

Alastair Crooke: Yemen's Red Sea Siege as a New Front in Iran War

Alastair Crooke discusses Yemen's Red Sea Siege. 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:

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#Glenn

Welcome back. We are joined again by Alistair Crooke, a former British diplomat and expert on the Middle East. And I would highly advise to read his Substack, Conflicts Forum. And I've left a link in the description. And we'll actually—thank you for coming on. What I want to discuss with you is actually some of the articles you've been writing. I really want to unpack what is happening now in East Asia, because the war on Iran, it appears to be a real powder keg. That is, the war is widening, it's expanding, with many of the conflicts being quite interconnected. We see, of course, Iran, Israel, the Saudi-Yemen component.

We see now attacks on Saudi oil from Iraq. We have a possible conflict now between Iraq and Kuwait, a crisis in Lebanon, Syria, possibly regime change in Bahrain. It looks like there could even be a possible Iran-Ukraine component now, as we see Iran might even start to strike EU energy projects across the Middle East because they see Zelensky as being managed by the West. So, in short, the US appears to have started something that will be very difficult to put back together. I was just wondering, how are you reading this situation in terms of this, I guess, spiraling out of control?

#Alastair Crooke

Well, you know, you've hit the nail on the head. I mean, you know, it's mildly unscathed at the moment, but it is in flames throughout the region. And Trump and his attack on Iran is responsible for this upsurge in, if you like, conflicts and destabilization. They are, as you say, all infilling, but they also all have separate agendas. This is what makes it impossible now, in my view, for the United States to get an agreement with Iran. I mean, there are other reasons too, but, I mean, it's become a really complex matrix of interests and agendas, which, you know, before it was a binary

negotiation between Iran and the U.S., and now even Trump is saying, well, in the future, now we've got to have the Houthis.

Remember, it wasn't so wrong. He said, "Well, we've got to have Hezbollah. Hezbollah called me up, and I said, 'Do you have to join in the talks?'" I mean, that's a joke, of course, but I mean, it all sort of underlines the complexity. So if you start with the most complex part, or the most complicated one from a U.S. perspective, it will be Yemen. And what happened, just to give a little background to your listeners, if that's all right, is it really has been a ceasefire underway with Saudi Arabia. And also there has been a siege by Saudi Arabia of the Houthi and Sana'a part of Yemen for more than 10 years, a siege on ports and airports. And of course, the Houthis strongly resent and object to this.

Well, what triggered it all, though, was that they had prepared the delegation to go and attend the funeral commemorations for the assassinated Supreme Leader in Iran, and were invited. And the Iranians sent a civil airliner to Sana'a Airport to collect the delegation to go and attend the funeral. Saudi Arabia said this was against their siege, so they bombed the airport, Sana'a International Airport, to prevent the plane landing. In fact, the plane did land at Hodeidah, and the delegation went to Iran and returned. And as a consequence, then, we're closely on the verge of war between Yemen and Saudi Arabia.

So that's really why it came into being. And so Yemen then declared, rather along the Iranian lines, okay, siege for siege. You've imposed for 10 years a siege on us. We impose a siege on Saudi Arabia. And that meant effectively the closure of the Red Sea to the ports of Saudi Arabia. Please note, because I think it's important, that it doesn't mean the closure of the Red Sea to all shipping. It means the closure of the Red Sea to Saudi shipping. Now, there are a few wrinkles in it. The Saudis have tried to slip a couple of tankers through towards the Suez, and two tankers have been struck that were heading towards Bab al-Mandab by the Yemenis.

But what the Yemenis are now doing is effectively they are warning empty tankers coming to the Yanbu port facility and saying, "Go back, don't come here because you will be stopped." So this is a major affair. The total oil passage through that Yanbu facility, I think, was something between six and seven million barrels a day. And that certainly will no longer be flowing into the Western market. And that has been much exacerbated by the attack on the Jizan refinery, the Aramco refinery, close to the Red Sea in Saudi Arabia. Now, this is not just any refinery attack.

I'm saying that because we're so used to, in the Russian context, there have been reports that there's been another attack on a Russian refinery and lots of black smoke. And then, when we look at it a bit more closely, we find the damage was repaired in a few hours and it's back in operation. With the Jizan refinery, first of all, it's not just a refinery. It is the refinery. It is an all-singing, all-dancing refinery that is the most modern in the world, apparently. But it not just, you know, distills oil products, it does a lot more, and it is burning, and it is still burning, and it is burnt, really burnt.

