



The Untold History of the United States & Nuclear Weapons | With Peter Kuznick

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Zain Raza (ZR): Welcome to Know Your Stuff: a program aimed at educating on historical developments and societal concepts. My name is Zain Raza. Today I'm joined by Peter Kuznick, Professor of History and the Director of Nuclear Studies at the American University. He's also the author of numerous books and the book that we will be specifically discussing today is called *The Untold History of the United States*. Peter Kuznick wrote this book together with film director and producer, Oliver Stone. Peter Kuznick thank you so much for joining us today, I'm looking forward to this discussion.

Peter Kuznick (PK): Sure, glad to be with you.

ZR: So let's start with the book that you co-authored with Oliver Stone. Can you introduce the book? Talk about why you decided to write it and also list some facts that do not appear in mainstream historical discourse.

PK: Oliver and I were having dinner in 2007. We were talking about history and politics - like we always do - and in the middle of it Oliver says to me, "Peter let's do a documentary". And he had the idea we would do a one-hour documentary on the origins of the Cold War and the atomic bombings in 1945.

I went to see him in New York the next week and now he had the idea for a 10-hour, 10-part documentary film series. We ended up doing 12 hours and midway through that process we decided we needed to add a book, because the amount of information we could convey in 58 minutes and 30 seconds was very frustrating - even if Oliver spoke quickly. So we ended up - initially we thought we would maybe have a coffee table book like the Ken Burns books - but then the publishers all wanted a serious book. Which I was much happier to do. So we ended up writing an 800-page book that I've got here, I think you showed it: *The Untold History of the United States* and we also put out *The Concise Untold History of the United States*, which is not an abridgement, it's really based on the documentary scripts.

You know Oliver's got a controversial reputation and the films like JFK - we knew we would get attacked, so we've got more than 100 pages of footnotes in the big book. We've now finished writing the new edition, which comes out in early April and it's going to be more than 900 pages – we added a 150-page chapter on what's happened in the world between 2012 and 2019. So it takes us right up to the present.

So the initial idea was it was going to be a history of the American Empire and national security state. And we called it *The Untold History of the United States*; we grappled with different titles, tried to figure out on the best one and we decided this. And it starts really in the late 19th Century. One of the turning points in American history is the Spanish American War in 1898, followed by the US occupation of Philippines in 1899 and the massacre that goes on there for the next few years.

So the United States began to change, whereas the United States was once a leading democratic – even pro-revolutionary nation having been born in revolution itself – the United States gradually becomes the world's leading counter-revolutionary force. Then the United States starts intervening in country after country. Initially, mostly in Central America and South America, but after the US involvement in World War I the US starts to take more of a global role and New York replaces London as the centre of world finance.

But the real big turning point for us is with World War II – not only the defeat of fascism and Japanese militarism – but the use of the atomic bomb and then the start of the Cold War. So the world dramatically changes. The United States begins to acquire a real global empire, we get a lot of bases from the Brits in exchange for the warships that we were giving them and we create this global network.

By 1948 you've got George Kennan, the architect of the Cold War, the architect of the US containment policy, writing a secret memo in which he says, “we've got 6.3% of the world's population yet we control 50% of the world's wealth. The challenge that confronts us in this coming period is to maintain that position of disparity. We're not going to do so with idealistic slogans and freedom of the press and stressing freedom, we're only going to do that with hard power concepts.” And that really is going to define the US approach towards the Cold War. In 1949 in August the Soviets test their atomic bomb, in 1949 the Chinese Revolution occurs and the formation of NATO and we're going to see the hardening of those lines. In 1950 to 1953 we've got the Korean war, which still has not officially ended, and so then we go to this period in the 50s.

In fact it's interesting that a year ago, 2018 January, the Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists moved the hands of the Doomsday Clock (to) 2 minutes before midnight – the closest we've been since the early 1950s – and what triggered in 1952-53 was the US tests of the hydrogen bomb and then Soviet tests of the proto-hydrogen bomb in 1953. So they moved the hands to 2 minutes before midnight then and now we're back at 2 minutes before midnight

So these are the kinds of issues that Oliver and I are looking at. The history of the possession of the planet. The consequences of the Pax Americana in which the United States - well if you look at it globally - the richest eight people in the world have more wealth than the poorest 3.6 billion people - and that's the crazy world that we've constructed. A world in which two countries, the United States and Russia, control 93% of the world's nuclear

weapons. Two people, Donald Trump and Vladimir Putin, have veto power over the continued existence of our species. These are the things that trouble us.

