



## **U.S. shields Israel, Zelenskyy's visit & Cold War with China | 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. Before I start this interview, I would like to share with you that we recently started our crowdfunding campaign with the goal of continuing our independent and nonprofit journalism in 2024. Journalism that is viewer-funded and does not accept any money from corporations or governments. Our goal is to reach €20,000 by January 10th so that we can cover our costs that are associated with our journalism, such as tax advising, website maintenance, translation, voice-over, video editing, camera, light and many others. If we fail to reach this goal, we will be unable to continue our journalism in 2024 and may have to scale back on our capacities. If you're watching our videos regularly, make sure to participate in our crowdfunding campaign. If all of our 145,000 subscribers just donate two to three Euros today, we will not only be able to achieve our crowdfunding target, but also be able to cover our costs for the next four to five years. Today I'll be talking to Professor of history and the director of the Nuclear Studies Institute, Peter Kuznick. Peter Kuznick is also the author of *The Untold History of the United States*, which he wrote together with film director and Hollywood producer Oliver Stone. Peter Kuznick, welcome back.

**Peter Kuznick (PK):** Glad to be with you. I wish the world were in better shape. We could talk about sports and nicer things, but the world is kind of a mess and getting worse.

**ZR:** Let's hope for the best, Peter. I would like to start this interview with Israel's war on Gaza. On the 12th of December, the United Nations General Assembly voted to demand an immediate humanitarian cease fire in war-torn Gaza. A clear majority that included 153 nations were in favor of a cease fire, while ten voted against it and 23 abstained. The most powerful nation on earth that voted against a ceasefire was the United States. And just a few days prior, UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres invoked Article 99, a rarely used provision of the UN Charter to bring to the attention of the Security Council the hostilities taking place in Gaza and Israel, as he was convinced that it poses a threat to international peace and security. At the Security Council meeting that followed this move, the United

States once again shielded its ally Israel, and vetoed a resolution calling for an immediate humanitarian cease fire. How do you assess these developments and do you think that the situation in Gaza poses a risk to international security and stability?

**PK:** The United States is acting like an outlier again with its ally, Israel. It's interesting to look at the U.N. votes. So, with the Security Council vote, the U.S. voted against it and used its veto, the British abstained and everybody else voted for the resolution. And that really reflects the sentiment around the world now. If we compare yesterday's U.N. vote for a ceasefire with the one in October for a humanitarian pause, yesterday's vote was 153 in favor, ten opposed and 23 abstentions. But in October - you know, we're not even talking, two months ago, in October, - the vote was 120 in favor, 14 opposed and 45 abstentions. So if you look at which way this is going, the world's sentiment is increasingly with the Palestinians in Gaza, because the images that come out on a daily basis are so heartbreaking, so horrific and so disproportionate that even those of us who strongly condemn what Hamas did on October 7th and thought that that was unconscionable are still absolutely appalled by what Israel is doing now. And so 1200 were killed on October 7th, most of them Israelis. But now it's close to 20,000 Gazans who have been killed, two thirds of whom are women and children. The United States made such a big deal about what the Russians were doing in Ukraine and the number of civilians who were being killed and the amount of infrastructure destroyed. Well, the Russians in 21 months have barely killed half as many civilians in Ukraine as the Israelis did in six weeks. But the United States is not quite silent, but it speaks with its actions. And its actions are to give unlimited amounts of money and arms and aid to the Israelis to continue the slaughter. And so the world's moral conscience has been outraged by what the world is seeing. But the Israelis are not going to stop. They use the excuse of Hamas. Now, I hate Hamas. I would love to see Hamas replaced by a more progressive, more secular, more humane alternative in Gaza. But the idea of getting rid of Hamas - Hamas really is a concept, it's an idea, it's a movement. The Israelis, with their slaughter and killing civilians, have created more people who hate Israel, who are willing to become terrorists than they've been eliminating in this fighting. So it's just a stupid, immoral policy that I hate to see Israel carrying out, but Israel has become one of the most right wing countries in the world. I remember when Israel was a progressive country. I remember when Israel had a strong left. I remember when there were socialists and communists in the leadership in Israel. And that has been eliminated. And now if you look at this Netanyahu government - it's somewhere ranging from the extremists like Netanyahu, the extreme right wingers, to the ultra crazies who want to eliminate the Palestinians, who would love to see ethnic cleansing. And they've given free rein to the settlers in the West Bank. And there have been hundreds and hundreds now more than a thousand attacks against Palestinian farmers and settlers in the West Bank by these zealots who've been armed by Netanyahu's cabinet with assault weapons that have been used to terrorize and kill Palestinians, the West Bank also. And so we have a situation that is immoral, unthinkable. And for the Jews who suffered so much in the Holocaust to have become so, or not the Jews but the Israelis, at least, because American Jews don't like Netanyahu, American Jews don't support what's going on in Gaza now. But the Israelis