So when you look at this, so the Saudi oil loss, I mean, if you take it all together, is probably about... getting on for maybe 20% of the oil that was passing through the Red Sea. Like, that total Hormuz amount, which is much more, you know, it varies from day to day, but it's probably about another 22% of world oil supply. You're talking about a big hit to the world oil supply, really big hit. And what is so strange is, you know, the Saudis have said nothing. If you read the European press, which you perhaps have done, if you find a reference to this, it's rare indeed. It's just almost as if it's pushed off the news agenda. A few pictures of something burning, but no sort of context given to it, no sort of sense.

And in fact, the whole of Europe is already in this strange sort of environment, psychological environment, where, I mean, there's no mention of it in the press, very little. Europeans have not been sort of prepared or briefed that a crisis could come. For the first time today, there were a few comments saying, well, you know, clearly this winter there is going to be a gas crisis. But in terms of diesel, in terms of gasoline and other things that come from the Middle East, almost nothing. So, I mean, this is obviously a strategy not to frighten people, and really, fingers crossed, that enough could be drained out of the Strategic Petroleum Reserve in America just to keep through and to pass through this awkward period.

But even there, I mean, you know, now unpleasant things are coming out. Actually, the Americans, you know, the strategic limit for drawing on the reserve, the absolute minimum set by the military authorities, I think 250 million barrels, they're below—well below—they're below that, and they're still drawing down on it. And they're now trying to manipulate the markets by saying, look, it's all right, we can go down perhaps even as much as 70 million barrels per day, draw on it from this. And the experts are saying, you know, it's not just one single, you know, supply of oil reserves. It's lots of caverns, and the structures—and you've got different grades of oil in different caverns. And it's much more complex. And many of these caverns are likely to collapse.

If you like, the oil is taken out, the pressures will then push in the sides inevitably because the oil was stabilizing the caverns. And many of these caverns are in danger of collapse. Anyway, all this has been ignored in the interest of keeping markets content, keeping the price of oil a little bit down from its hundred percent. So that's a major element in this world. Then another one, which is hardly, rarely noticed, but it is in Iraq, where the prime minister went to see Trump. It seems that he gave Trump some indications, you know, American oil companies would be favored in Iraq against existing competition, something of that sort maybe, but also said he was going to disarm the Shiite militias, the Hashd militias, by the 30th of September. And they said, "No way."

So there's a lot of problems there. And Iranian special forces are fighting in Iraq across the border from Qarun al-Shar. They're fighting there against the Kurds regularly. Iranian special forces have gone in and assassinated seven or eight leaders of the Kurdish militia there, and they bombed them, and they've attacked their supplies and supply lines. So Iraq is in a state of some disruption, or we say that. It might be yet worse. I think, you know, the funeral showed very clearly the strength of—I

don't call it Iranian power, because it's not really Iranian power—the civilizational force of Iran. I mean, you know, millions turned out, of course, at Kabul, but also at Qom and even Isfahan. So, I mean, we had, you know, what, 15 million or so turn out for his funeral.

Many of them walked there to these funeral arrangements. I mean, it was extraordinary, the outpouring. And Iraq is a Shiite country. And the supreme leader in Iran was the Marja, that is, the guide, the source of emulation for many, not most, of the Shiites in Iraq. So it was their religious leader that was killed, as well as Iran's religious leader that was killed by an American. And so it's not in a very stable situation. It's their crime disarmed. America is trying to force the disarmament in Iraq, trying to force the disarmament of Hezbollah in Lebanon, and thinking to use Syria somehow, to the extent that the Syrian militias will come down and attack some of the Shia villages on the borders between Lebanon and Syria.

I didn't know whether that will happen. I heard rather dark thoughts about it. But Turkey, too, is in a state of panic, uncertainty, although Erdoğan says he supports the idea of—or at least not that strongly, actually. I think the key: everyone says he doesn't oppose, and they take it as negative, though he doesn't oppose Syria being involved in Lebanon. But he's clearly got misgivings, and he's introducing radar and other assets into Syria, right down to Damascus. And the Israelis are threatening him with war and saying, "We won't allow that." So we have that. And the other thing, which is, again, fairly covered in the European press, is what's happening in the West Bank.

