brought events to a head, brought about the framework, and that's where they might well move forward.

#Glenn

Well, my first thought when I saw this remarkable statement by Trump was that they fell short of action — that is, it's just in the language. But on the other hand, this language matters. This is, as you said, ringing through the media in Israel. This is putting out shockwaves, but also in the United States. All the America Firsters — the people who think like Tucker Carlson, that they shouldn't put

Israel first but America first — they must surely feel vindicated. They have wind in their sails at the moment. So it does change.

#Alastair Crooke

It changes so much in that way. I mean, something has broken, if you like — a paradigm has been blown up. And it was just him, as a piece of paper, which, as you say, is not a commitment to anything particularly. It's just a framework for starting a different process. But that paradigm has been blown up because Trump visibly sided and said — and because of language. You know, it talks about the sovereignty and the rights of sovereignty of Iran and, by implication, of Lebanon too. I mean, it says respect for the sovereignty of states, da-di-da, you look. But I mean, Iran is being treated as a sovereign state and being engaged with as a sovereign state, and not as a recalcitrant terrorist state.

And that is a change. Yes, the language, I'm sure Trump will say, and you'll have Ted Cruz coming out and saying, they're all terrorists, they're all horrible people, you know, we have to do everything against them. But the fact that, you know, this language was incorporated in it, and then Trump at the G7 spoke in, you know, in a very different way about Israel and said, you know, you don't know what you're doing in Lebanon anyway, so it's best if you get out of it, is a shock — a psychological shock. The whole paradigm is broken. And Israelis don't know what to do about it. I mean, really, they don't know what to do about it.

And people are saying, and serious Israelis are saying, as Chikrinowitz says there, you know, we will have to think about this in the aftermath because the original strategy of Israel is broken. And we have to think and understand that Trump is maneuvering towards a new sort of understanding between America and Iran. I don't know if it will end up in an agreement or all of the elements of it, but there is a new, if you like, atmosphere. Let's just call it that. There is a new atmosphere that is coming and that he's serious about it. And he says, I don't think that this is damaging to Israeli security. Again, wow.

I mean, this is quite an interesting thing to say, that, you know, you can have a relationship with America to get positive with Iran. And, you know, all of those strange comments that he was making earlier, that he said about, you know, Iran could be part of the Abraham Accords and his sort of various other strange comments about, you know, Iran. I mean, you can sort of imply, at least in the obscure workings of Trump's brain, that he's sort of moving towards some sort of idea that there can be, you know, perfect peace, or whatever he calls it. This great peace can break out in the Middle East. And a key element of it could be played by de-escalation of the conflict with Iran. But de-escalating Iran could lead to something more secure in the region.

#Glenn

And on that, he's probably right.

#Alastair Crooke

I mean, let's give Trump his due in that de-escalation with Iran is key to a more peaceful region. The alternative that Israel presents of just going there and destroying a country and destroying all of those groups that are allied to it, simply destroying and killing and killing more people, it's not a solution to stability. It's not a path to stability. It's the opposite. And I think somehow, maybe this message is percolating up in Washington amidst huge opposition, with people infuriated and on the brink of almost a civil war about this.

So you have all these tensions about this. This really fairly innocuous document comes up and, wow, you know, tensions in Iraq, tensions in Israel, massive tensions in Israel, and tensions in the United States, I would say, equally. I mean, strategic tension, because they're going to weigh on this. You know, the forthcoming elections in the United States are going to center around this question about who runs United States foreign policy and in whose interest is foreign policy formulated? I think that's going to be a key issue. So this is going to be bad.

#Glenn

Building on what you said, I also thought his remarks about Iran's ballistic missiles were interesting, because in the past there was consensus around the idea that these terrorists should not be allowed to have ballistic missiles, this ballistic missile program to threaten Iran's neighbors. Again, this was a key component of the U.S. demands — that this had to be dismantled. I saw a speech by Trump where he was making the point that, well, you know, the Saudis have ballistic missiles, so of course the Iranians have to have them as well. Suddenly, you know, as you said, it marks a shift. They're not the terrorists who are illegitimate, who hold ballistic missiles. They are a state with basic national interests, and they will have to defend themselves like everyone else.