The fact that the US is now bombing nine countries – who does such things? The US has an empire with 800 bases. So we get at this whole question of American exceptionalism, which is at the core of so much of what America does. The idea that the United States is not only different from all other countries but the United States is better than all other countries. The idea that the United States – whereas other countries are motivated by wanting more territory or power or political control or military strength – the United States only wants to spread freedom and democracy. That's the vision that Americans are taught from the beginning – that we're benevolent, we're altruistic, we're generous, we're peace loving. The reality is unfortunately very, very different. And so in that kind of world we're trying to make sense out of what's happening, and what should be happening instead.

ZR: So talk about the sourcing of your book. How did you source your book and make your historical case as opposed to how traditional mainstream historical books are written?

PK: I would not say that we're so fundamentally different, because academia in the United States and much of the rest of the world is really a bastion of progressivism. Our interpretations are much more in line with left-wing academics in the United States and the left wing dominates most historical professions certainly, and a lot of other important social sciences, arts and humanities; so we're not really out of step with them. What we're out of step with is what's taught in the high schools. What's the vision you get on television. And so it's fairly traditional in that sense. We had eight of my PhD students on the payroll as researchers – we were just devouring everything. We did a lot of documentary research also, in terms of documents and the National Security archive and the Cold War international history project, there are a lot of very, very good sources out there. So the problem wasn't finding material. The problem was shaping it into a narrative that made sense and one that could appeal to people.

So what we did is we got a 12-hour 12-part documentary film series that's out, it was on Showtime here for 10 hours and then it played all over the world – well, except for China. But then the big book is out in about 20 languages and we're still working on more. The small but *Concise Untold History (Book)* is out in a lot of languages and I think that's the one that is in Germany – this one. And then we've got the second volume of our four-volume young readers' edition just came out this past week. So that's for middle school and younger high school students. Now we've also got a graphic novel on the way. So what we're doing is we're trying to reach people any possible way we can, get them to just start questioning more, start thinking, developing counter-narratives, different ways of looking at the history of our planet for the past 120+ years.

ZR: You mentioned nuclear weapons and the fact that the atomic scientists have moved the Clock 2 minutes to midnight. I want to get to where it all started and that's one of the chapters of your book that deals with that: Japan. What really happened during the end of World War II when the atomic weapons were dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki? The perception here in Germany is, it was essential for the US to do that so the war could end. However you provide a different perspective in your book. Could you please talk about that?

PK: Well my students have to sit through a 12-hour lecture on this topic. I'll try to consolidate it a little bit. The basic facts that people need to know: after the battle of Saipan in July of 1944, the Japanese knew they were defeated, they had no more prospects for traditional military victory. They began doing secret studies about how to end the war. In February 1945 Prince Konoe, the former Prime Minister, wrote a memo to the Emperor saying, "I regret to tell you but defeat is inevitable. The real challenge we have is to figure out how to prevent the communist revolution in the event of our surrender."

US intelligence had been basically saying the same thing, which show that their transportation system was collapsing, their food supply was shrinking, access to energy was diminishing. The Japanese were, in a lot of ways, defeated but the American strategy was that we would have to have a blockade, have to bomb their cities, and we have to invade, and so the belief in the United States – this is the public misperception – was that, if the United States had not dropped the atomic bombs, then the US would have had to invade Japan and Truman writes in his memoirs that General Marshall told him that a half million boys would be lost in the invasion, some estimates were a million. So in that situation that was a justification, that the atomic bombings were actually a humane act. That they not only saved a half million American lives but millions of Japanese who would have been killed in the invasion. So Truman did a great thing by using the atomic bombs rather than invading.

The reality is totally different – 180 degrees different – the reality is the Japanese were already militarily defeated and were searching for a way to end the war. We know this because it broke in the Japanese codes early on in the war, we were intercepting their telegrams, and the Japanese had decided that their best way to get better surrender terms – the surrender terms were a big issue. The US was demanding unconditional surrender – which to Japan meant the execution of the Emperor as a war criminal. To the Japanese the Emperor was a god and the MacArthur's southwest command issues a background report in the summer of 45 that says the execution of the Emperor to them would be like the crucifixion of Christ to us – all would fight to die like ants. We knew that the Japanese would never accept unconditional surrender in that way. So one way to end the war was to change the surrender terms.