There is a clear attempt by Smotrich and Ben-Gvir and the messianic component, the national religious and the others—not the Hasidic—the other messianic element of Likud and the government, to create a crisis for the elections in October. Ben-Gvir and Smotrich seem to believe that this crisis will allow them to get rid of the Arabs from the West Bank and take it and introduce settlements, more settlements, both there and in Gaza. And so the West Bank is poised for a really difficult period. It's already happening. There's almost civil war taking place in parts of the West Bank. And so it could get a lot worse. So that is also a problem. And Gaza, they're about to put the Gaza population into these controlled and safe areas, concentration camps, effectively, in Gaza. So everything is boiling as Netanyahu sets off to meet Trump tomorrow in Washington.

#Glenn

Well, thanks for unpacking that, because it is getting not just boiling over, but it's getting awfully complicated as well. But Trump, he was making these comments that, you know, because he has to respond somehow to the lack of progress in Iran. So, you know, will he escalate, de-escalate? It's always unclear what he's going to do. He made the point he was going to open the gates of hell, which suggests a dramatic escalation. And indeed, you do see some movement of these refueler tankers. And again, the U.S. isn't pulling back.

So, you know, either it's going for that escalation by preparing for a major strike, or it's looking to walk this back, as some of Trump's advisors apparently have recommended, given that the weapons

are becoming depleted. There's no convincing path to victory. But if the U.S. decides to go for a huge strike against Iran now, what is the chance of Israel joining in? Because the Israelis appear, again, to have to sit this one out, this new round of the war on Iran. But to what extent do you think Netanyahu wants to bring Israel back into this war?

#Alastair Crooke

Netanyahu desperately wants to bring Israel back into the war and persuade Trump to attack its infrastructure. I suspect he's going to say we have new intelligence to suggest that the Iranians are proceeding with their nuclear program. I mean, it happens regularly all the time. I'm just amazed that Washington falls for it. But anyway, he's probably going to say that, and he wants the infrastructure. It seems like what brought it to an end was that Brad Cooper, who's in charge, the commander of CENTCOM, was pretty adamant in saying, look, just going on bombing around Hormuz, you're not going to change the Iranian position on negotiations or anything else. It's actually only wasting our very rapidly depleting weapons supplies, really reducing them rapidly. And then, I mean, if you take that off the table, then what have you got left?

What you've got left is Pickaxe Mountain, which Israel says—I'm not sure if they have really any intelligence, or anyone has any idea—where this 400-odd, 430 kilograms of 60% enriched uranium is. It was at Fordow, it seems, on the 22nd of June when Trump bombed Fordow and other Iranian nuclear facilities. I think it's unlikely it's Fordow. Pickaxe could be where it is because Pickaxe is deeper and more structurally stronger than any of the other sites. But no one, I think, knows. And I don't really believe that they have solid intelligence on this. I may be wrong, but I just don't believe it. So, I mean, these things are not inviting targets. I mean, first of all, to bomb Pickaxe, it's a solid granite mountain, very steep slopes, and a thousand meters down to the working level.

And the experts say, well, to bomb this, we have to sort of drill down two- to three-meter vertical shafts by bomb, bomb, bomb, bombing to get that thousand meters. And then they'll drop a nuclear weapon down it, and it will blow the whole thing up. I mean, this is fantastic. I mean, this is sort of science fiction, not serious. I don't believe it's serious. I mean, imagine trying to sort of shape a little vertical hole into a steeply sloping granite mountain. It's just, you know, a thing will bounce off the bottom. Anyway, I think that'll be a gift to Iran. And then if they put troops on the ground in Isfahan or somewhere, go and seize Isfahan and take the tunnels, I think that would be a huge gift to Iran, that the troops would be captured or killed.

#Glenn

There will be a large loss.

#Alastair Crooke

So there's no, I mean, this is why I've written that actually the military war, the back of it has been broken. I mean, America is running out of the wherewithal for a major operation, running out of the wherewithal. And it hasn't achieved any change. The opposite has happened. The Iranians have become more resilient and tougher in their position. And I argue, I've argued, that they completely have the Iranian situation back to front. They just don't understand, because they keep arguing that the situation is that they've got a very hard-line leadership, and the ordinary people are just desperate for some sort of solution. They want to get out of this. And actually, it's the reverse. The leadership are pragmatic.

