Epstein Files, Ukraine's Corruption Scandal & Gaza Blackout – Prof. Peter 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 we begin this interview, I would like to remind you to join our alternative channels on Rumble and Telegram. We're not asking you to leave YouTube permanently. All we're requesting you is to join these channels as a precautionary measure as YouTube is owned by Google and Google has a history of shadowbanning and censoring content of alternative channels that provide a different perspective, especially on Ukraine and Israel. How you can join our alternative channels, you will find out in the description of this video below.

Today I'll be talking to Peter Kuznick, who is a professor of history and the director of the Nuclear Studies Institute at the American University. He is also an author and has written a book with film director and producer Oliver Stone called The Untold History of the United States. Peter, glad to have you back on the show.

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

ZR: Let us start with US domestic politics and President Trump's political future. We have seen significant wins by the Democrats in November. Zohran Mamdani was elected mayor of New York City and Democrats also secured governorships in Virginia with Abigail Spanberger and in New Jersey with Mikie Sherrill. Meanwhile, newly released documents from the estate of Jeffrey Epstein show an email alleging that Donald Trump spent hours with one of Epstein's victims at his house, renewing public scrutiny of their relationship. Given these developments, what is the significance of all of this for Trump's tenor and the Republican Party? Do you believe he will be able to maintain control through the forthcoming midterms and hold on to power through the end of his terms, or do you anticipate significant political changes on the horizon?

PK: Domestic politics in the United States are more interesting now than they've been for a few years because Trump was carrying out his project 2025 fascist agenda in all aspects and it was ugly. And progressives in the US were on the defensive. We saw horrible things happening to undocumented people, but also just to people of color who were just getting randomly beaten up by masked ICE agents in the streets surrounded by the National Guard Marines. I mean, Trump was acclimating the American public to accept troops in the street to enforce his fascist agenda. There was also the rising prices because of his crazy tariff policy, which was hurting nobody as much as it was hurting American consumers, because we know who pays the price for these tariffs. It's not the overseas countries and exporters, it's not even the importers. It's passed on to the consumers. So the American people were hurting. Then Trump starts to cut the food stamps program, the SNAP program, and starts to cut the subsidies for health care. Health care is starting to rise. And so the American people were in a state of rebellion.

What happened in last Tuesday's elections was a cross the board sweep by the Democrats, mainstream and progressives. The election in New York City of Mamdani over the establishment Democrats was beautiful to watch. Because what we saw there was young people coming out. What we saw there, we saw in all the elections, was the groups that had defected to Trump in 2024, which means Latinos, more black Americans, the younger people, and some of the elderly, and even women, now had come back to the democratic fold. Now, that's a mixed blessing, you could say, because the Democrats are no bargain either. But at least they're not fascist. They might be neocons. We could say that many of the neocons have migrated to the Democratic party and that their foreign policy can be as rotten and corrupt and hawkish as the Republican foreign policy in some instances, but they're no fascist, which means Trump is already putting into place efforts to steal the 2026 election. And he keeps on throwing about the idea that he might run again in 2028, even though the Constitution forbids it.

But, you know, in Trump's America, anything is possible. So you've got violence, you've gotten lies. The policy overall, which is why the Democrats were so angry, is Trump was cutting social programs for poor people in order to give trillions of dollars in tax breaks to the wealthiest Americans. In what universe that is acceptable, I don't know. We're seeing some of the same kind of thing going on in Germany. Not so much to give tax breaks to the wealthy, but to support the war machine in Germany, as Merz wants Germany to become the most powerful country militarily in Europe and stand up to the Russians and threaten the Russians. So we see crazy things, dangerous things, immoral things going on everywhere right now. But Trump was the leader. And even with the right-wing parties that are emerging and gaining strength in Europe, many of them pointed to Trump as their inspiration. So he was going – and there was no resistance. The courts below the Supreme Court were resisting him but the Supreme Court kept caving in, capitulating, encouraging him, empowering him. And that's where the ultimate strength lies.

And you saw in Congress, the Republicans were just a party of sycophants, cheering Trump on and approving everything he did and giving up their power. The House of Representatives

and the Senate have been castrated. They've got no power left, even though we're supposed to have a system of checks and balances. So the situation was dismal. But in this election, we saw people fighting back. And overwhelmingly – it was expected to be very, very close. I was talking with somebody who was a top Republican official who thought that the Republicans had a 50-50 shot at winning in New Jersey. They didn't win New Jersey, they lost by more than 13 points in New Jersey. In Virginia, they lost more than 15 points. In New York, Mamdani carried it by almost 10 points as a democratic socialist, openly embracing democratic socialism. But we saw in the minor elections everywhere in the country, even states like Mississippi or Georgia, the Democrats and the anti-Trump's anti-fascist forces won overwhelmingly. And so what we're seeing is a shift going on, a polar shift.