Roosevelt died on April 12 1945. The person who should have replaced him was his former Vice President Henry Wallace. Not to get too convoluted here, but the Democratic convention on July 20 1944 – Gallup issued a poll asking people who they wanted on the ticket as Vice President; 65% of the American voters said they wanted Henry Wallace back on the ticket as Vice President, 2% said they wanted Harry Truman. But the party bosses controlled the convention and they put Truman there instead of Wallace.

Oliver and I argued that had Wallace been back on the ticket as Vice President, become President on April 12, there would have been no atomic bombing of World War II and possibly no Cold War. But that's another discussion. Truman is in power now. All of Truman's advisors except for Jimmy Byrnes are urging him to change the surrender terms (and) let the Japanese know that they can keep the Emperor. Truman refuses to do that. Byrnes told him he would be politically crucified if he let the Japanese keep the Emperor. So that's one way to end the war sooner. And we know that because of the cables – so the Japanese strategy, rather ill-conceived, was to try to get the Soviets to intervene on their behalf to get them (Japan) better surrender terms.

What they didn't know is that we had a deal, and at Yalta Roosevelt finally got Stalin to agree to come into the Pacific War three months after the end of the war in Europe. In exchange for that the Russians were going to get a lot of concessions that they wanted. So the Russians didn't have any interest in helping the Japanese get better surrender terms before Russia got into the war. But the other way to end the war was to wait for the Soviet invasion which was scheduled to begin around August 8/August 9; three months after the end of the war in Europe. US intelligence and British intelligence had been saying for months, as soon as the Soviets entered the war that all Japanese will know that further resistance is futile. That it will end the war almost immediately with Soviet entry itself. So the Soviets do enter, but to back up even a little bit more, Truman arrives at Potsdam – I think it was July 15. Stalin assures him that the Russians are coming in on schedule. Truman writes in his diary that night, “Stalin will be in the Jap war by August 15. Fini (finish) Japs when that occurs”. He (Truman) knew the Japanese were finished when the Russians (the Soviets) invaded. He writes to his wife Bess the next day and says, “The Russians are coming in, we'll end the war a year sooner now, think of all the kids who won't be killed”. Truman knew that. And Truman refers on July 18 to the intercepted Japanese telegram as, “a telegram from the Jap Emperor asking for peace”.

So clearly the American leaders all knew that the Japanese were finished. That there were two ways to end the war without using the atomic bombs, and that the Soviets knew better than anybody how desperate the Japanese were to surrender – because former Prime Minister Hirota had met a couple of times with the Soviet Ambassador in Tokyo, Malik, and Malik writes back to the Kremlin that the Japanese are desperate to surrender. This is in June and July.

So the atomic bomb - then the question is, so why does the United States use the bomb? Truman is not bloodthirsty, he's not Hitler; but the United States' probable motive in using the bomb was to send a message to the Soviets that they mess with the US plans in Europe or in Asia, this is what's going to happen to them. And that's exactly how all the Soviet leaders interpreted it: that the bomb was not dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the bombs were dropped on Moscow and St Petersburg (*metaphorically speaking in terms of sending a message to the Soviet Union*). So that was really what was going on. So it's a key factor in the start of the Cold War. Because the US and the Soviets were still allies at that point and there were a lot of forces that were trying to hold us together.

The Cold War was a disastrous period in human history. We are lucky to have survived it. And the US then has an atomic monopoly, which we continue to build up. Soviets test their bomb in August '49 and we've got the race for the hydrogen bomb.

And then we got to the point ... I used to take students every summer on a study abroad trip to Hiroshima and Nagasaki – it's a class we offer at American University – and I always find myself writing down the same inscription from the display at the Hiroshima A-bomb museum, that by 1985 the world had accumulated the equivalent of 1.47 million Hiroshima bombs. We had 70 000 nuclear weapons. What do we need 1.5 million Hiroshima bombs for? How many times over do we have to kill everybody on this planet? And we still have that capability. If we've got some time I'd be happy to talk about nuclear winter and the current state of the nuclear insanity.

ZR: So I want to summarise this as short as I can. If I understood you correctly, an undemocratic leader in Truman comes into power, sidelining a progressive, and this leader President Truman knew that there are better terms of surrender, there's a better way to go around it – yet chooses to bomb Hiroshima and Nagasaki, thereby igniting the Cold War and the situation we are in today. Is that a fair way to put it?