I mean, treating them like a normal power — it is a huge step. Especially in this day and age when the first objective is always to delegitimize the opponents. We delegitimize Putin, Xi. Whenever we're going to go to war, we make sure that we delegitimize them. And I think the fact that now it's going the other way is quite remarkable. And again, it opens the door for so many in the United States to essentially come with common sense. They are a state. They have the right to basic national interests and to protect themselves. You can take it a step further — actually, we should encourage their ballistic missiles because this gives them a conventional deterrence, less reliance on nuclear deterrence. I mean, common sense could break out. So yeah, I think language is powerful.

#Alastair Crooke

I mean, you know, the whole image. I mean, Iran is essentially fighting for its sovereignty, its right to determine its own path ahead. And this is catching, you know, the imaginations of much of the world. It's not, you know, we may be going back to that post-war period, or, you know, when the Bandung Conference and all those things — independence and sovereignty — certainly, you know,

countries have motives, you know, how did they do this? Well, they did this by defying the United States' attempt to put financial and tariff checkpoints on them. Well, Russia has checkpoints, China has checkpoints put on them, and Iran has at least partially succeeded by taking assertive action against these United States checkpoints. This is a president that is going to have a larger tale.

#Glenn

Well, I wanted to shift a bit. Well, focus not completely. It's still about Western wars. But as we saw yesterday with this bombing of Moscow — unprecedented. And another thing which was quite different is, in the West, the Western countries, they don't seem to work very hard anymore to conceal their own participation. I remember at the beginning of the Russian invasion of Ukraine, you had people like Baerbock saying, listen, we shouldn't turn on each other, we are at war with Russia. And this was deeply problematic because we shouldn't say these things. But now we see all the weapons coming, the intelligence, I mean, the use of NATO territory.

But now, of course, this massive strike on—well, last year, not just on Russia's nuclear deterrent, but now this massive bombing of Moscow. And, you know, it's... I mean, the NATO footprint here is very obvious. It's advertised almost. I mean, how are you seeing this? Because... I guess of all things, this is what's keeping me up at night. What seems to be a march towards what would be a massive war with Russia, which I just can't conceive the possibility of us having any escalation control. And it would spiral very quickly into a nuclear war. Maybe I'm pessimistic, but this is madness here.

#Alastair Crooke

I think what you're saying is very pertinent to everything.

#Glenn

Yes.

#Alastair Crooke

Let me just say that I think all that happened — I don't know how many drones and missiles were fired, 136 or something — into that refinery in Moscow. I mean, this is a major step up, a major step up. And it's intended to put Russians on edge — Russians, Muscovites, and people in St. Petersburg — feeling that they're less secure. I think it was also coordinated, it was pre-coordinated at the Euro 3 — not EU, Euro 3 — France, Macron, and Merz meeting, I think it was in London just beforehand, where they put forward their, you know, ultimatums for Russia. And then again, you know, they brought in — deliberately, Macron brought in Zelensky to that meeting and to the European meeting.

And I think what we're seeing, therefore, is a major effort by Europe to change the narrative. Macron has said, you know, at the beginning, that he believed Russia, as a big state, would crush

Ukraine easily, and that it would be done quickly. This is Macron saying Russia would crush Ukraine, and therefore, you know, there was not really much to do about it because it was going to happen. And then that passed, and we see that Russia still hasn't crushed Ukraine. And the point of these missiles and the point of pushing Zelensky to the sort of front of stage at these two meetings was to say to Trump, look, it's all changed. They're not on the back foot. They're on the front foot. They are winning. Now, it's not true.

Of course we know it's not true. It was a huge effort to get together that amount of missiles. And, you know, overall, these attacks on refineries have done little strategic damage to Russia. The economy is not in any sort of free fall. In fact, the economy is growing and employment is increasing. So it's a false narrative, but they were intent on stage-managing it with Zelensky and, you know. So the whole of that thing was about the G7 and about the EU summit that was going to take place, that has taken place in these last days, because the summit was going to look at EU budgets and financial resources. And there's a big division in Europe about whether to agree to this huge budget that is being proposed by the Commission, with some states objecting to it.

So, I mean, the aim is to push for more defense resources going to Ukraine in the first place. Secondly, to lay down the framework that Europe wants, which is a ceasefire, then Britain, France, and other states of the willing will take part in peacekeeping. So, NATO will move into Ukraine. Ukraine will become part of NATO, eventually an EU member. And the main element of it is to bring America into this agreement and into this process, to bring America back to Europe by saying, look, we've done our part, we're doing it, look, you see what's happening, you know, and Zelensky was showing photographs of the cathedral and how the Russians destroyed this cathedral in Kiev. In fact, it was probably a Patriot missile that misfired that did the damage, but it doesn't matter.