And then the stupid spineless Democrats cave in on the shutdown. And eight of them vote with the Republicans to end the shutdown, just when the Democrats were finally feeling strong and empowered. But then the Epstein files come out. And these are not even the ones that the US has. And so you've got Trump there and you've got Pam Bondi and you got all the other Republicans saying, "oh, it's no big deal". It's a huge deal because what it does is it puts Trump and Epstein together so clearly in the public eye that I'm really worried. Because I think the real possibility, that, since this is so humiliating, so incriminating to Trump and so relevant to most of his MAGA base – it was Trump and the MAGA people who made a big deal of the Epstein files. And so now you see the Lauren Boeberts and the Nancy Maces and the Marjorie Taylor Greenes and the MAGA crazies now saying that we're going to have to release more files, we have to get to the bottom of this, get to the truth. And the truth is that Trump and Epstein were best friends for more than a decade. That Trump, as Epstein says, knew everything about his young girls who he was raping. And Trump enjoyed that. Trump, he said he hung out with the girls, spent hours and hours with, I think it was Virginia Giuffre. And Trump knew it. He helped cover it. He probably engaged with it. We don't know that for sure yet, but this is going to explode.

So what I fear is that in order to distract this, Trump is going to do what he's been wanting to do now and building for, and that's invade Venezuela. Trump is totally capable of starting a war in order to deflect attention from his own crimes, misdeeds, and horrible behavior. But the things that Epstein says about him, that he's crazy, that he is disgusting, that he was shameful, it's great to hear that coming out of Epstein because we know that. Also in the US, you had, since I last spoke to you, the No-Kings-rallies, seven million people out in the streets. Democrats were beginning to develop a backbone. But they haven't had one for a long time. Obama had no backbone. Obama caved repeatedly, whether it was to the bankers or to the military. And then with Biden, you know, with Biden, there was nobody home. Except for the Center for New American Security. So the Democrats had no backbone for a long time. And now they showed signs of developing one. So of course, eight of them decided it's time to cave in and show the Republicans they don't have to worry about us because we're really spineless as they thought we would be.

But there are signs of fight. And people like Chuck Schumer and others who are showing no leadership are likely to be ousted. Because young Democrats – what happened with

Mamdani, was he was at 1% in the polls, and then he caught on with the young people. And they not only supported him, but they were out there in the streets, organizing for him, and sending out tweets for him and using social media and raising money. It was a mobilization of a sort that we haven't seen since Obama initially. Because the people were very enthusiastic about Obama too. He disappointed from the beginning, but there was a lot of groundswell of enthusiasm and excitement about Obama, and then he killed it. He demobilized the movement immediately. But Mamdani is not going to do that, I hope.

ZR: I want to sidetrack a bit and talk about Dick Cheney, who died recently and was former US Vice President, long-time Republican power broker and one of the principal architects of America's post-9/11 foreign policy. Much of the mainstream coverage of his death in Germany has been remarkably selective in my observation. For example, on November 4th, the Tagesschau, Germany's biggest primetime news program that airs every day at 8 p.m. and is watched by millions, reported on Cheney's death and framed his political legacy simply as a response to "war and terrorism". The only critical element they included was a brief clip of Cheneys refusal to express any regret over the torture at Abu Ghraib Prison during the US occupation of Iraq in 2003. What the Tagesschau did not mention was his central role in fabricating the case for the Iraq War, his involvement in war crimes committed across the globe and the ways in which his policies helped create the very conditions for terrorism and regional instability throughout the Middle East. For audiences who may only have heard the sanitized version of his legacy, can you provide the broader context that is missing from mainstream reporting? What should people understand about Dick Cheney's real historical role and the ideas and doctrines he left behind that still shape Washington today?

PK: Do you know that when George W. Bush left office in 2008, they did a survey of American historians, presidential historians, and the overwhelming consensus was that the Bush-Cheney administration was the worst in American history. That Bush was the worst president in American history, and Cheney was even less popular than Bush in 2008, 2009. Now, obviously, Donald Trump has inherited the mantle of the worst president in US history. As the years passed, George W. Bush became a more benign figure. As hated as he was for the invasion of Afghanistan, the invasion of Iraq, for unsettling the entire global order, his neocon militarism – people forgot it. And George W. Bush became a painter, a benign figure who would show up and pal around with Obama and Clinton and the others, an esteemed former president. As Zhou Enlai once said, the Chinese leader, "the charming thing about Americans is that they have absolutely no historical memory". But the one I like to quote is the philosopher George Santayana, who's most known for saying that "if we forget the past, we're condemned to repeat it". But he also said that "a people without historical memory is a country of madmen". And that's what happens in the United States.