somehow have given up their moral compass and are going along with this and supporting what the Army is doing in Gaza. So it's a tragic situation with potentially devastating consequences because it really could expand. Israel has been making threats against Hezbollah. The Israelis say they want Hezbollah to move back off the border, and they say, the Israeli leaders say if Hezbollah does not move back immediately, that Israel is going to launch a war against Hezbollah. Well, Hezbollah's capability is so much greater than Hamas's capability. Hamas has maybe 30,000 troops in armed fighters and 30,000 weapons, maybe 50,000. But Hezbollah has 100,000 hardened fighters and 150,000 rockets and missiles that it can launch, many of them precision guided. That's a much, much more serious threat to Israel and then it does expand from there. We already see the fighting going on with the Houthis and Yemen. And there's also a lot of other militias in the region, in Iraq and Syria. And, of course, then there's Iran. So the U.S. has moved two aircraft carrier strike groups to the Mediterranean to get ready for that war with Iran that many Americans have been itching for - not American people, but American leaders, the neocons and the hawks - have been itching for for years. And so, you know, people don't really rationally weigh the consequences; either the immediate humanitarian slaughter that breaks any decent person's heart to see these parents carrying their dead children out of that rubble is unthinkable. But it could be worse. It could be much, much worse.

**ZR:** I want to highlight some developments taking place in Germany in regards to Israel and Palestine. In November, the use of the slogan "From the river to the sea, Palestine will be free" became a criminal offense in Germany, punishable by a prison sentence of up to three years or a fine. However, the statement "Between the sea and Jordan, there will be only Israel sovereignty", which is stated in the founding charter of the Likud Party from 1977, the party which Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu currently heads, has not been criminalized by the German government. Furthermore, starting this month, a written declaration of commitment recognizing the right of the state of Israel to exist must be submitted in the eastern federal state of Saxony-Anhalt in order to obtain German citizenship. Commentators and analysts are warning that these moves by the federal and regional governments pose a danger to civil liberties. How is this situation across the Atlantic in the United States in terms of civil liberties and academic freedom?

**PK:** The situation is somewhere between unfortunate and dismal in the United States. And what we're seeing on a global scale is a retrenchment of civil rights and human rights and freedom of speech and freedom of the press. When I see what's going on inside Russia, I'm horrified by that. The fact that 20,000 or so Russians have been arrested for speaking out against the invasion of Ukraine. I hate seeing what's going on in Germany. I hate seeing what's going on in the United States. There's no freedom of speech in China, certainly, and in much of the world. But even countries that had, like Russia, are losing it. And that to me is very disturbing. So what's going on in Germany is upsetting, too. But in the United States, we just had these congressional hearings. There were four people who testified. The president of Harvard, the president of MIT, the president of the University of Pennsylvania, and my