PK: It's actually the worst. Truman knew and said on at least three occasions, explicitly, that he understood he was beginning a process that could end all life on the planet. His first big briefing on the bomb – he was Vice President for 82 days, nobody had enough regard for him to even tell him that we were building an atomic bomb. He doesn't even find out about the bomb project until after he's sworn in at the emergency Cabinet meeting on the night of April 12. Secretary of War Stimson mentions it to him, but he says, I was distracted I didn't really pay any attention. The next day Jimmy Byrnes flies up from South Carolina and he briefs Truman about what's going on. Truman writes in his memoir, he says, Jimmy Byrnes said, "a weapon great enough to destroy the whole world". Truman gets a full briefing on April 25th from General Groves, the head of the Manhattan Project and Secretary of War Stimson and Truman comments after that that Stimson said, "Even if we have the bomb maybe we should never use it because it could end up ending life on the planet". Truman says, "I agreed with him".

Then when Truman is in Potsdam on July 25th he gets a full briefing on how powerful the bomb test in Alamogordo, New Mexico was and Truman writes in his journal that night, "we've discovered the most terrible bomb in history". He says, "this may be the fire destruction prophecy in the Euphrates Valley Era after Noah and his fabulous Ark." To kill hundreds of thousands of innocent people in Hiroshima and Nagasaki, women and children is a war crime. But to threaten or begin a process that you know can end all life on the planet goes far beyond that and that's the reality that we've lived with ever since.

So the United States had eight five-star admirals and generals in 1945; seven of them are on record saying that the atomic bombings were either militarily unnecessary, morally reprehensible, or both. Truman's personal Chief of Staff was Admiral William Leahy who was also Chair of the meetings of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Leahy said the Japanese were already defeated before the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. He said, "Use of this horrific weapon put us on the moral level of the barbarians of the Dark Ages". Gerald MacArthur who wanted to use atomic bombs in Korea, MacArthur said, "the Japanese would have surrendered in May – three months earlier – if we told them they could keep the Emperor".

Eisenhower was briefed by Stimson at Potsdam about the imminent use of the bombs and Eisenhower said, "I got very depressed, and then he asked me for my opinion, so I told him my war in Europe was already over" he said, "but listening to you I got so depressed." He said, "First of all, the Japanese were already defeated and there was no need for such a weapon. Number two, I hated to see our country be the first to use such a weapon". But we can look at the same kinds of comments from the other top military leaders.

And what finally ends the war is not the atomic bomb it was the Soviet invasion. That is what changed the equation. The US had been firebombing Japanese cities for months now. We had

firebombed more than 100 Japanese cities. The destruction reached as high as 99.5% in the city of Toyama. The Japanese accepted that we could firebomb and wipe out their cities. They accepted that. To them, it didn't make a big difference if it was one plane and one bomb or 200 planes and 10 000 bombs, they accepted we could wipe out their cities.

What changed the equation was the vast Red Army that they had dreaded all along invading Manchuria and Manchuro islands and Sakhalin. And as Prime Minister Suzuki says on August 10th, he was asked why the Japanese had to surrender so quickly, he said, "well they've already blown through our Kwantung army in Manchuria and they've taken Karafuto. Tomorrow they'll be in Hokkaido – the foundation of Japan will be destroyed. We'll have to surrender while we can surrender to the Americans". And so the United States does let them keep the Emperor ultimately, because it was in the US interests to maintain stability afterwards. But if you go to the official US Navy museum in Washington DC, it's got a display now that says, correctly, that there was almost no discussion in the Japanese Cabinet of the atomic bombs. The discussion all focussed on the Soviet invasion and that's what convinced them to end the war. And we knew that, our intelligence was saying that that would be the case. So the world gets off to a pretty horrific start in 1945, the end of the war and the beginning of the nuclear arms race.

ZR: Let's pick up on that. Since World War II, even though there was a big escalation in the nuclear arsenal and many more countries joined the club, there were certain safeguards when it came to ballistic missiles, nuclear weaponry, that were put in place. Can you talk a bit about the history of all these treaties that were signed and whether they achieved their goal, and what their statuses are today?

PK: Well there were the SALT treaties. The major treaties were the ABM Treaty (the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty) which the US abrogated in 2002. The Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty – now the Europeans understand how important that was - because you have the Tomahawk and Pershing missiles the US put into Germany and other parts of Europe – and the Soviets had the SS20s. And if those were fired at each other we had about a 10-minute warning time on that. At least (with) the ICBMs you have a 30-minute warning time, but when you have such a short window you've got to decide immediately, and the intelligence is often flawed, as we have seen and we can talk about.