So they forgave George W. Bush, and they started to forgive Cheney. And then when Liz Cheney, the Republican Congresswoman from Wyoming, led the Republican fight against Donald Trump, especially after the 2020 election, which Trump said was stolen and then which Trump rallied the mob there before they attacked the Capitol, Liz Cheney led the attack and the attempt to impeach Trump and the condemnation of everything that was

Trumpian. But Dick Cheney came out publicly with her, condemning Trump and fighting for democracy. So people said, well, maybe he wasn't as bad as we thought. He was as bad as we thought. He was the brains behind George W. Bush. That's partly why they put him in as vice president, because they knew that George W Bush was a lightweight. He had no gravitas. He had no vision of the world.

So he came in with the Project for New American Century, the neocons founded in 1997 by William Kristol and Robert Kagan. And they brought in all of these militarists who said that the US has to build up its military and establish itself as the world's hegemon and reassert itself militarily around the world. And then they came out with the report saying that we cannot be able to do this quickly unless we have a new Pearl Harbor. And then we get hit on 9/11. And then, we've got our new Pearl harbor. And they immediately went into Afghanistan, even though Afghanistan was trying to negotiate with the United States to give up Bin Laden and al-Qaeda. But Cheney and the people around him, Rumsfeld and Condoleezza Rice and the other jerks who were in there and the militarists, said, "no, this is our opportunity, we can do this".

And then they want to go into Iraq, but they have to lie about it and say that Iraq has weapons of mass destruction. We should have known, and most people did know, based on all the reports that have come out, that Iraq had given up its weapons of mass destruction. But Cheney and Bush didn't want to hear that. They wanted to invade. And what we knew at that time, January 5th, 2003, New York Times Sunday magazine headlined, "American Empire – Get Used To It". And they came up with a list of seven countries they were going to topple. And that included Iran. That included Iraq. It included Syria. It included Somalia. It included Libya. Well, they laid it out. We knew that that's what they were going to do. And that was a Cheney vision.

And Cheney also emphasized the role of fossil fuels. He was an oilman. He was with Halliburton. And they were making a fortune around the world. And then they brought in Prince and the others. And so it was this ugly, horrific vision. In 1990, Charles Krauthammer, the neocon theorist, said "This is America's unipolar moment". But then he revisited that in 2001, after the invasion of Afghanistan, and he said, "I was wrong. I said it was a unipolar moment that was going to last 30 or 40 years. It's the unipola era. Nobody's going to be able to challenge us anytime in the foreseeable future". Well, this was the Cheney vision: Using American might to force the world to kneel under, to succumb to American hegemony and American economic and financial domination.

But then he was quiet because nobody wanted to hear from him because he was such a vile, hated figure in America throughout the Obama years, and even some of the Biden years, except for him working with his daughter to try to defend democracy. He was the biggest enemy of democracy in the country for those eight years that he and Bush were running the show. So he's got a little bit of a second life, as we're seeing in Germany and elsewhere. And they want to remember him as a good guy, as somebody who fought against narco-terrorism. They were the ones who declared the war on terror as the standard for American policy. It

was mad dog Jim Mattis in 2018 who said, "no, no, the threat to America is not from global terrorism. It's from Russia and China". Then they changed America's security strategy. But Cheney was a nightmare and he should be remembered for what a vile hawkish, economically dominating, anti-democratic brutal figure he really was. And the metaphor was when he had his heart replacement because Cheney never had a heart. He never had a sign of human compassion, kindness, or emotion.

When President Coolidge died in 1932, he was known as "Silent Cal" because he never spoke and he died and Dorothy Parker got the word that Coolidge had died and her comment was, "how can they tell, how can they know", because he was dead already when he was president and afterwards. Well, that's the same thing with Cheney. The man had no heart. He was living on borrowed time and he was probably a vampire. He probably went around and survived by biting people's necks and sucking their blood. That was the image that we had of Dick Cheney. So it was nice of the Germans, you know, now that they're rehabilitating the Nazis in Germany and the AFD and the racists and the fascists, they can rehabilitate Dick Chaney too – they go along.

