



Cluster Bombs, NATO Summit & Cold War with China - With Prof. Kuznick

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Zain Raza (ZR): Thank you for tuning in today and welcome back to another episode of The Source. I'm your host Zain Raza and today I'll be talking to Peter Kuznick about the war in Ukraine and the latest developments surrounding China. Peter Kuznick is professor of history and director of the Nuclear Studies Institute at American University. He's also the author of *The Untold History of the United States*, which he wrote together with film director and producer Oliver Stone. Peter Kuznick, welcome back to the show.

Peter Kuznick (PK): Good to see you again, Zain.

ZR: I want to begin this interview with Ukraine and focus on NATO's summit in Vilnius, the Lithuanian capital. NATO's communique after the summit stated that, quote, "Ukraine's future is in NATO", unquote. However, no concrete time plan was given, and instead it was stated that Kiev will be asked to join the military alliance when, quote, "members agree and conditions are met", unquote. On the other hand, after more than a year of opposition, Turkey decided to support Sweden's NATO membership. Can you comment on these geopolitical developments and also why you think that NATO continues to stall on Ukraine's NATO membership?

PK: Well, today the meeting at Vilnius in Lithuania concluded. It was a very important meeting as much for what didn't happen as for what did happen. Zelensky went there, demanding that Ukraine be allowed into NATO immediately. And most of NATO was willing to go along with that. Ironically, it was the United States that put up the impediments. Nobody might have expected that, given the fact that the United States has been the driving force behind everything that's happened with the Ukrainian war. The United States uses NATO as an instrument of American policy. It's been that way since 1949 when NATO was founded. But currently NATO, four years ago, Macron, the French president said NATO was

brain dead. The discussion was NATO did not have a mission. Thank you, Vladimir Putin, for giving NATO a mission. So Putin's invasion on February 24th, 2022 allowed Biden to become the war president he fantasized about being. He mobilized the Europeans. He pulled them together in a way that most people didn't think was possible and probably Putin didn't think was possible. And so the United States has been the driving force behind the revival and the cohesion of NATO. The United States has done this by moral suasion and coercion, but the United States has also done it by taking the lead. So more than half of NATO's funding comes from the United States. The weapons systems are American systems to a large part. And the direction has come from Washington. So with this meeting, though, what Zelensky is counting on was joining NATO immediately because NATO has been doing everything it can to support this war effort. And the United States has been in the forefront of that. We've seen time after time the United States say, No, I'm not going to give that weapons system. And the pressure from the Europeans and the pressure from Ukraine and the pressure from inside the United States; and Biden caves in. The most recent example, that was on the cluster munitions. There's strong opposition in the United States to providing cluster munitions. Why? Because most of the world is against them. More than 120 countries have signed the international ban treaty on providing and using cluster munitions (CCM). We've seen the effects of it. I've seen it in Vietnam. My friends in Vietnam, Project RENEW and other efforts, they're still almost regularly dealing with and removing these unexploded ordnance from the Vietnam War more than 50 years ago. What's been said is that the last person to die in this Ukraine war has not even been born yet. Because with extensive use of cluster munitions, a lot of them don't explode, and then children find them or farmers find them and they get their arms and legs blown off or their eyes blown out or they get killed years later, decades later. So Biden has said all along, we're not going to provide them. And now he's given in. But this has been the case over and over and over again, whether it was tanks, whether it was HIMARS, whether it was air defense systems. Now, the big discussion is – there are two things. One is the F-16 fighter jets, which the United States has given approval for, and eleven countries are now going to begin training the Ukrainian pilots. And even though nobody is actually committed to sending them yet. And the second is the ATACMS missiles. Those are the American army tactical missiles that have a range of 190 to 200 miles. Well, that's very important because it can allow them to hit into Crimea and behind Russian lines. However, they're already getting the missiles from Britain that travel almost 150 miles. And now France just announced at Vilnius that it's going to be providing similar missiles that go 150 miles. But they still want American missiles. And then the German is talking about missiles that go 300 miles. Hopefully that won't happen. Anyway, Zelensky did not get the promise that he wanted about NATO coming, NATO joining immediately. He got various other concessions, but not that. And he said that this is inconceivable and absurd, that NATO is not putting a specific time date on when Ukraine can join NATO. And why did they not do that? The United States and Biden understood, as did France and Germany, that giving Ukraine and having Ukraine join NATO very likely means that the United States and NATO will be at war with Russia and will be committed to defending every inch of prewar Russian pre-war Ukrainian territory, including the Donbas, including Crimea. You know, Biden is an

