



Russia announces nuclear drills, Israel begins attack on Rafah & student protests

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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. Today I'll be talking to Professor Kuznick about the latest developments surrounding the war in Ukraine, Israel's assault in Gaza, and the Cold War between the United States and China. Peter Kuznick is professor of history and the director of the Nuclear Studies Institute at American University. He's also the coauthor of the book that he wrote together with film director and Hollywood producer Oliver Stone called *The Untold History of the United States*. Peter, welcome back to the show.

Peter Kuznick (PK): Glad to be with you, Zain.

ZR: Let me begin this interview with a breaking development. The Associated Press AP is reporting, quote, "Israel launches military operation in Rafah hours after Hamas agrees to a ceasefire", unquote. This development comes despite the fact that the United States vocally stated that the military operation in Rafah is a red line, and warned that it could trigger a catastrophic humanitarian situation as millions of Palestinian civilians who fled the North are trapped there and are seeking refuge and are already facing shortages of water, food and medicine. The ceasefire agreement that was accepted by Hamas was drafted by Egypt and Qatar, and it could have ended Israel's seven month military operation, and also put an end to what the United Nations Human Rights Office calls, quote, "a massive human rights crisis and a humanitarian disaster", unquote. So far, at least 34,735 Palestinian civilians have been killed by Israel's military operation, a majority of them being women and children. Can you comment on Israel's military operation in Rafah, and whether you think it would defeat Hamas and restore peace and stability in the region? And secondly, can you also address why the red line in Rafah, which was vocally announced by the United States, was not taken seriously by the Israelis?

PK: Well, on your last point, the Israelis have not taken seriously anything that Biden or the rest of the international community has demanded of them. Biden has been pressuring and imploring Netanyahu to accept the ceasefire. And to certainly not invade Rafha. But Biden has not been willing to tighten the screws on Israel. So Biden's words come across as hollow and toothless. And it undermines US credibility in the world. It points to US hypocrisy in the world. And it also could bring down the Biden administration. So Biden's behavior is not only self-destructive, it is perplexing, and it is gutless. To highlight the immorality, the duplicity, the hypocrisy, Biden is going to make a big speech today on Holocaust Remembrance Day. Holocaust Remembrance Day, the world has been condemning Israel for what appears to be a genocide. Now, I don't use the word genocide lightly, given my family's history with the Holocaust, but the international courts, as well as international experts, say that this is at least has the makings of a genocide if it's not a full blown genocide. You look at what's going on there. You cited the figure of 35,000 approximately of thousands who have been killed. My sources estimate well over 50,000. But that figure is based upon the Gazan health ministry, and they only count the corpses that they actually see. But there are so many people buried under that rubble whose bodies we have not been able to see. So I think, 50,000 would be a conservative estimate of the actual numbers who'd been killed. And we know that about 70% of them are women and children. So what Israel has been conducting and you look at it, the visuals are so clear and that's partly what's driving the international protest. 85% of the housing has been destroyed. The universities have been destroyed. The hospitals have been destroyed. The infrastructure has been destroyed. Then you got idiots like Trump's son in law, Kushner, talking about what wonderful beachfront property there could be in Gaza if only the Palestinians were removed. And you've got that kind of attitude, we see these statements coming out of officials in Israel, the vice chairman of Likud talking about going into Rafah, not caring about humanitarian issues and kill more, kill more, kill more, kill as many as we can. The kind of extreme right wing sentiments being expressed by elements in the Israeli parliament, Israeli cabinet who actually make Netanyahu look like a centrist in comparison with the extremists to his right, who have been urging this and Netanyahu has been wanting to go after Rafah and to go after the Gazans, especially Hamas, but kill as many collaterally as possible.

So now they've taken the next step. And they've demanded effectively that the civilian population leave Rafah. But we know that there are more than 1.2 million people in Rafah, that there is no way for them to evacuate. And even the United States, Netanyahu's close ally, sadly, embarrassingly, even the United States says there is no credible plan to remove those people from Rafah. And so Biden has been inveighing against Netanyahu not to begin this operation. And Netanyahu flipped them the bird again, told them, we're going to ignore what you're saying and let's see what you do. And Biden has been unwilling to follow up his words with actions. They could effectively end this immediately. The irony, of course, is that Israel carrying out what appears to be a genocide in Gaza, is being supplied by [the United States]. 70% of the weapons imports into Israel come from the United States, a country which was founded upon genocide of the native populations here. And the other 30% come from your country, Germany, which carried out the Holocaust. So they've got three now genocidal countries that we're dealing with, and they are seen as global pariahs. The international