colleague Pam Nadell, who teaches with me at the American University and is writing a book on the history of anti-Semitism in the United States. But it was the three university presidents, who were under the spotlight there. And the Republicans in charge, the same Republicans who have been endorsing Donald Trump, who's an outrageous anti-Semite who had dinner recently with Kanye West and Nick Fuentes – a Holocaust denier. And they support anti-Semites everywhere, these same people got on their high horse there and attacked the university presidents whose responses were sadly inept about condemning calls for genocide on campus. And they were trying to walk a fine line between freedom of speech and actionable policies or statements that hurt people. You know, and it's especially troubling because there has been much sensitivity in the United States when it comes to racial issues on campus, when it comes to gender issues, when it comes to sexual issues. You know, which is a little bit overblown, in my opinion, but at least the heart was in the right place. So they should have been able to condemn calls for genocide against the Jews. But I don't think there were any calls for genocide against the Jews. Maybe some crackpots here and there. But they were creating a false narrative. Stefanik was the worst, Elise Stefanik. And she said that there have been people on the campuses calling for Intifada. And she says while intifada is the same thing as genocide and therefore, would you let them do that or would you condemn that? First of all, Intifada is not genocide. She's a fool. She's a moron and she's a liar. But she used that in order to put these college presidents on the spot and they were lawyered up. And they all use the exact same language because they were all being advised by the same law firm. And so rather than to speak it from the heart or even from the brain, they gave these really legalistic explanations. And then there was an outcry against them. And you have the U.S. media and you've got the – you know, it was really the big donors to the universities. This guy Ackman at Harvard, there's several people at Penn, people who give \$100 million, most of them were hedge funds millionaires. These people are the scum of the earth, right? Hedge fund millionaires. Did they do anything productive? No, they're destroying the companies and that's how they make their money. But those who are the ones who are able to claim the moral high ground and either threaten or in some cases withdraw their money from the universities as they had pledged. So the universities need these donations because the United States does not support it, the state governments and the federal government does not give a lot of support to education. And so the boards of trustees who are also mostly business people were getting nervous. And you had three presidents, all of whom are new presidents, all of whom are women. One is a Jewish woman, one is a Black woman, and the other I assume is a WASP woman or a Christian woman, and they were all new and not very experienced and not very deft in their handling of this. I would have turned that around. I would say, who the F do you think you are? A supporter of Trump? The election deniers? You know, the people who spread lies deliberately, consciously, you know, to even challenge us on this ground. But they didn't do that. It was a long hearing, it went on for five hours, and they just maybe were exhausted, maybe they were confused at that point. But it was unfortunate. And the president of the University of Pennsylvania resigned as the chairman of the board. But fortunately, the trustees at Harvard and MIT gave strong support to their presidents and neither of whom is stepping down. But this attack on academic freedom – you

know, it's really the root of it, Zain. It's that the one institution that the left still runs in the United States, not the Congress, not the media, not the military - the only institution where we have a lot of influence and still call the shots is academia. And they've been a concerted effort to wrest academia away from the left for years now. You know, they created all these think tanks; you know, they call them think tanks, but it's like the Center for a New American Security. These are the people who are Biden's top advisers who are pushing him on Ukraine, on China and Taiwan, on Israel. I mean, these are the Super Hawks. They create these institutions, extralegal institutions, because they are so wealthy, these rich capitalists, that to them, to give away \$100 million is chump change. And so they create these institutions which try to vie in the marketplace of ideas with the ideas of the progressives who don't have any of that kind of funding. And so they're trying to get control of the universities. And so far they have not succeeded, but they have made some inroads. And the university, to tell you the truth, is very left. I've been involved in lots and lots of searches for historians. I would love to find an intelligent, articulate conservative to hire for any of these positions that are being created in the history departments or other departments. But we don't even get applicants who are even in the ballpark, who we could even consider for these jobs, partly because these people want to go into business and get rich. It is us, the left wing idealists, the progressives who go into academia, knowing we're never going to get rich, but because we care about ideas, we care about the impact of ideas in order to make a better world. And we care about the minds of young people. These people just want to go into business and get wealthy, the brightest ones among them.

**ZR:** I want to switch gears here and move to Ukraine. Ukraine President Zelenskyy recently visited the United States for the purpose of drumming up support for a \$61 billion aid package from the U.S. that has stalled in Congress for a while. While visiting the White House, the U.S. president strongly praised Ukraine's resilient defense against Russia's assaults since the war began. In the meeting, Biden said to Zelensky, and let me quote him, quote: "Mr. President, I will not walk away from Ukraine and neither will the American people", unquote. Although it seemed over the last two months that the U.S. position was kind of changing towards pushing Ukraine to diplomacy and negotiations with Russia, it now appears that the U.S. remains committed to Ukraine winning the war against Russia. How do you assess these developments? Can Ukraine still win the war and reclaim back all of its territory?