The public relations went that way. And so, yes, this is where we are moving, and we will have to see how he has to respond. He has to respond to it. And the question is, are we moving closer to them responding in the way that Sergei Karaganov and others like Dmitry Trenin and others at the St. Petersburg conference were saying, no, the only thing that will stop this escalation every time, further and further. And I mean, one of the agreements that came out of that bilateral meeting — more preparation, more missiles, more drones — joined with what they call co-production, which means that they just ship over the parts for reassembly in Ukraine, and then Ukraine fires it at Russia. How do you put a stop to this?

And this is the debate in Russia. And I think it's edging closer and closer to, you know, what I described, I think, to, you know, Karaganov's argument. You know, the problem is that they don't believe that we will react, even we being Russia. You know, it's all said, oh, that's just Putin's bluff. I mean, don't take it seriously. He's not going to do anything because we're NATO, Article 5. And the Russian Muslim Putin, I think, believes that Article 5 is the bluff, that, you know, if there was an attack — and I think Karaganov was on your program — argued quite forcefully and directly that he really doubted that America would intervene, even if a tactical nuclear weapon was used against a European NATO state, that they would intervene.

And Professor Mearsheimer, if I recall correctly, agreed with him. He thought that the United States would not necessarily directly become involved. But both agreed also that this could lead to something much worse, that this could escalate and go up. And I think all we've seen in these last days is Europe trying to get to the position where they have, I think it was Macron or someone, said they want to create Ukraine as the mailed fist at the front of European military and NATO military architecture against Russia, that it is to be the frontline putting pressure and attacking Russia behind it. I'm seriously skeptical of these stories, and I've said that in Moscow.

I don't believe Europe has the ability to build a military architecture. You know, when I hear 1997 or 1930, it takes 20 years to do supply lines, to build a realm of military infrastructure. I mean, let alone they don't even have the men. I mean, you can see. I mean, look at the U.K., it can't even provide a naval vessel at the moment. It's got something like 40 tanks that are serviceable. I mean, the European defense structures are in a terrible state, really terrible state. You don't change that in three years. And anyway, much of this money is just one of these boondoggles. You know, the money is going to existing European defense contractors, and their share prices are going up, and a lot of people are going to make a lot of money sort of going in and out, insider trading on who's going to get, you know, the defense money.

So it's rather like, you know, what's been happening in Washington, I think, where, you know, the oil futures—whereas, you know, just before Trump makes an announcement, then, you know, there's the big, you know, sale or purchase of oil futures, and then he makes the announcement, ah, peace. And then, you know, I think there's an element of this taking place in the European context too. So I don't think it's so—what they really want is, if I can make a strange comparison—but I would say it's rather akin, if you think of Europe as being Israel. Israel is using Lebanon as an attempt to pull in, and has been, to pull in America on its side in a war against Iran. And Europe, in a similar way, is doing this with, you know, just as Israel is doing attacks inside Lebanon and taking towns and leveling them.

Europe is using missiles into deep Russia in order to say to America, look, we can win this. You know, we've set the framework for it. We can win this. All we need to do is pull you into this, stand by the condition that, you know, Russia has to capitulate and withdraw from all of its sovereign territory and pay compensation and put up its officials for war crimes trials. I mean, Europe is moving very fast from the Ukrainian Council to arrange all of the means for war crimes trials and reparations, assessing, keeping lists of damage so they can charge Russia with the cost of all these things. I don't think this is going to fly at all. I mean, Putin clearly understands it. I read a statement that Lavrov was going to put in Politico. I don't know if you've seen it, but a very strong account of the system. Politico refused to publish it, I think, in the end. But I mean...

#Glenn

The Foreign Ministry published it in Russia.

#Alastair Crooke

Oh, they have. Well, I mean, it's a very strong article, a very strong piece. I suggest people read it because it's very clear. It's a very clear indication. So now we know very clearly where things are. The Europeans are pulling Trump, and they were very pleased with the G7 meeting because they got him actually to sit with Zelensky, and they got him to sort of more or less agree with the European position, which is there must be an immediate ceasefire, total sovereignty returned to Ukraine, all of these maximalist demands of Europe. They are maximalist. Russia would never agree to anything. So they got in Russia, trying to get this out of the accepted consensus and to try and pull America into their consensus.