interesting character. He's a warmonger. He's a hawk. He gives in on every weapons system. He's unified this coalition. However, he doesn't want World War Three with Russia. And he said that from the very beginning that the United States is not going to go to war with Russia and we're not going to create conditions where that's going to be happening. And so he actually put down his foot and said, We are not going to allow Ukraine into NATO immediately. We're going to maybe create a path. The future of Ukraine is of NATO. We know that from 2008, when George W Bush was president, they said that Ukraine's future is in NATO and they never laid out the path. So then they've done a couple of things. They've gone from this Ukraine NATO commission to Ukraine NATO Council, which gives Ukraine equal footing with the NATO powers. They've said that Ukraine, much like Sweden and Finland, doesn't need a membership action plan, that it can become a member without that. But they have still said that Ukraine has to meet certain conditions. It has to democratize. There has to be freedom of the press. It has to get rid of corruption. Ukraine is one of the most corrupt countries in the world. So there are still conditions and they say the future is in NATO. The other thing is that there is pressure to negotiate growing all the time. We could talk about this a little bit more later. But if Ukraine is part of NATO, one of the demands that Russia is making is that Ukraine not be in NATO and Ukraine being neutralized. If Ukraine joins NATO, then that option is off the table and the possibility of a diplomatic solution is off the table. So Ukraine is getting a lot more weapons, more military, more financial aid, but it has not been given that path. And Zelensky was furious. And when he publicly criticized the US and NATO, the Americans were furious with Zelensky for that. Now, they had this kissy make up meeting with Biden and Zelensky, talking about how much they love each other. But the reality is that Ukraine did not get what it wants.

ZR: I would like now to switch to China. US Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen recently met with Chinese officials in Beijing. This move was perceived as stabilizing relations between the US and China, the two of the world's largest economies. However, a few days later, NATO at its summit in Lithuania, which we just talked about, released a communique which NATO stated, quote, The People's Republic of China's malicious hybrid and cyber operations and its confrontational rhetoric and disinformation targets, allies and harms the alliance's security", unquote. Regarding Russia and China NATO went on to further state, quote, "the deepening strategic partnership between the People's Republic of China and Russia and their mutual reinforcing attempts to undercut the rules based international order run counter to our values and interests", unquote. China strongly condemned NATO's communique and perceives NATO as expanding into its region, given that it invited New Zealand, South Korea, Japan and Australia to its summit. China swiftly sent out a warning by stating that any, quote, "eastward expansion into the East Pacific region would be met with resolute response", unquote. How do you view these two contradictory developments? On one hand, Janet Yellen visiting, on the other hand, having the summit in which it is condemning China.

PK: Relations between the US and China have hit rock bottom. We stopped talking. We didn't have high level diplomatic connections. Gradually, that's been easing a little bit. And

that's the thing about Biden. Biden is instinctually a hawk, but he's a conflicted hawk. He's surrounded himself with 18 top advisers from the Center for New American Security, the super hawks. Their main agenda is China. They want to stop China. They want to defeat China. Their secondary objective is to defeat Russia and to weaken Russia. But RAND issued a report on the Ukraine war titled *Avoiding a Long War*, because they want to focus instead on China. That's the real priority. And they know what we've seen is that so long as all these weapons keep going into Ukraine, they're not going into China. And so the United States, according to some assessments, is four years behind on delivery of weapons systems to Taiwan. So to make Taiwan indigestible, to make Taiwan a porcupine that China can't absorb, the United States wants to fill it with all these weapons systems. It's not going to work any more than it's working in Ukraine now. One of the things we didn't mention about Ukraine is this big counteroffensive. It's not working because the Russians have dug in. They have defense lines, which go miles and miles and miles. And so the Ukrainian counteroffensive has stalled largely. And so they're not going to win militarily. And it changes the diplomatic as well as the military reality there. Same thing with China. So Biden comes to office wanting to focus on China. As vice president during the Obama administration, it was Obama back in 2011 who announced the Asia pivot. It was Hillary Clinton as secretary of state in November 2011, writes the article in *Foreign Policy* magazine titled *America's Pacific Century*. Talk about imperial hubris. You know, it was Clinton who kept saying over and over again, The United States is the indispensable nation. Indispensable to what? Maybe indispensable to war. But the United States, which is what Jimmy Carter said a few years ago, Jimmy Carter said the United States has been around for 242 years. During that time, the United States has known peace for only 16 years. He said the United States is the biggest warmonger in the world, says China has not been involved overseas, has not been involved out of its border since 1979. So China is a much more peaceful country, but the United States has its plans to dominate Asia. And so NATO is its main instrument now. And so the United States has been talking about expanding NATO to the Pacific. They talked about setting up a liaison office in Tokyo. They've gotten, the US has been militarizing the Pacific. Japan is doubling its military spending. We've got the AUKUS agreement involving Australia. We've got the Quad that involves India. Modi just visited the United States. They're trying to rope India in, even though India has refused to be a part of American foreign policy. The United States announced four new bases in the Philippines, four new military bases. South Korea, the Yoon government, right wing hawkish, very confrontational toward North Korea. The US sending nuclear carriers, aircraft carriers off the South Korean coast. United States war games on a scale that we've never seen before. What's going on with this militarization of the Pacific? Well, the NATO piece is an important part of that. However, there's opposition within NATO, France, Germany, we said Italy and Spain. So, why should we be at war with China? Why should we see China as an enemy? They're our main trade partner. They are potential friends. We should have a collaborative relationship. But that's not the US approach. The US approach, back in 2018, when James N. Mattis issued the new US security policy, it said America's main threat is no longer global terrorism, it's Russia and China. And we've oriented that way. So Obama announced the pivot to Asia back in 2011, but we got still bogged down