**PK:** No. As you know as well as I do, Ukraine is not going to defeat Russia militarily. It's just not going to happen. The West - Europe and the United States are getting weary. They place a lot of hope in this spring offensive. Well, it didn't start in the spring, so it's finally starting this summer. And the counter-offensive has spun its wheels. It's gone nowhere. If anything, they've lost ground, especially in the east. And have made no headway. People had this fantasy because Ukraine was able to claw back so much territory in Kharkiv and Kherson in 2022, they thought they would be able to do that again. But the Russians learned a lot of lessons. They are a lot smarter now than they were then. The military leadership is a lot

smarter. Whereas the Ukrainians - Zelenskyy has replaced all of the top military officials and advisors there. But the Russians have learned a lot. And one of the things they learned, it's a lot easier to be on defense than it is to be on offense in this kind of war. We saw it in World War I, we're seeing a replay now. And so they put in all those armaments, they put in the IEDs, the landmines. And the Ukrainians made effectively no progress in taking back more territory. Russia is in a stronger position. The West strategy was to destroy Russia's economy with the sanctions. That didn't happen. And according to many reports, the Russian economy is booming. The West has not been able to provide the artillery, the munitions, the planes that the Ukrainians need, the missile defense systems. But the Russians have ramped up their military production. They're just in a much stronger position than the Ukrainians are. And there are so many people in the West - it's not just Viktor Orban - there's a lot of others in the West who look at what's happening and say, what is the point of continuing to support Ukraine militarily if the best they can hope for is a stalemate and the worst is a military defeat? And so the best case scenario for Ukraine is we come back a year from now and there's 100,000 more Russians and 75,000 more Ukrainians dead and hundreds of thousands more wounded on both sides. And we're at the same place that we're at now. It doesn't make any sense to continue this, especially because we know the history. And the history is that in March of 2022, we could have had a settlement. And the Ukrainians and the Russians had come to an agreement at that point, and Ukraine was not going to join NATO and Russia - but what happened? Then Boris Johnson goes to visit. Then the Americans go to visit and they tell Ukraine, Zelenskyy and the Ukrainian leaders, "don't give in, don't compromise, we're going to support you as long as it takes". And they tried for a year and now, not only in the United States, but in other parts of Europe and much of the world, people are tired and don't want to keep on supporting what's turned out to be a stalemate and a slaughter there. But if you look at these situations, we talked about Gaza, we talked about Ukraine, what this is showing, and there was a big article in the Associated Press about this today, that the U.S. position in the world is now greatly diminished. The support for Gaza has weakened U.S. moral authority, undermined U.S. moral authority. The inability for Biden to deliver on the arms that he wants for Ukraine, for Israel, for Taiwan, has now shown that American leadership is really hollow in many ways and is being seen that way. And the vote that we talked about before in the United Nations, the fact that the anti-Israel vote is increasing, it's really the anti-U.S. vote and the fact that the U.S. position is so weakened now - that the United States is not in a position. So what do people in Japan think? What do people in South Korea think? What do people in Taiwan think? Is the U.S. going to be such a reliable partner if it can't even come up with the funding? Biden wants \$111 billion more, 61 billion for Ukraine and 14 billion for Israel, some for the southern border, more for Taiwan. You know, but the Congress is stalled. American political dysfunction is really undermining Biden's hawkishness. At the same time, he is destroying his own chances for reelection. I'm afraid of Trump. Trump is a fascist dictator or wannabe fascist dictator, if he gets back in power, he's never going to leave. And the little bit that's left of American democracy is going to be destroyed. But Biden is contributing to it. You look at the response, 20% of 18 to 34 year olds support the U.S. policy in Israel. And that was earlier. Maybe now it's down to 15%. Biden

desperately needs those people. There is no enthusiasm for Biden on American campuses. I hear it from my students, from students elsewhere when I'm giving talks. The younger generation despises Biden. They hate Trump. They might come out and vote for Biden because they hate Trump and fear Trump, but not because they like Biden. And also his minority support, support among black men especially, has decreased markedly. So the constituency that Biden needs to get reelected, he's willing to antagonize, to sabotage, really, in order to carry out his global militaristic responses to political crises around the world. So not only is it hurting the world, it's hurting him, but he's such a fool at this point or so wedded to these militaristic policies that he's willing to sabotage, self-destruct, really. And it's very sad for me to watch.