And then, if they can, pull America back into supporting their war, into going to war against Russia with Europe. That's been, you know, the German, the French, and British aim — to get a war against Russia in which, like in the Second World War, they pulled in Roosevelt, now pull in Trump, you know, find the initiative to — then it was a hub or whatever it was — pull America into their war against Russia. It would be catastrophic. And this is a plan that is catastrophic. And people should understand how dangerous it is, how catastrophic it could be. It could end up — because Russia will not tolerate it. I was very struck by what was said about Germany on your program by Karaganov, who does know about the nuclear issues.

I mean, he has been involved in this for years, decades. And, you know, he said, we will not tolerate Germany having nuclear weapons; we would eliminate it first. It was a very tough comment. I mean, we all play with fire, I think. So I agree with you. What's happened there, what happened at the G7, at the European meeting, no one seems to sort of be aware. All the talk in Europe is how disgraceful it was that Costa's chief of staff actually spoke to someone in Moscow without telling von der Leyen. I mean, he is actually the president of the council, and in case the Europeans have forgotten, it is the member states that decide foreign policy, not the commission and not the foreign high representative. It's war rule, that's fact, and they just go on anyway.

#Glenn

Yeah, but what you said before, though, I agree. I think this is the goal of the Europeans — that is, to have Ukraine standing in front of them and the Americans standing behind. This is how they will seek to weaken Russia over the next years and decades. But...

#Alastair Crooke

But still, I mean, I think, you know, maybe you ought to get someone on the program who can answer this. I mean, you know, even in Israel now, people are saying there was no discussion about an attack on Iran. There was no one from the Mossad or the military, Aman, the military intelligence, or anyone that came when all of this was being discussed and said, but what happens if Iran survives and emerges stronger? Nobody said anything. And if they did think it, they kept their

mouths shut. And I think the same question should be asked of the Europeans: what do you conceive a war on Russia would look like? Would it be ground troops?

Would it be simply a nuclear war? Would it be—how would you run it? I mean, are you going to mass troops, and would it be a conventional war, or would it be an asymmetrical war, and would it be led by Ukraine in this way? And what would be the outcome? I mean, when you see that, you know, the NATO states are sort of practicing by building prisoner-of-war camps in parts of it, I mean, it's just nuts. But I have no sense of what—if Europe thinks about what it's trying to do beyond the big picture of, you know, putting pressure on Russia, pressure on Russia, bringing America back to Europe, getting Europe to give more money and more weapons to Ukraine.

And what would war with Russia mean in practical terms? Would it be an air war? Would it be a ground war? Would it just be a nuclear war? It's a question that never seems to be addressed, perhaps because no one wants to address it. Because, just like no one in Israel wanted to seem, you know, other than, you know, "We're in, you know, we're part of the team, we're going to go wingtip to wingtip with the Americans and destroy Iran"—wingtip to wingtip with the Americans, we're going to go in and destroy Russia.

#Glenn

Yeah, I think this is the problem. They often think that the war is simply going to be something low-intensity that they can control. I think they often miss out on why Russia hasn't retaliated against the European countries yet or against NATO in general, because once they do, the Russians also understand that there is no escalation control anymore. It's going to be impossible, and most likely it would escalate into an all-out war where nuclear weapons could quickly be introduced. I mean, and still the idea is that if you can just push the Russians a bit more, a bit more, and once a war breaks out, like the Dutch are building camps for Russian prisoners and all this.

I mean, I often make this point. How exactly do you think this war is going to play out? Once it starts, it's not going to be able to be controlled. The idea that Russian soldiers would go into Europe, the Europeans would capture them, send them to Dutch camps—I mean, it's so obscene. But it's not even within propaganda; they actually believe this. Otherwise, why would they build these camps? They actually think this is how the war would be fought. It does beg the question, though: is anyone actually behind the wheel on this one? Because this is absurd.

#Alastair Crooke

This is the question. It's now come out in Israel. No one was asking that sort of question. And the same thing, I would say, the whole of the strategy is based on the European conviction that Russia would and must capitulate. It would have no choice against the combined force of Europe—so many countries, such a big GDP, such military strength in NATO—that it would have no choice. And just as what happened in Iran reflected a complete misunderstanding of the nature of the Iranians, the

character of the Iranians, so such a conviction that Russia was going to capitulate or would easily capitulate is a complete misunderstanding of Russia and Russia's consciousness of their history with Europe.

#Glenn

Well, thank you for sharing your insights on these very depressing topics. I, as always, recommend that people read your Substack, **Conflicts Forum**, and a link will be in the description. So thank you very much for your time. Thank you.