ZR: Let us switch to the latest news, in particular Ukraine. I would like to first recap some of the notable developments for our viewers that took place in November: On November 3rd, the UK delivered another batch of long-range Storm Shadow missiles to Ukraine. On November 5th, Ukraine received advanced partner status with the UK-led Expeditionary Force, a defense framework of 10 NATO member states, bringing it closer into joint military planning with them. The European Union also increased economic pressure on Russia by passing its 19th sanctions package at the end of October. And already in early November talks are underway for another package. In the same period, Ukraine confirmed it will receive Sweden's JAS-39 Gripen fighter jets from 2026, a major boost to its air defense and strike capabilities. On November 12th, G7 foreign ministers reiterated their unwavering support for Ukraine and urged Russia to halt attacks on critical infrastructure.

On the battlefield, November has seen a sharp escalation in wrong-made strikes. Russia has carried out repeated drone and missile attacks on Ukraine's energy grid and civilian infrastructure, causing civilian deaths and damaging power plants, forcing emergency blackouts as winter approaches. Ukraine has struck fuel and energy facilities inside Russia in response. Meanwhile, the battle for Pokrovsk has intensified. Moscow claims it's "close to encircling the strategic city", while Kiev denies this, stating heavy fighting "is still continuing". Against this backdrop, Ukraine has been hit by a major corruption scandal. The justice and energy ministers were removed, other investigators uncovered an alleged $100 million embezzlement network centered on the state nuclear and energy sector, the same sector Russia is targeting most. At the center of the scheme is Timur Mindich, a long-time and close associate of President Zelensky, who is accused of exploiting martial law conditions and his personal access to the presidency for his personal enrichment. How significant do you think this scandal is in the broader context of the war? And could it complicate or erode Western support? Secondly, do you see any signs of diplomacy and peace setting at this stage with the European Union going fully hawkish?

PK: Well, that was a good summary, Zain. You touched on pretty much everything that I might have talked about. But the question you're asking about the corruption scandal, it's coming at a terrible time for Ukraine because Ukraine is losing on the battlefield. That becomes clearer every day. Pokrovsk is a major rail and road hub. Russia has about almost the entirety, 99% or so, of Luhansk. And it's got more than 75% of Donetsk. At the same time, according to the top commander of Ukraine, Syrskyi, Russia is making major advances in Zaporizhzhia. And we know this is a broader front that the Russians are taking. And they tried to, they've been fighting in Pokrovsk for over a year now. But the Russian strategy is a pincer movement. And they've got hundreds of troops inside of the city, plus they're surrounding it from the outside.

So it's looking very, very grim on the battlefield right now for Ukraine. And the Ukrainians are trying to sustain a narrative that they can hold on, because the false narrative being spread in Europe and in parts of the United States is that if we keep giving Ukraine more and more arms and financial support and help them rebuild their energy infrastructure, Ukraine can hold on for another year or two years and Putin is finally going to wear down especially if we keep increasing the sanctions and enforcing them to leading Russian oil companies and other entities inside of Russia and put more and more pressure on China and India to cut off the purchases. But in order to do that, they have to sell this idea that Ukraine can hold on on the battlefield.

And what's the reality there? The reality is that Ukraine's position gets weaker every day. Ukraine is losing more ground and more men. The situation in Ukraine is that Ukraine never had the manpower to defeat Russia, but they've pretty much taken all of the manpower they can get. What they're doing is picking up people, arresting people, young men, on the streets, in the schools, in the bars, and forcing them to join the military. What that does, is it lowers morale. Ukraine has been very brave. They've fought a brilliant fight up to this point, much better than almost anybody anticipated. But what's happening now is that the desertion rate on the battlefield is skyrocketing. As John Kerry said in Vietnam, "no one wants to be the last soldier to die for a lie". And that's what the Ukrainians are feeling, that the end is in sight, it's inevitable, and they don't want to be the last ones to die or lose an arm or lose a leg or lose an eye or lose their testicles, which is what's happening.

So, the situation is very dismal on the battlefield front, and the Europeans don't want to recognize that, because the Europeans have made clear they're willing to fight to the last Ukrainian. I have a lot of respect for Ukraine – not for the Neonazis, not for militarists who want to die for their country – but I don't want to see Ukraine dismembered. And the Minsk II Agreement, what Russia wanted initially, was not to dismember Ukraine. But what's happening is, the longer the war goes on, the worse shape Ukraine's going to be in. They lose more every day.