community has condemned it. Another vote is going to come up in the United Nations this week on Palestinian membership in the UN. And so for the last one, the United States vetoed. But the world sees what's going on. And so look what it does to undermine US credibility. So the US condemns the Russian destruction of infrastructure and death caused by the Russian invasion of Ukraine. And then the United States refuses to do anything to stop Israel conducting a far worse and in a shorter period of time, destruction of infrastructure and killing of civilians in Gaza. How does that make the United States look? Other than like, the world's leading hypocrite?! I haven't had a chance lately, to quote the London Economist, which was commented a while back that to the United States, this is a battle between autocracy and democracy. To the rest of the world, it's a battle between autocracy and hypocrisy. And, you know, that's so clearly the case. So what's happening in Gaza is a humanitarian catastrophe. It has been. Now that the Rafah crossing is going to be shut down, even the little bit of aid that was getting into Gaza is not going to get in there. We already knew that the Gazans were on the verge of starvation. Now that's only going to get worse. Medicine is destroyed, the health system is destroyed, the hospitals are destroyed – what is going on there? And so far as this ceasefire deal that Hamas accepted, at the behest of Egypt and Qatar, Israel says it's not the deal that they agreed to. And so they're sending a mid-level delegation to continue the talks, I think, in Cairo. But there is clearly no desire on the part of Netanyahu and his fascistic allies in Israel. The irony of Israel, a country that was formed because of the Holocaust in the 1930s and 1940s, to be carrying this out, for many, many Jewish people around the world, this is absolute madness. And it is the worst moral outrage that a country founded in response to the worst Holocaust ever is conducting the most recent and tragic and unconscionable holocaust. So this is bad and it's going to get worse.

ZR: I would like to switch to the massive student protests taking place across the United States, demanding an end to US support for Israel, which they believe is enabling a genocide in Gaza. What began with an encampment at Columbia University spread nationwide to include the University of Texas, Yale, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, UC Berkeley, University of Michigan, Brown, Harvard, and many others. Mass arrests and crackdown by the police were observed at a number of universities. The most watched daily primetime news program in Germany, the Tagesschau reported on the 4th of May that there are concerns that similar protests might break out in German universities, after 150 students gathered for a sit in protest in front of the entrance to Berlin's Humboldt University to demand an end to the genocide in Gaza. Their report makes these protests with the label of anti-Semitism, and one could get the impression that there may not be a difference in what is taking place in these protests and anti-Semitism itself, both in the US and Germany. As someone who lives in the United States and is a professor who has taught many, many young people, can you share your impressions of these protests and also talk about whether they are anti-Semitic, relating to the United States?

PK: These protests are the most exciting thing that's happened on US campuses in more than 50 years. Students have been notoriously apathetic in the United States when it comes to foreign policy concerns. I've been condemning student apathy in silence, lack of protest for many years now. This is the most positive, caring, humane response by American students