So the INF Treaty was an important one – Donald Trump has now announced that he wants to withdraw from the INF Treaty also. So you've got the ABM Treaty gone. The INF Treaty is going to be gone. The first phone conversation between Putin and Donald Trump after Trump was elected, Putin says to him, "We need to talk about extending the New START Treaty." The New START Treaty limited the number of nuclear weapons and launchers. So that was the last restraint on a nuclear arms race, nuclear anarchy. Putin says we need to extend it when it expires in 2021. Trump puts down the phone and asks his advisors in the room, "What's the New START Treaty?" They tell him what it is he gets back on the phone, "No, no we don't like that one either. We're not going to extend that."

That's what's so frightening about what's going on now. Trump says, "What is the point of having nuclear weapons if we can't use them?" To the sane human being that means let's get rid of them. To Donald Trump it means let's make them more usable. So in February of 2018, Trump issued his new Nuclear Posture Review, which not only talks about developing new

weapons, it talks about making smaller weapons that will be more usable. But you can't just blame this on Trump because it's got a lot of co-conspirators when it comes to wanting to end life on this planet. Among them was Barack Obama.

Remember in 2009, Obama won the Nobel Peace Prize for his Prague speech calling for nuclear abolition. You know, we thought that was strange at the time – a man waging two wars and bombing other countries would get the Nobel Peace Prize – but it was a recognition of his call for nuclear abolition. Well, as he says in that speech, the US won't be the first country to abolish its nuclear weapons, it will be the last country. And he was certainly true to that word. Obama began a 30-year modernisation program. It was supposed to be a trillion dollar modernisation program with every aspect of the nuclear arsenal. Now the official estimate is 1.2 trillion, the unofficial estimate is 1.7 trillion. The goal of that was to make nuclear weapons more efficient and more usable, and so this is Obama's legacy, which Trump has now picked up on and is doubling down on.

So in response to the American modernisation all nine nuclear powers are modernising their nuclear arsenals. In Vladimir Putin's State of the Nation address, March 1 2018, Putin announced that Russia has developed five new nuclear weapons, all of which can circumvent US missile defense. But we see this everywhere. This march – rush – towards insanity on a global scale. We have the nuclear insanity and they are going to probably move the hands of the Doomsday Clock even closer to midnight on January 24.

So we have that coming. But we also have the climate insanity. The experts had said there's been a 1 degree Celsius rise in global warming since the Industrial Revolution. The leading experts said the planet can tolerate the damage of a 2 degree Celsius rise at most. If we go beyond that then we're going to look at: a 3-degree Celsius rise means much of India and China becomes uninhabitable. It means that the coastal cities have to be abandoned, means that the polar ice caps melt, island nations will be submerged below the water. It will be a disaster. Now a lot of the experts are saying we hope for a 3 degrees Celsius rise. Some are saying that (it's) 4 degrees Celsius, the World Bank and others are predicting that it could be as much as 4 degrees Celsius. Five degrees, and human civilisation is finished.

So do we have any kind of real leadership about this – world leadership on any of these issues? That's what troubles me so much. I look at our leaders and they are all pygmies – they are all nationalists – Trump's slogan "Make America Great Again", endorsing American nationalism (you know). Putin might be a little bit better but he's not providing the kind of planetary leadership that we need. Xi Jinping – the stuff he's doing – the Chinese are doing in the South China Sea makes no sense to me: this nine-dash line – there are enough wealth and resources to be shared. But we have nobody speaking for humanity- we have nobody speaking for the planet.

I just got back from India and I was going to meet with Rahul Gandhi. We weren't able to do it. There's new elections in India in May. There's a good chance that Rahul Gandhi at the head of a broad progressive coalition could become the next Prime Minister. India will soon outstrip China in terms of population. By 2030, India will be the second biggest economy in the world. And India's got traditions, going back to Gandhi, going back to Nehru. Nehru not only led the third world movement against the US and Soviet blocks, he also led the

movement for nuclear abolition to stop nuclear testing. India's got these proud traditions and so what we need is some leaders. I can see an axis between Rahul Gandhi and Moon Jae-in.

Why did we have progress in India? Not because of the clown in Washington, you know Diaper Donald, not because we have progress in Korea because the Candlelight Revolution that brought Moon Jae-in to power, and Moon Jae-in took tremendous initiative towards North Korea and the North Koreans responded. Trump tried to sabotage it initially. We thought a year ago that we were on the verge of war. The head of the Council on Foreign Relations said there was a 50% chance of the US going to war with North Korea. There was that dangerous situation. But Moon Jae-in took the initiative and I could see a force, a counterforce, of nations wanting to really support peace and development and disarmament beginning to emerge, maybe around Rahul Gandhi and Moon Jae-in and some others coming on board with that. Rather than the war-mongering that we see in the planet now.