And now we've got this corruption scandal. Ukraine always had the reputation for being the most corrupt or the second most corrupt country in the world and the most corrupt country in

Europe, which is part of why People didn't want to give all that money because it was going into the pockets of this corrupt military, politicians, energy officials. That's why Hunter Biden's involvement there was so typical of what goes on in Ukraine. And so the situation now, Zelensky is begging for more air support, more air defense systems. And you've got comments by Ruta and the Swedish prime minister about how dangerous Russia is, and we need war with Ukraine. And you got Former NATO Secretary General Rasmussen saying that "the coalition of the willing should send troops to Ukraine immediately, not wait". But then you've got, on the other hand, a lot of pressure to use the frozen Russian assets to bail out Ukraine's economy. But you've got Fico from Slovakia and others saying "we can't do that, it's illegal, it's immoral, and we're not going to go along with it".

So Europe is divided. The European economies are hurting. Germany is a good example. Britain also, others too. It's in the interests of the European people to end this war, not to keep on funding it. And it seemed for a moment in Anchorage, that Trump understood what Putin's been talking about in terms of long-term or root-underlying interests. But then the Europeans rushed here and Ruta rushed here, and Callas and the others, and Trump, as he always does, agreed with the last person in the room. And he flipped and canceled the Budapest meeting with Putin. It looked like we were making progress. Well, I think they need to sit down. We need to have those negotiations. So Putin is trying to establish facts on the battlefield by taking all of the Donbass because he controls 90% of it, he wants the entirety and has said that all of it is part of Russia. I don't know, they're going to have to work that out on the battlefield. Ukraine's going to need security guarantees. It's not going to be NATO troops on the ground, but there are other ways to give Ukraine security guarantees. Russia wants the cultural issues, they want the Russian language, the Russian religion Russian, the Orthodox Church to be supported inside Russia and they don't want NATO, of course, that's the biggest issue from the beginning, and that Ukraine is not going to join it.

We know pretty much what the settlements are going to be. We should get there immediately before more Ukrainians die, before more Russians die. Ukraine's energy generating capacity is down 50% approximately now. Russia is striking the energy system. And then you've got the Ukrainians – first of all, Zelensky said Ukraine should have its own nuclear weapons. That's the last thing the world needs. And we already see nuclear proliferation starting. And we can get to the nuclear issues. That's mostly what I've been talking about lately around the world. Ukraine is trying to resist militarily, but the whole thing doesn't make any sense. We're going to see more dead, more of Ukraine's economy destroyed, more Russian troops dead, more Russia's suffering also. It's in everybody's best interest to end this as quickly as possible and try to rebuild Ukraine in a more peaceful way.

ZR: Yes, let's dig deeper into the nuclear aspect. Donald Trump recently, before meeting Chinese leader Xi Jinping, announced that he has given the goal for nuclear testing to begin. It is unclear whether it's going to be testing the systems or warheads, but nevertheless this has not been done by the US since, I believe, 1992, when the last test happened. And Russia immediately responded that they'll join too, as well as China said that they'll join nuclear testing as well. So can you talk about the implications of this as someone who directs the

Nuclear Studies Institute and has seen what has happened during the Cold War? What significance does this announcement have?

PK: Well, you put it in the right context. You can't overemphasize and exaggerate the significance of this. So on October 30th, Trump announced that the US was going to begin testing nuclear weapons "on an equal basis", this is a quote, with Russia and China. Well, "on equal basis" means Russia hasn't tested since 1990 and China hasn't tested since 1996. The only country that's tested in the 21st century is North Korea in 2017. They haven't tested since either. So, the first thing about this, the most significant, Trump is a fucking moron. He's an idiot. He doesn't know anything. The fact that a man who's that stupid and ignorant would have access to the nuclear codes is truly terrifying. So he says "we're going to test light". Then he said that "Russia, China, North Korea and Pakistan have been testing underground". There's no evidence to suggest that at all. India would have blown the whistle on Pakistan in a minute. The seismic kind of test, number two.

Number three, he said he "gave orders to the Secretary of War", we don't have a Secretary of war, but he means Pete Hegseth, to "begin testing immediately". That's great. First of all, the Defense Department, the War Department, does not conduct nuclear testing. The Department of Energy does. Secondly, in that regard, we can't do it immediately because our test site has rusted out over the past 33 years. It would take two to three years to get ready to begin testing. Furthermore, the United States has a stockpile stewardship program, which means we conduct sub-critical nuclear tests with supercomputers, with laser beams, with x-rays, we take it right to the point where there's going to be an explosion and we cut it off. We know that the nuclear weapons are going to work. We've got the most sophisticated nuclear testing program in the world.

And during the Cold War, we conducted 1,054 below-ground and atmospheric nuclear tests. The only one that was close to that, although not that close, was Russia, the Soviet Union. So, they know that their system is going to work. China conducted 45. That's all they've conducted. North Korea has conducted six nuclear tests. India has conducted three nuclear tests. Pakistan has conducted two nuclear tests. If we began nuclear testing, the ones who would benefit from that are not the United States, not Russia, but China, India, North Korea, Pakistan – they could all actually benefit.