that we've seen in many, many years. I think the protests are wonderful. That doesn't mean they're perfect. Right, this is not a generation that's had a lot of experience with protests. But, when we look at the history of American student protests, going back to the civil rights movement in the 50s and 60s, going back to the anti-McCarthy protests on campuses, going back to the anti-Vietnam War protests that I participated in, going back, you look at the history of these, the anti-apartheid protests in South Africa, the anti-nuclear protests during the 1980s, the occupy movement, the anti-Iraq war protests, the George Floyd Black Lives Matter protests, the student campus protesters have been on the right side of history every single time, and they're on the right side of history again. And who are they up against? They're up against the establishment forces, the foreign policy establishment, the domestic policy establishment, and the police and the National Guard, and behind them, the Army, who have been on the wrong side of history every single time. And for these university administrations, confronted with peaceful protest by students who are decrying mass slaughter that's going on against the people in Gaza, for these university administrations to excuse them lyingly of anti-Semitism, of harassing Jewish students, of being anti-Semite and then calling in the police to shut them down, is such a crime against academia that none of these presidents deserves to be allowed to set foot on an American campus again. You look at Shafiq at Columbia; have been called in the police repeatedly to silence the protesters. And then Biden with his absurd statement the other day, in which he condemns anti-Semitism and he condemns lawlessness and talks about the looting and breaking of windows and how this cannot be tolerated on America's campuses. Breaking of windows – what the US has helped support is the destruction of entire infrastructure and housing in Gaza. The destruction of the universities, the killing of professors, of university presidents, of doctors, of women and children, and he's concerned that these protesters broke a window in order to get into Hamilton Hall. I mean, this shows the kind of – the man is an immoral imbecile. I'm sorry to say, because there are things about his domestic policies that I like, and I fear what a Donald Trump presidency will mean for the United States, and the little bit of democracy that exists because Donald Trump is an outright fascist. Biden, though, is a fool. But you look at these accusations, has there been some anti-Semitism in these protests? Yes, of course. Anti-Semitism is rampant in the world. I despise anti-Semitism. I don't like Hamas. I don't support Hamas. But if you look at US media, the way this is framed is this pro-Palestinian rallies or pro Hamas-rallies or pro-terrorist rallies on the campuses. Bullshit. That's not what is going on. These students are seeing these images on their TikTok accounts of horrific destruction and the killing of civilians. These are anti-slaughter anti-genocide protests. To some extent they are pro-Palestinian, but that's not at the heart of it. And there's a tiny bit of anti-Semitism, but for the most part the protests have policed that anti-Semitism because they know, not only is it wrong, but it also is used by the media, the establishment, the Republicans, the pro-war Democrats, in order to undermine the credibility of the protest.

So do I approve of blocking people's access? In general, no. But that's happened in every protest. You look at what Rosa Parks did. You look at what Martin Luther King did. You look at what every great protest movement has done. All of which have been on the right side of history. And they have all disrupted people and blocked people's access and limited ways. So I prefer other kinds of protest, but I applaud the students. I applaud the professors, and I

applaud the student newspapers and the journalists who have been out there telling the truth against the lies being spread by Shafik in her congressional testimony. The lies being spread by the mass media in the United States about what's going on. I mean, I talk to my students who are participating in the DC area; all the student protesters from AU [American University] and Georgetown are congregating at George Washington University. And most of the students, my strongest protesters who are participating, most of them are Jewish. And I ask them, have they encountered any anti-Semitism during these protests? And they tell me no. They tell me the only bullying and harassment they're getting are from other Jewish students, who are putting pressure on them and decrying their participation and threatening them if they continue to participate. And does that mean that there's no anti-Semitism? No, I'm not naive enough to believe that. Anti-Semitism is rampant in the world and has to be condemned, and there's no place for it in these protests. But the comparison of how much anti-Semitism is occurring, compared to the slaughter that's occurring, is negligible and is a phony issue that is picked up by the media. And I would love to see those protests spread through Germany as they're spreading throughout much of the world now. Students are the moral voice. And the other point that's important to make is that, the campuses, the universities are the last bastion of progressivism in the United States. There are some voices in the media, but there are a minority. There really is no other institution that the right wing, that the Trump aides, the MAGA people and their allies don't control, which is why they're going after the universities now. And we cannot let them win. And any time you have one of these university presidents who caves into that pressure, does not support academic freedom, does not allow protests on campus, calls in the police, this is giving in to those reactionary forces that are trying to take over the universities also. This has been a systematic campaign. We can trace it back to the attacks on postmodernism. We can trace it back to the attacks on anti-racists on the campus. We can trace it back to the attacks on wokeism on the campus. They've been trying to discredit the universities for years, talking about how expensive they are and how the students are better off not going. You know, the various lines of attack. But now the latest is this attack on the campus protesters. And this is resonating the most. And we see the right wing Republicans and their Democratic Party allies, all of whom basically espoused the same imperial nonsense, are now trying to take over the universities. Well, they're not succeeding, and they cannot be allowed to succeed.