ZR: Given that there's a complete media blackout on this issue – there are no discussions or analysis or solutions being presented. Could you quickly talk about what individuals could do to help make people conscious about this? And connect the nuclear movement of the 80s and what young people could learn from that today. In five minutes please.

PK: The nuclear movement in the 80s is a good example. Because we had the beginning of what felt like then the new Cold War. After the period after the Cuban missile crisis until the election of Ronald Reagan there was a period of relative quiet in which nuclear issues kind of disappeared. Then when Reagan came in there and talked about his version of the axis – the Evil Empire – and building up of American defenses and American nuclear capabilities and the Russians responding and the sense of a new Cold War all over the planet again, the world responded with a tremendous anti-nuclear movement. My friend Jonathan Schell wrote a fabulous book called, *The Fate of the Earth*. The march of a million people in Central Park, anti-nuclear march, in Central Park, New York. Among the participants was the young Columbia undergraduate named Barack Obama who actually marched there – which is why I trusted that he maybe was sincere about wanting to get rid of nuclear weapons. But then we went to sleep after that.

Gorbachev reached out after the meeting at Reykjavik in 1986 we came within one word of abolishing nuclear weapons. If Reagan were willing to limit the testing of Star Wars - his stupid fantasy - and limit it to the laboratory for 10 years Gorbachev was going to sign an agreement to get rid of all nuclear weapons. We came so close in Reykjavik. The INF Treaty was kind of the booby prize for having failed to get rid of nuclear weapons completely.

And since then we thought then with the end of the Cold War in 1991, the fall of the Berlin wall, the end of the Cold War - we were going to have a period of peace and detente. What happens instead? George H.W. Bush praises Gorbachev for his restraint in Germany and Eastern Europe. What does the US do? Invades Panama. The US gets involved & invades in the first Gulf War.

The neocons who were just forming in that period led by Charles Krauthammer - in 1990 Krauthammer writes an article and gives talks, he says, "This is the unipolar moment - the United States is the unipolar force in the world. We are the world's great hegemon. No one can challenge us anywhere." He says "The unipolar moment can last 20 or 30 years". By

2003, after the invasion of Afghanistan, Krauthammer writes a new piece in which he says, “that I underestimated it in 1991, it’s not a unipolar moment it’s a unipolar era. He says, “This can last indefinitely. It can last hundreds of years. The United States will dominate the world.” It got so bad that on January 5th, 2003, the New York Times headline, in its Sunday magazine section (was): “American Empire get used to it”. The neocons were flourishing in the Bush administration, but by 2005 things had gone so poorly in Afghanistan, so poorly in Iraq, that Krauthammer wrote again and said, “I was wrong. The unipolar era and unipolar moment are over - the United States does not have that kind of power and control.”

You know which we’ve seen. The United States has been unable. Yeah, we can invade Grenada in 1983 and defeat a couple of dozen Cuban construction workers and wave the flag and say, “America is back, standing tall and proud on its feet again, the Vietnam syndrome is buried”. We can do that but military solutions don’t work. We got involved in Syria, the secret covert CIA programs, at that the point the New York Times was saying that dozens had died in the Syrian civil war. We fuelled the opposition there, Operation Timber Sycamore. It’s led, in part, to hundreds of thousands of deaths there. When do we learn the lesson? We haven’t learned that lesson.

One person I don’t usually agree with is Samuel Huntington “*The Clash of Civilizations*”, but Huntington had some insights on occasion and he said, “The west won the world not by the superiority of its ideas or values or religion, but by the superior application of organised violence”. Westerners often forget that fact non-westerners never do. We have not learned that lesson, and it doesn’t work at this point. The War on Terror was a disaster, but if you look at the neocons’ hitlist they said, “Well after Afghanistan we go and take Iraq, then we take Syria, then we take Libya, then we do Iran, then we do Somalia.” They had a list and they were all repeating this, this was their mantra. But we’ve seen what that’s produced: chaos, disruption, war, death, poverty, suffering. You know we’ve got to begin thinking in different terms.

ZR: Peter Kuznick, what an interesting discussion! I hope to continue with this in the near future. Thank you so much for your time.

PK: A pleasure - thank you.

ZR: And thank you for joining us today. Don’t forget to subscribe to our YouTube channel and to donate, because if you don’t we won’t be able to produce independent and non-profit news and analysis. My name is Zain Raza. See you guys next time.

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