But they've gone along with the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, and they haven't tested. So this would not only be stupid from the US standpoint, it would hurt the US more than anybody else. If we did so, then not only would the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty – which is not in force but its being respected – be destroyed, so would the Non-Proliferation Treaty, because we have countries all around the world that are itching to begin testing and developing their own nuclear programs. Beginning with South Korea, where 72% of the public says they want South Korea to have their own nuclear weapons.

Well, Zelensky says he wants Ukraine to have its own nuclear weapon again. We have Japan, the most anti-nuclear country in the world. Ishiba, before the previous Prime Minister, said

that Japan should have its own nuclear weapons. Takaichi has hinted at the same. Iran would develop nuclear weapons, Saudi Arabia, United Emirates, Egypt, Turkey would develop nuclear weapons. We have nuclear anarchy on a global scale. Is that really what anybody wants? All nine nuclear powers are already modernizing their nuclear arsenal. Most of them have announced plans to expand. It was Project 2025 which said that Trump should begin the nuclear testing again, nuclear weapons testing. Project 2025 also said the US should expand its nuclear arsenals and make them more usable.

So what we are, we are on the road to madness, to insanity, to World War III, to a nuclear World War III. Fortunately, during the Russian Security Council meeting, when Defense Minister Belousov and General Gerasimov and Shoigu talked about what the US might be doing, Putin said, "we're part of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty. We're going to stick to that. We are not going to do anything hasty or precipitate. We're going to wait until we get more information, clarification of what the US is actually doing". And Putin also doubled down on his call to the US to extend the New START Treaty for another year while we negotiate. Well, the New START Treaty ends February 5th, 2026, which is around the corner. And when he had a chance to extend it back in 2020, when Trump was president the first time, he refused to do so. If we get rid of the New START Treaty, that's the last nuclear arms control treaty. We need new nuclear security architecture globally. We need to be sitting down and talking. Right now, Trump is not talking, and he's building up and threatening the nuclear forces. Well, the world has gotten much more dangerous.

On June 11th of this year, Tulsi Gabbard, in one of her increasingly rare, lucid moments, issued a two and a half minute video, starting in Hiroshima, where she showed Hiroshima and talked about the fact that that was a tiny nuclear explosion compared to what we have now. She said "the world is closer to nuclear annihilation now than we've ever been before". She was terrified because she knew two days later, Israel started bombing Iran. But then, two weeks ago, Sergey Naryshkin, the head of the SVR, the Russian intelligence agency, said that the global situation now is more fragile, global security is more fragile today than it has been at any time since World War II. So you have these two spy chiefs both saying we're at a more crucial and dangerous and fragile moment than we've been since ever. And we know there's no such thing as a limited nuclear war. We know that there's enough nuclear weapons to end life on the planet, effectively. And we keep on going like mad blind lemmings jumping off a cliff, threatening each other, threatening China, threatening North Korea, India and Pakistan, again on the verge of military conflict. The world is just too dangerous. We need to cool down, step back. We need diplomacy. As you and I have talked about, the world has enough warmongers. What we need are some diplomats.

ZR: Let us switch regions and move to Gaza where, since the so-called ceasefire agreement was signed in October, we have seen what appears to be a noticeable drop in Western media coverage. For example, the Tagesschau, which I mentioned before in the opening question, has, according to my observation, only covered the situation in Israel-Gaza once in November and that was on the 13th November in its 8pm prime time segment. Even that segment was limited to Germany's Foreign Minister Johann Wadephul’s statements during his

visit to Israel, in which he stated that his "trust in the process between Israel and Palestine has grown", and also signaled that "travel restrictions for Israel could be eased". We are seeing the same trend of reversal towards Israel across Europe. For example, the EU has put discussions of further sanctions on hold to "give the ceasefire a chance", and French President Macron has lifted France's earlier ban on Israeli defense companies participating in a major Paris security expo.

On the ground, however, the situation has continued to deteriorate. In the West Bank, the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs documented at least 264 attacks by Israeli settlers in the West Bank in October, the highest number ever recorded. In Gaza, Al Jazeera reports that since the ceasefire began, Israel has violated it at least 282 times, killing 240 Palestinians and wounding more than 600. Humanitarian access also remains far below the agreed level under the ceasefire. Although Israel had promised up to 600 delivery trucks per day, data suggests roughly 4,450 trucks entered Gaza between October 10th and early November, an average of about 170 per day. Since Israel began its assault in October 2023, around 68,000 civilians have been killed in Gaza, as well as hundreds of thousands have been wounded. In your view, do you think Trump's Gaza peace plan and the ceasefire will be able to hold and bring about lasting peace, especially when we take into consideration that the plan makes no mention of Israeli occupation, annexation or the ongoing violence in the West Bank, nor of equal rights for Palestinians, and only offers a vague reference to a future Palestinian state?