They may be tough, but they're pragmatic. But it's the people on the ground, particularly the young, who are saying, "Why are we talking to the Americans at all? Actually, what we want is vengeance." They are tough, and they're giving the negotiators quite a hard time. I mean, they were attacked. They weren't. They were not popular. So I don't think there's going to be a change in the posture. The Iranians have already said, "We're not negotiating with the United States, and we will not negotiate with them as things stand." So, I mean, there hasn't been a change in posture. So we wait and see what Netanyahu comes with. And as I say, I think what he is going to go and say is, "You need to restart the war, and you need to attack infrastructure. Infrastructure."

They're very careful in their words on this: infrastructure, the word, and the ability of the state to provide services to its citizens. In other words, they're calling for the destruction of the state. I mean, that must be the definition of a state that is unable to provide any services to its people. So that's what I think they're going to say. I'm not—you know, lots of people think this is going to be, you know, a slam dunk, and Trump will agree with it. I'm not one of those. I think that Trump has an inkling, if it penetrates through to his mind, that this hasn't been going well, and it is not going well in terms of the polls in the U.S. I mean, the latest polls would show a catastrophic fall in the standing of Israel amongst Americans.

I mean, CNN comes out with it very clearly. We've never seen anything like it. The drop-off in support for Israel across the board is, you know, stunning. And the other—even Fox News. So I think, you know, there is a new vibe in Washington. I only call it that. I mean, it's not a strategic thing, but I think there's a vibe which says, you know—and I think even the Wall Street Journal said there wasn't anyone at the meeting the other day that thought continuing the war was a good idea. And so I don't think Trump—we don't know what hold Netanyahu has over Trump exactly—but I don't know that it's a sort of open-and-shut case that he will do what Netanyahu wants.

#Glenn

So what could happen?

#Alastair Crooke

I just think that, you know, I imagine that he thinks he can just go back to the MOU as it was left, and that he can just take it up and say, well, we're negotiating on that. I don't believe that. I don't think that that's possible. I don't think it's possible because he discredited it, discredited the whole thing so completely, and because he lied about it and continued to lie about it and walked back every provision in it. I don't think—why would the Iranians just simply go back to this? Why would they agree to a halt in the war simply for America perhaps to rearm and re-prepare and come back in September and decide, now the weather was cooler, if they could do some military operation in the area?

I think the Iranians probably wouldn't accept that so easily. So, and, you know, this whole question of language—I wrote about, you know, I mean, the whole language. I mean, I'm shocked when I hear what they're saying on Fox News and things like that. They're all evil. They're all just a gang of thugs. They're not really human beings. I mean, this Manichaeism, I mean, it's so powerful. And I've always remembered it from earlier. I mean, think back to Carl Schmitt and Leo Strauss. They always said the meaning was to blacken your enemies so completely, so thoroughly, that no one could negotiate with them. It was not possible to negotiate with them because they're evil. How do you sit down with evil? How do you allow evil to emerge, if you like, in a stronger position?

You don't. And that was their purpose. And, of course, Israel plays that tune all the time: Iranians, evil, evil, they have to be defeated totally, completely. But, I mean, it does stop your ability to negotiate anything, particularly with a sophisticated country like Iran, by just saying they're so evil. And so that, taken with the sort of widening of the regional war, means that I don't think—unless Trump did one thing, which would be to provide real concessions, major concessions on Hormuz and on Lebanon and all of these other areas, and front-load it, and offer it in advance—because no one believes him when he says, you know, whether things work out, you get all your money, blah, blah, blah.

I mean, it's just no one buys that, either in Russia, China, or in Iran anymore. I mean, the American ability to negotiate in the old-fashioned diplomatic idea of this mission, I think, is gone. I mean, we're in a new era. Everyone knows he doesn't pay any attention to laws or international law or norms or Congress. So he does what he wants. And so he's made sure his animus towards Iran and everything Iran stands for. So why would you negotiate? So I don't honestly know what we're going to do in those circumstances. I mean, beyond unpredictable, he's not altogether that. So we have to wait and see. I mean, I'll be there tomorrow, and then we may learn a little more.