ZR: I would like to switch gears here and examine the developments related to Ukraine. After months of delay due to domestic political differences, the US Congress was finally able to pass a comprehensive \$95.3 billion foreign aid package at the end of last month. This aid package includes \$61 billion to support Ukraine in its war against Russia. Most of the funds will go towards replenishing US stockpiles and purchasing US defense systems. One notable difference, however, is the Army Tactical Missile systems, also known as ATACMS. Until now, the US sent ATACMS with a range of 160km and now for the first time, they will send ATACMS with a range of 300km, which, according to many military analysts appearing in Western media, will make a significant difference in favor of the Ukraine military. End of last month, NATO General Secretary Jens Stoltenberg, while visiting Ukraine, also talked about Ukraine's NATO membership by announcing, quote, "Ukraine's rightful place is in NATO. Ukraine will become a member of NATO. The work we are undertaking now puts you on an

irreversible path towards NATO membership so that when the time is right, Ukraine can become a NATO member straight away", unquote. Furthermore, more recently, French President Emmanuel Macron stated that his country would consider sending ground troops to Ukraine if they ever requested backup and to follow up UK Foreign Secretary David Cameron stated that he would allow British weapons to be used to hit targets inside Russia if Ukraine wanted to do so. In response to this, Russia announced just a few days ago that it will hold drills that will include exercises for the use of tactical nuclear weapons. How do you assess these developments? And secondly, do you think that the latest aid package which includes long range ATACMS can shift the power dynamics in the battlefield and uplift Ukraine to victory?

PK: Well, you laid it out very well there, Zain. The lunatics have taken over the asylum. I mean, we've got mad men who are running global affairs. These are not rational people. They might not even be sane people. And they are threatening the world with nuclear annihilation. We're getting closer by the day. And you look at the situation and first of all, so far as the efficacy of the new weapon systems, so the US has sent a bigger and more powerful ATACMS, as you say, and you didn't mention, I don't think, the F-16s, which are now becoming operational inside of Ukraine. The ATACMS, the F-16s, on top of the HIMARS, and on top of the tanks that Germany and the US have been providing, you know, it's an illusion. It's the illusion that somehow these new weapons systems give Ukraine greater capability to attack inside Russia are going to turn the tide of war. It's not going to happen. And the basic things that are actually determining what's happening on the battlefield, the artillery ammunition, the number of troops deployable, there's no way that Ukraine can compete with Russia right now. Russia has turned itself, sadly, in my opinion, into a military industrial state. That more than a third of Russia's budget now goes to the military and the war.

We saw what happened in the 1970s and 80s inside Russia that triggered the first collapse of the Soviet Union. In the long run, this is unsustainable. But in the short run, it gives Russia an enormous military advantage over Ukraine, which is why Russia is prevailing on the battlefield, taking more and more ground and putting Ukraine in a weaker and weaker position. Now, it looked for a long time that the right wing Republicans were going to force Mike Johnson's hand and not allow him to bring up this weapons package, in the Congress, in the House. But Johnson caved in. His justification was, Oh, I saw the intelligence reports and I got the briefings and I realized what a threat Russia poses. And then he went on to say the big lie at the heart of the Western strategy: And I didn't want to see Russia marching through Europe after they defeat Ukraine. This idiocy, this idea that somehow Putin and Russia are such a threat that if they prevail in Ukraine, they are going to then take the Baltic states, then they're going to take Poland, and pretty soon they're going to be at your doorstep in Germany, this is madness. But we've seen this kind of threat inflation repeatedly throughout the Cold War and since the Cold War. Think back to the missile gap after Russia launched Sputnik. Well, the American, you know, experts were saying soon they're gonna outnumber us 3000 or 1000 to ten, and they're going to attack. The United States will be defenseless. And, you know, the reality was the US had between a ten to one and 100 to one advantage in ICBMs by

the time the Kennedy administration began. But this is the kind of scaremongering that we've seen over and over and over again. And that's what we hear from Biden, we hear from Austin, we hear from Blinken, from Sullivan, I mean go down the line. And this is what we hear from all of them. We heard that again from Mike Johnson when he justified this.