PK: Again, Zain, great summary of what's going on. I share your pessimism. Trump didn't care about the details. Trump is rather a shallow man. And then you put in Jared Kushner and some of the other negotiators, whose understanding is also very, very limited. Kushner wants to set up his Paris on the Riviera in the Middle East and rebuild and put luxury hotels and golf courses there and big buildings with Trump's name on them and make billions of dollars in the process. Trump's big desire is to be seen as a peacemaker. It's the biggest joke going. But Trump wanted a ceasefire so he could claim credit for having brought peace to the region. That's a very complicated situation that we've had people working on for 80 years almost now without being able to figure out how we're going to peacefully and diplomatically resolve the conflict there. But Trump got them to stop firing at each other for a minute and a half and claim victory there as well as he does between India and Pakistan. The reality is much more complicated. Hamas is not going to disarm itself, even though that was part of the supposed conditions. Israel is not going to support a role for the Palestinian Authority, even though the Palestinian Authority is weak and unpopular. They're not going to allow a Hamas-accepted solution with Hamas. Israel controls 53% of Gaza. Gaza was so tightly packed beforehand, they don't want to be in the Israeli sector. When they talk about rebuilding, they're only talking about the Israeli controlled 53%.

But the biggest stumbling block of course is the two-state solution. Everybody who talks about the area says there's not going to be any peaceful resolution until there's a Palestinian state. Netanyahu and his cabinet would rather go to war. They want to go to war, they never wanted the war to end. Trump put some pressure on them. Netanyahu knows if the war ever

ends, he's going to be behind bars, as well as probably out of office. So there's really no incentive on the ground to end this. Trump wants Saudi Arabia to join the Abraham Accords. The governments in the Middle East are pretty reprehensible, backward, misogynistic, reactionary. But they know that the Arab populations are so angry about what's going on. They've seen this genocide, this destruction. You look at this video from Gaza and it looks like atomic bombs, nuclear bombs were dropped there. All you see is rubble. They've destroyed it. People can't live there. Their lives are in tatters. They're starving. Their health, the kids are growing up without nutrition, without education. I mean, it is an absolute nightmare. And the Arab populations, the Gulf state populations see this and they're not going to let their leaders cave into Netanyahu. And so what we have there, it's going to blow up almost certainly at some point. And we'll be back where we were before. I mean, I prefer to see a ceasefire. I wish they would let the aid trucks in. There's no real leadership to try to make that happen. And so if the Germans and the others and the French want to delude themselves into thinking that this is somehow going to bring stability, I think that they're deluding themselves, blowing smoke and deluding their populations. I would much rather see the money go to rebuilding Gaza than go to killing more Ukrainians and Russians, it would be better spent there as well.

ZR: Let us now turn to Latin America, in particular Venezuela, where the Trump administration has sharply escalated its military and maritime posture. Washington says this campaign is aimed at cracking down on drug trafficking networks and transnational criminal organisations operating in the Caribbean and across Latin America. As part of that, US forces have deployed the USS Gerald R. Ford carrier strike group to the region and air. Sea strikes and suspected trafficking vessels in the Caribbean have killed at least 70 people and destroyed at least 18 boats since September. What, in your view, is the real agenda here behind the US escalation in Latin America and the Caribbean? And could you, for our viewers who might not know much about the historical context regarding US-Venezuela relations, provide that?

PK: Well, the US has been trying to destabilize and topple the Venezuelan government for a long time. This goes back to Hugo Chávez. Hugo Chávez was a powerful critic of the US empire and the US role in Latin America. What you have to know about Venezuela is they've got vast oil reserves. Some think they've got the biggest oil reserves in the world. The United States would love to seize Venezuela's oil reserves. And what they can do with that is several things. Number one, if the US sees Venezuela's oil reserves and unleash them on the world, that would dramatically lower the cost internationally, which would greatly weaken Russia. Among others, Saudi Arabia too, but it would weaken Russia the most. However, if Venezuela cut off the supply of oil to Cuba, then the United States could finally topple the Cuban government, which would likely collapse because of economic misery in Cuba without Venezuelan oil. So Venezuela is key. The US has been plotting to overthrow the Venezuelan government for decades.