in the Middle East. We had Iraq and Afghanistan going on. Finally now they want to focus on China and the Pacific, but Ukraine is in the way. And so there are some people who say we have to get rid of the Ukraine war, so we can focus on China. But the Europeans aren't going along with that. And if you look at the new communique, as much as negative and hostile it is toward China in rhetoric, it doesn't say anything about this new liaison office in Tokyo. And we know that the French and the Germans have resisted harsher language in taking actual steps. So there is still some hope. Janet Yellen's visit. Okay. Well, back in March or April of 2021, the first meeting between Wang Yi and Yang Jiechi, the top Chinese foreign policy officials and Blinken and Sullivan went terribly in Anchorage, in Anchorage. And Blinken made some open comments. And the Chinese respond with an 18 minute diatribe against the United States, basically saying, Who the fuck are you to tell us what we're doing is wrong? And you talk about the rules based on international order. You are the ones who invaded Vietnam, Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya. And so they handed it to the United States. That's been the tone since then from China, seeing the United States as a declining empire, seeing China as the ascendant force in the world soon to be the biggest economy in the world. And China has been growing its military. I'm not happy about that exactly. China has been expanding its nuclear forces. They had about 200 now they're up to about 400 nuclear weapons. The Pentagon says they're going to have a thousand by 2030 and 1500 by 2035. Great. Now, China has joined the United States and Russia in the ability to end life on the planet. That's not a good thing. Or it will be. But we don't know for sure that's China's plan. But that's what the US is alleging. So China is feeling itself. China says we are the major player. And what's happened is that most of the world is not going along with the US sanctions on Russia. The Global South is not gone along; India, China, South Africa. We in fact see a movement toward peace developing, toward diplomacy, toward negotiations. Lula in Brazil, Xi Jinping in China, a 12 point peace plan, the Vatican, the African countries, Guterres from the United Nations, there is a lot of pressure. And there's been informal meetings. Some of them have been announced in New York between former top diplomats, that's come out publicly. What people don't know is that there's also a track to diplomacy that I'm involved in going on here in Washington, D.C., in meetings between people pushing for diplomacy and Russian officials here in Washington as well. So there is that kind of movement because the reality, the likelihood is that this offensive is going to stall and that six months from now or a year from now, we're going to be in the same position. A stalemate on the battlefield, a meat grinder, tens of thousands, hundreds of thousands more Ukrainian and Russian young men and women being killed and no progress being made and no closer to a settlement. And that's the nightmare. The real nightmare scenario, of course, is that it escalates into World War three and nuclear war, which is not a zero possibility. But the second, the more likely nightmare scenario is that we're back in the same place a year from now. Let's get there now while we can and save so many lives and so much waste of human resources. You know, we have so many issues we have to deal with as a global civilization. Let's get to it. Let's get serious.

ZR: Peter Kuznick, thank you so much for your time today.

PK: Thank you, Zain.

ZR: And thank you for tuning in today. An important development in our organization. We are currently in our summer break and have reduced our capacities. Right of this summer break, we will return to normal operations and provide you with daily content. Also, if you're watching our channel, make sure to join our alternative channels on Rumble and Telegram. YouTube, which is owned by Google, has a long history of shadow banning and censoring our content. As a precaution, we're asking all our viewers to also subscribe to our channel on Rumble, Telegram and Podbean. If you're watching our videos regularly, make sure to donate. There's an entire team working behind the scenes from camera, lighting videos, in the case of German videos, translation. voiceover, correction. So if you want us to continue providing you with daily independent nonprofit news and analysis, make sure to donate today. I'm Zain Raza, see you guys next time.

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