**ZR:** Let us switch over to the Pacific and the Cold War with China. In the Pacific, U.S. funded programs for Micronesia, the Marshall Islands and the Republic of Palau are awaiting U.S. congressional approval. A few days ago, a senior U.S. official named Kurt Campbell told a Senate panel when it came to the funding of these programs, let me quote him here, quote: "You can expect that literally the next day, Chinese diplomats, military and other folks will be on the plane landing in each of these islands, trying to secure a better deal for China", unquote. He was referring to, if the U.S. Senate does not approve this funding, then China will come and take this place over. How do you view the situation with China in the Pacific? Has it cooled down since the war, Israel's war in Gaza began, or is there still a looming danger in the background?

**PK:** Well, Kurt Campbell is an interesting person to start with. He is really the China Hawk. He's one of the leaders of the Center for a New American Security. As I mentioned before, Biden has 18 top advisers from the Center for New American Security. And those are the real China hawks. So what Campbell says is significant. He was the brains behind the Asia pivot under Obama and Clinton back in 2011. It didn't come to fruition, but that was his policy. That was his baby. And he's stirring it up again. And what we've seen in the last - what we saw, Trump beginning with his absurd trade war policies and his increased diplomatic relations with Taiwan. And then we hoped when Biden came to office, we'd get a breath of sanity. But Biden doubled down on all of the backward policies of the Trump administration, has even brought higher level diplomatic relations, more military ties, more weapons, and further antagonized China. And it was Biden who four times now has gone against U.S. policy instead of fighting breaks out between China and Taiwan. The U.S. will get involved militarily. U.S. policy is supposedly ambiguous on that question. Biden had to work it back all four times. But he has succeeded in strengthening the alliances. He did create the AUKU.S. deal which brings in Australia. He has convinced Japan to double its military spending. He has convinced the Philippines to give the U.S. four more bases in the Philippines. He now sees the Yoon government in South Korea, a very hawkish right wing government that replaced the much better Moon government there. And you know that the U.S. still controls the South Korean military. They don't even have autonomy. The U.S. controls it. And 70% of South Koreans say they'd like to see their country develop its own

nuclear weapons. So that's very, very dangerous. And they try to strengthen the Quad, try to improve relations and alliances with India. So we see this across the board, a hawkish policy that Biden has adopted. Still, the developments going on inside of Okinawa - across the board for that first island chain, and then second, the United States is trying to strengthen its position. And then at the same time, you've got American military leaders like this Army General Minihan, who says he believes the U.S. and China will be at war by 2025. And they're preparing for that. So recently, this report just came out called America's Strategic Posture. This is the bipartisan Congressional Commission on the Strategic Posture of the United States. And what do they say? Do they say we need peaceful relations? Do they say we need a win-win diplomacy? As Xi Jinping likes to talk about. Does it say that we need peaceful development? No, it says we have to prepare to win simultaneous wars against Russia and China. We have to be able to defeat them both. And now they want to throw in the Middle East also. It's madness. But this is what we've seen. So the United States clinging desperately to unit polarity. But what they do in this report is very interesting. It's the same thing that we heard from Reagan. It's the same thing we heard for the Project for the New American Century, the neocons who went into the Bush administration. The idea that the United States is so weak, it's vulnerable. We go back to the Gaither Report in 1957 after the Soviets launched Sputnik. And then the Gaither report says the United States has this moment of maximum weakness and vulnerability. If we don't throw massive amounts of money at America's military, then the United States is going to be overrun by the Soviets and they've got the advantage and ICBMs. Then we had the missile gap bullshit, which it turns out, yeah, there was a missile gap. We were ahead of them between 10 to 1 and 100 to 1 in every category. But that's what they're doing now, fanning the flame of fear in order to try to get more military spending. And they did that under Bush. They did that under Reagan. They're trying to do it again now under Biden. And we know that the money was supposedly the money we gave to Ukraine. Does that money go to Ukraine? No. Goes to American military contractors. They're the ones who make out like bandits with this blood money that they're making off the killing in Gaza, the killing in Ukraine, the potential killing in Taiwan. They love it. And they're the only ones who profit from this. But that's what we're facing now in a world that's going the wrong direction in so many ways. And the United States is still the cheerleader, although the United States and its rules-based international order, already has its credibility weakening. The global South refused to go along with the sanctions against Russia. And a lot of the economists, of all places, got it right. They said to the Biden administration, it's a global war between autocracy and democracy. But to the rest of the world, it's a global war between autocracy and hypocrisy. And that hypocrisy has been more exaggerated now and more clearly expressed by the U.S. contradictory policies in Gaza and Ukraine now. And so the world is seeing this every day. You know, as you've been struggling, watching this now, 90% of the people in Gaza have been driven out of their homes. Probably 70% of the homes have been damaged or destroyed. So, you know, even if the war ended tomorrow, what it would mean to try to rebuild these people's lives. They've lost their homes. They've lost their jobs. They've lost everything, their possessions. I mean, it's just a tragedy. And that's on top of me saying that I hate Hamas and I want to see them out of the leadership