However, Venezuela has friendly relations with Russia, friendly relations with China, friendly relations with much of Latin America. And so Trump has embarked on his new strategy,

sending American troops. There are about 10,000 American troops in the region. There are ten American naval vessels. As you say, the USS Gerald R. Ford Aircraft carrier strike group is in the region, and the US has been conducting not only destabilization operations through the CIA, but also attacks on boats in the area. They've now attacked 19 boats at least, and killed at least 76 people, which is flagrantly illegal according to international law. The US says these are narco-terrorists.

First of all, the drug that Americans are most worried about is fentanyl. Fentanyl gets made largely in Colombia. It doesn't get produced in Venezuela. The Venezuelan boats that the US was shooting down can't make it to the United States. These are small vessels. And it's against international law to be doing that. US law requires that the US embark on those boats, we land in those boats, we investigate and we arrest people. But Trump and Hegseth, led by Marco Rubio, Marco Rubio is the real brain behind this operation. Hegseth doesn't have a brain. Rubio has a brain, but it's an evil brain. You know, when Trump called him "little Marco", he was talking about a different body part. But the brain is probably a normal sized brain. But he's ruined by being a Cuban-American, having this hatred of communism and hatred of anything left-wing and progressive. He's the one who's friends with Machado. Machado recently won the Nobel Peace Prize. I mean, the Nobel Committee did great in 2024 when they named my nominee, Nihon Hidankyo, the Nobel Peace Prize winner. But all that goodwill that they did in 2024 under the new leadership, they reversed in 2025 when they picked Maria Machado, who called on Netanyahu to have Israel invade and overthrow Maduro and called upon the United States to invade and overthrow Maduro, and is close friends with Rubio. So she's an embarrassment, not only to the Nobel committee, but to the human race. And also not the first warmonger to be given the Nobel Peace Prize, sadly.

But the situation there – during the recent G7 meeting, you had the French foreign minister again, condemn the United States for illegal attacks on boats in the area, and Rubio effectively told him to go fuck himself, said, "we're going to decide about US security, not you". What does that have to do with US security? This has nothing to do with drug running in the area. They have supplied zero evidence of drug running. I don't doubt there's a lot of drug running going on, but the US has supplied zero evidence. So what is it about? The US wants to invade Venezuela and overthrow Maduro and replace him, put Machado or some other clown in there instead. Maduro is not my favorite leader, and Maduro's not a great Democrat by any means. But the people of Venezuela, if they decide they want to do that, should do it without US aid and support. Much of Latin America is arrayed against the United States. The US is trying to stir up its allies. They like what's going on in Bolivia. They like what's going on in other places where the US is getting involved, like Argentina. The US imposed a 50 percent tariff on Brazil because of Brazil's arrest of Bolsonaro for leading an illegal coup there. The US has reached out and propped up the Malay government with tens of billions of dollars in loans and assets at the time they won't give food stamps to poor and hungry Americans or give them the health benefits they need.

So we see what Trump's game is. It is very, very dangerous. The United States invaded Panama in 1989. The US has a long history of gunboat diplomacy in Latin America,

supporting banana republics, supporting military regimes, supporting death squads, which the US did, training the death squads of Latin America. The US had a very, very vile record of history in Latin America. Overthrowing Allende in Chile, replacing him with Pinochet, overthrowing governments in the Dominican Republic and Honduras. I mean, you look at it, we have done it. And this is another step in that direction. So Trump says, "I'm a peacemaker". He says "I want the Nobel Peace Prize". Well, he should get the Nobel piece of shit prize for what he's doing in Venezuela, threatening to invade Nigeria, Panama… One of the things that came out in the Epstein files is Epstein saying that Trump is crazy and Trump is dangerous. And that part he got right, even though Epstein was not exactly an exemplary individual. The person who originally proposed to cut off Venezuela's oil to sink the government in Cuba was John Bolton. He wanted to do that when he was in office there. Now, Trump's gone after Bolton, and Bolton deserves whatever he gets. But even what Trump is doing is not based on what Bolton really deserves to be reprimanded for.

ZR: Peter Kuznick, author and historian, we will have to leave it here. Thank you so much for your time and insights.

PK: Always great to talk to you, Zain. I love your summaries of each of these issues.

ZR: And thank you for tuning in today. If you like the journalism that we undertook in this video and would like to follow our content going forward, then make sure to click on the subscribe button below. And don't forget to donate as we are a non-profit and independent media organization that does not take any money from corporations or governments, all with the goal of providing you with the information that is free from any external influence. I thank you all for your support and for tuning in. I'm your host Zain Raza. See you next time.

END

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