So what the reality is, is that Russia is going to make gains on the battlefield. The new weapons systems are going to give Ukraine some capabilities they don't have now. It's going to strengthen their ability to attack the Russian fleet in the Black Sea. It's going to strengthen their ability to knock out some Russian oil refineries, which Biden doesn't really want, because he doesn't want the price of oil and gas to skyrocket before the election, because that's driving inflation and is going to weaken his position further. But that's what's going to be happening. And Russia's response – because threatening tactical nuclear weapons is not the right answer either. Anything that threatens nuclear war is madness. But Putin is doing this calculatingly, because he believes it's going to send the message to the West to back off. It would if there were reasonable statesmen in charge. Is it going to back Scholz off? Macron? Biden? Zelensky? Who is it going to back off? None of them. They first say they're not going to give the new weapons systems. And then every single time they do it. The only thing they have not sent so far are Ukraine's own nuclear weapons. But Poland has asked the United States to position weapons there. The US has six nuclear bases in Europe already; five different countries. Two in Italy, have nuclear weapons in Germany and now Poland wants them also. So Putin is responding in kind and anybody who in any way escalates nuclear threats is playing with insanity right now because we're getting closer and closer. There is no way that Russia is going to give up the territory it occupies in Ukraine. It's not going to happen and they're not going to give up Crimea. It's not going to happen. And many people in the West recognize that. And there are some same voices who are pushing for diplomacy. Understanding that at the end, when this ends, it's going to end with a diplomatic negotiated settlement. We can effectively envision where that's going to be. What is anybody going to gain by prolonging this for a year or two years and sending more weapons in and keep the Ukrainians fighting? Well, how are we going to be better off a year from now, with a half million more Ukrainians and Russians dead on the battlefield and basically the same stalemate we're in now?! You know, dead and wounded. That would be a tragedy. And that's where we're headed.

And so let's get to the end point now, before World War three. I mean, the danger is World War three is looming on multiple fronts in the world right now. And to extend there's any diplomacy, there's certainly none going on about Ukraine. There's none going on between the Americans or the Russians. There are no strategic stability talks. There are no military to military negotiations between the US and Russia. The arms control treaties have effectively all been dismantled at this point. Where are we going with this? And who's to gain? Nobody is to gain. We're all going to lose. Putin has said he is willing to negotiate. Let's call his bluff. Let's sit down and see what terms Russia is willing to accept. Let's sit down and see if they are willing to compromise and allow long term security for Ukraine, and end this absurd prattling about Russia's desire to reestablish the old Russian Empire. Look at what Russia has had to do to defeat Ukraine. You know, even if they can't defeat Ukraine, they're going to

defeat Poland and NATO? That's absurd, is beyond absurd. But that's what they're trying to scare the American people and the Europeans into believing. And Macron wanting to send combat troops, European combat troops into Ukraine is exactly the way we start World War three. So I mean, to think of these people as statesmen, I think of them as fools. I think of them as suicidal, homicidal fools, each and every one of them. And they're delusional. They're dangerous. They've got to be overthrown. So I guess I'm calling for regime change. I'd like to see regime change everywhere. I'd like to see it in the US, not regime change with Trump, regime change with progressives. In the US, in Germany, in France, in Russia, I'd like to see it everywhere because none of these leaders speak for the planet. We've got real planetary needs and none of them address them. Gutierrez does. The Pope does. Lula does. I can't think of very many other leaders who are doing that now. But there are some steps toward diplomacy. China has put forth a plan for diplomacy in Ukraine, much of which could be viable. And the other thing is, as you know, Zain, back in March of 2022, we had an agreement. It was effectively in place. And then Bozo Boris Johnson goes over to Kiev and tells Zelensky, don't go along with this, we will support you. We'll arm you. You know, we've got your back as far as it goes. And then the US weighs in also. And so that agreement would have been an acceptable agreement, just like the old Minsk agreements were an acceptable basis. But now, as you say, there again, Stoltenberg and the other clowns are again talking about Ukraine going to NATO. They really think Russia is going to accept it after all, that it's sacrificing in order to prevent that? Every wise American and international statesmen warned against the expansion of NATO to Russia's doorstep, and they went ahead blindly, recklessly anyway. And now those same idiots are running the policy and pushing us toward World War three. We have to stop them before it's too late.

ZR: Peter, unfortunately, we have run out of time. Even though I wanted to talk about China. Let's catch up on that next time. Professor of history and the director at the Nuclear Study Institute, Peter Kuznick, thanks again for joining us today.

PK: Anytime, Zain. Always good to talk to you.

ZR: And thank you for tuning in today. If you're still here, please just take a few minutes to join our alternative channels on Rumble, Telegram and our podcast called Podbean. YouTube, which is owned by Google, can shadowban or censor us at any time and in case if that ever happens, we won't be able to reach you even with an announcement. You will find the links to all of these platforms in the description of this video. And if you're watching our videos regularly, make sure to support us with a standing order via Patreon, BetterPlace, PayPal or directly to our bank account. We are an independent and a nonprofit media organization that does not take any money from corporations or governments. Hence, we only depend on you, our viewers, to continue. I'm your host, Zain Raza. Thank you for your support and see you next time.

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