in Gaza. And I'd like to see a progressive Palestinian authority revamped, take over. But Netanyahu still, despite the demands from Biden, refuses to think about a two state solution, refuses a humanitarian cease fire. And the killing is going to go on there and it could go on for months. And those poor people there, you know, are trapped. And the world is watching this. I don't know what we do, but the pressure is building in the United States to force Biden to change direction, just like Ukraine might have to change direction. There is not going to be a deal on the aid to Ukraine. There's not even going to be more negotiations till next year. And the Ukrainians are running out of the ammunition, the artillery, the missile defense systems that they need. Maybe there will be a diplomatic solution. Not that Putin is, you know, very supportive of this either. He's on saying he wants diplomacy, but his demands are going to be pretty tough. I mean, he's in a strong position now. The Russians already controlled 20% of Ukraine, and by the spring, they're likely to control significantly more than that. So, you know, there's no great solutions. And as you heard me say, there are no good guys in this world. You know, there are a lot of good guys. Most of the people on the planet, I would say, are the good guys. But in terms of the leaders - and I'd love to see Xi Jinping's idea of win-win diplomacy be something that gets fleshed out that we can see happen in Gaza and Ukraine and Taiwan, everywhere around the planet.

**ZR:** To my last question, we are currently in a crowdfunding campaign so that we can raise enough funds to continue our independent and nonprofit journalism in 2024. Why do you think it is important to support independent media organizations like acTVism Munich today?

**PK:** Well, it's crucial that we support independent media because the mainstream media is so bankrupt, so corrupt, so immoral. You know, I think I'm going to break my record this year and do maybe 300 TV interviews around the world. I do close to zero on U.S. mainstream media. And I'm sure that's the way it is - I mean, I get to do some in Europe, but, you know, the problem is in the West, if you don't voice the official narrative, support American empire, support global militarism and hawkishness, you don't get a voice. You get on alternative media, but you don't get a voice in mainstream media. The confines, the boundaries, that mainstream media will tolerate are so narrow. You turn on MSNBC or CNN in the United States and a lot of German media, I know it's very similar, and you don't hear a dissenting voice. And so the kind of work that you do and that allies in other parts of the world do, is so important because you're speaking truth to power, and power has no conscience. But it will respond to pressure if people organize and mobilize. And I know you do a great job of this and you've got colleagues and allies in other parts of the world who do so, too. So I hope people do open up their pocketbooks and do give you the kind of support that allows you to carry on this absolutely crucial function in a world that's going the wrong direction. And quickly so.

**ZR:** Peter Kuznick, professor of history and the director of Nuclear Studies Institute at American University, thank you so much for your time today.

**PK:** Thank you, as always.

**ZR:** And thank you for tuning in today. Please don't forget to participate in our crowdfunding campaign so that we can continue our journalism in 2024. You will find the links to all of the donation platforms in the description of this video. I'm your host, Zain Raza. See you next time.

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