#Glenn

I often cite the work of Walter Lippmann on propaganda because he tended to focus a lot on this framing of good versus evil. He made a point that it was a great way of mobilizing the public and resources for war. But once it was time to embrace a workable peace, it essentially made it impossible, because once you portray your opponent as pure evil, how can you possibly make compromise? How can you see things from their position? You know, you can't put yourself in the

shoes of evil. So, so he, yeah, this was his main concern looking back at, you know, World War One, the Bolshevik Revolution, you know, and the Russian Civil War. It was essentially the conclusion in most of these wars, the danger of portraying your opponent as being this pure evil. Unfortunately, we do it with Iran, the Russians, and I think this kind of propaganda, it's coming back to harm us when it's time to make peace.

#Alastair Crooke

I would just, if I just quickly intervene, I think this is really an important question. Michael Vlahos has looked at one. But my question is, when did this occur? Because after all, I mean, America was founded as, I won't say messianic, although it was partly messianic, but a millenarian society that was the redeemer nation, bringing liberty and democracy and all these benefits to the world. And at some point, it turned radically Manichaeian, black and white. The most obvious occasion of this was not with Trump, but Biden. I don't know if you remember when he was in Prague Castle, and then certainly afterwards at Independence Hall, when he was speaking and the whole thing was in some somber red light. It was really, you know, a sinister-looking aesthetic.

That he spoke in front of this symbolic place to say that, you know, Putin was evil, Russia was evil, and we were the light and the good, saving civilization. I mean, when did this actually happen? And I don't know. But it's an important question, it seems to me, that America slipped into this. Was it with 9/11 or something else that it changed? I don't know. Anyway, that's just a by-the-by. But it's an important aspect, I think, what you said before about the consequences of it. Because it's not just Iraq. I mean, it's the same with Russia, obviously. China too, but in a different way. But, you know, I mean, the West is just isolating itself into this little bubble, this, you know, retort, sealed retort. Also, we are virtuous and we are the good, and everywhere outside of us, there seems to be evil and bad, and we can't talk to them and we won't deal with them.

#Glenn

I suspect the post-Cold War order contributed to some extent, because if you form a world order based on hegemony and you essentially make the argument that the hegemon is benign, it will serve the benefit of all. You essentially make liberal democracy a hegemonic norm. And I think this probably contributed, well, at least to some extent, because you usually have two ways of understanding the world. One, you would see the international distribution of power creating power competition, but then you would recognize that peace means to put yourself in the shoes of the opponent, to figure out where you can compromise.

But if you see the world as being this eternal character of states that determine whether or not they're peaceful, well, that was the entire ideology after the Cold War. That is the democratic peace theory. That is, you know, because we're liberal democracies, we're more peaceful. So I think initially there was a—you can argue it came from a good place—that is the argument that we're going to pursue security in a positive-sum game. We're just going to promote democracy and human

rights, and then the world will become more peaceful. I mean, this was a very pervasive ideology for hegemony.

But what you essentially do is you say it's the internal character of states. You will always see the weakness in others. So you will attribute goodness to yourself and evil to others. So if it's the internal character of states that creates peace or war, then it's essentially all other states that either have to be converted, they have to be contained or defeated, because the era of mutual understanding and compromise is essentially appeasement. Why would good values seek to compromise with bad values? And I think this is at least part of the hegemonic piece, I think, made it too ideological, perhaps.

#Alastair Crooke

When we did the first talks with the IRA, long, long ago, and, you know, we sat both in a room together, the anger on both sides, and we thought that that could, you know, lead to some sort of solution, just getting them together. Actually, it did the opposite. It was a disaster. It just confirmed in each their prejudice.

#Glenn

So it started again.

#Alastair Crooke

And they looked very much at the whole question of, you know, why don't you sit down and say what your history is, how you understand your history, what you see to be the future. And they said, "Don't be so silly. You'll never accept that. You will just refuse it. Our history, that was the catch itself." But after a long discussion, they did. And so you have two completely incompatible notions of history and incompatible visions of the future. That wasn't the point. The point was, and this is what's relevant to the situation today, the point was that at that point, you got to the point where you could say, "Look, I don't accept this man's version of history. I don't accept their vision for the future. But I do accept that this is a valid exposition of his people's interests." And if both sides could accept that the other had a point, we don't agree with it. We think it's totally wrong.

#Glenn

But only then does politics become possible.

#Alastair Crooke

The acceptance that the other person has a position made it possible.

#Glenn

If you don't accept that the other person has a position, that they're just evil, then politics doesn't become possible. Just think back in the '90s. You would be able to say things which were common sense. For example, with the Russians, you could say, well, what are the strategic interests and security concerns of the Russians? And you would have military intelligence and political leaders arguing, well, their main concern would be NATO expansion. Oh, and they might react quite negatively to this if this is what we do. This was common sense. Many people would say this. If you would repeat that today, there will be huge consequences, because you can't recognize that the opponent has security concerns, at least not being triggered by us.

And the idea that they would respond to this, this would be dismissed quite quickly as some form of attempt to legitimize their policy. So it's very—I mean, if we look through the work of Kissinger, a lot of the things he would have argued wouldn't be possible to say in the open anymore. But I wanted to just circle a bit back to what you spoke before about, the Israelis wanting the US to go after Iranian infrastructure because I see Trump has taken again to social media. He's making this point that, well, he made some AI artwork on bombing Kharg Island. This is apparently what state leaders do these days. They put out AI pictures on social media about bombing infrastructure. But again, he can retreat into his own reality if he prefers to.

But I'm also wondering, what are the possible risks here, though? Because only that strike by Yemen into Saudi Arabia's oil infrastructure, I mean, it's not just the whole disruption to the markets. It could be the Gulf states, you know, retreating from the US-led alliance system. I mean, it could be the petrodollar at stake. And just, you know, a few—I wouldn't say minor strikes. It was quite a powerful one. But there seems to be a lot at stake here. I was just wondering, because I'm trying to assess whether or not the concerns from Trump are genuine, I'm just wondering what is at stake here if Trump decides to go down this path that is not just posting his AI pictures, but actually starts carpet bombing Kharg Island, for example, which is critical for Iran's oil exports?

#Alastair Crooke

It is partly, I mean, it is, you know, it's certainly a terminal. I mean, that's not where the oil fields originate. Often people think they are in Kharg Island. They're not. And so it's just a terminal. And I don't think it will be impossible to sort of adapt that. I think the main thing is that by Kharg Island is, you know, the stupidity of this idea. I mean, how would you get your troops there? You're going to sail them down. It's the other end of Hormuz, far end of Hormuz, about 400 to 500 kilometers down. How are you going to get them there? Are you going to fly them in? Is there a landing? Where would you land them? You know, Kharg Island comes under complete fire control of Iran from the cliffs opposite.

#Glenn

I've actually been to Kharg Island.

#Alastair Crooke

So, you know, there, the terrain's full of tunnels, full of artillery. So you come under full artillery control. Same goes for the Straits of Hormuz. The temperatures—I think the Americans would melt in them if they did it now. I mean, you know, we're melting in Italy, but it's more worse in Iran at the moment, and the humidity is incredible. They need eight liters of water a day to survive in the heat. Where does the supply come from? How are you going to get them back? You know, I don't think this has ever really been thought through, except by the people who know these things. But I don't think this is thought through by Trump, or by even probably most of his team, the people who really advise him on Iran, according to Maggie Haberman.

She was asked in this interview, who are the people who really advise him? And she thought about that and she said, well, I think Susie Wiles, she has a lot of influence because he really trusts her. She's the chief of staff, former chief of staff of Ron DeSantis. And then she said, and then I would say, it's Witkoff, Jared Kushner. And when she was asked, what about Hegseth? Uh, she said, what happens with Hegseth is he usually comes to those meetings with General Caine, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. They come together. And so Hegseth sort of stands back, doesn't engage in the real question of, is this a good policy or a bad policy for the United States?

He just sort of brings in Caine, who is, you know—and Trump loves real generals, you know, on Central Casting, as he says. So he has a general there, and the general then just swarms him with technical things. So yes, of course, there could be a major, major attack on Iran, but it would require the following tanker aircraft to be positioned. We'd need the following missiles to be pre-positioned. So he talks technology, and we all know Trump gets bored with that in about one nanosecond. So, you know, I don't think so. It looks like the burden of advice comes from Kushner, who has a direct line back to Tel Aviv. So I don't know that he, you know, so what's been said to him?

#Glenn

Oh, yeah, you know, it's easy.

#Alastair Crooke

We have control of the airspace, dominate the airspace. I mean, this makes it very unclear. Now, the other thing the audience should know, because—and we've written about it; I haven't written about it, but Aisling has—a long piece about the nuclear issue in the Hebrew press and the military and security commentators in Israel. And it is stunning because there are many of them, Ronen Bergman and all of these people, obviously communicating with each other. I mean, they're very similar in the

line that they're taking. And they're all just saying, you know, this whole nuclear thing was a lie. There never was a threat. There is no threat. Iran has never—hasn't got a weapon. And they're adamant, and they're adamant that, you know, Fordow and all of this was never destroyed.

#Glenn

You know, obliterate it.

#Alastair Crooke

I mean, it's surface damage here. All shot. But... it's extraordinary to read the sort of vehemence with which they say, you know, Netanyahu has just lied and lied and lied about this. And they give examples. And he said, you know, when he wanted to support Trump's position that they'd obliterated these infrastructures, Fordow, Isfahan, et cetera, in June, no one would sign up to it. I mean, they're saying this explicitly in the Israeli Hebrew press. No one would sign up for it. And finally Netanyahu was trying to—the only people he could find was the Atomic Energy Commission—and saying, "Will you sign up to it?" They said no. And then there was finally a sort of compromise last sentence, ambiguous sentence put in it.

And they use this to support, say, yes, this was a productive, you know, raid, and it set their facility back. But the uniform language—I, you know, I really think this document that we put together is so important, and it should be seen and read by everyone, even the people in Washington that are giving advice on these things, because these are the experts on it in Israel, and this is what they are saying. And I'm sure Gabbard, if she was still in office, Tulsi Gabbard, the former national security—what she calls herself—she's the national intelligence coordinator. It would have been of great interest for her to see this. And I don't think this is picked up in Washington. You know, Netanyahu's on his own, and he's making these comments.

And I'm sure he's going to repeat them tomorrow in Washington. "Oh yes, you know, it's moving towards a new—you know, they're restarting the program. We've got new intelligence that shows that." And all uniformly, the experts in Israel are saying, "This is BS, not true." Have a look at it in your time. It's on the web. It's on the Substack about the nuclear. But you can read all of it, who's saying what, and go to your own conclusion. But it's pretty devastating that this whole thing is actually a setup. And largely, you know, we're just waiting now for the next chapter of the setup to be unfolded in Washington. But, you know, will Washington—will Rubio and others sort of dig this or bother to read or anything like this? I don't know. Who knows?

#Glenn

Well, the threat of nuclear proliferation or humanitarian issues, it's always a good way of selling a war. The problem is, once you've sold a war, it's becoming difficult to walk this back. Anyway, it just seems like the United States—well, at least Trump—has painted himself in a corner here, because

going after the infrastructure is going to be problematic. A ground invasion, as you said, you can't do supply and support. I don't see any good story here for what a victory could actually look like. On the other hand, diplomacy is also going to become increasingly difficult because, as you said before, why would Iran even talk to the United States anymore?

At least, if I was Iranian, I would demand a buy-in. That is something immediate they have to hand over, for example, unfreeze some money or something, just so there's some cost to keep abandoning diplomacy all the time, because handing over this escalation control to the Americans, allowing them to decide when to start bombing, when it should stop, all of this, this is very dangerous for the Iranians. That is, if the U.S. thinks it can just turn off the war whenever it wants, it's going to go into war with much greater ease. So I think... Anyways, I think the EU has put itself in a very difficult spot now. Do you have any final thoughts before we wrap up?

#Alastair Crooke

Yeah, you are absolutely right about this. They have escalation control in Iran now, and they're not going to sort of give it up and allow the United States to say, okay, now it's a period of ceasefire where we all rearm. Now we'll go back to war. Now we'll have a ceasefire. Now we'll go back to war. I don't think they have understood very clearly. This is an existential war for Iran. And so I think they will keep their escalatory options. They may even go to war and escalate the war. I mean, they are keeping cards in reserve. And it's not that, you know, Israel is exempt. It's just its time hasn't come yet before that card might need to be played. So there's a lot further to go. If Israel really wants to get involved in it, I think Iran is ready for that. It's not a threat to them. Actually, it is something that has been in the plan from the beginning.

#Glenn

Well, Alistair, thank you so much for your time. I almost kept you for a full hour, so thanks again. My pleasure.

#Alastair Crooke

Always a pleasure to join you. Thank you.