

## Epstein, Iran, Ukraine & Japan: The Geopolitical Context

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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 begin this interview, I would like to remind you to join our alternative channels on Rumble and Telegram. YouTube, which is owned by Google, can shadowban and censor us at any time. And if that day ever comes, we won't be able to reach you with our information, let alone with an announcement. We are not asking you to leave YouTube permanently. All we're asking you is to sign up on these alternative channels so you can still stay in touch with us. The links to all of these platforms you will find in the description of this video below. Today I'll be talking to Professor of History and the Director of the Nuclear Studies Institute at American University, Peter Kuznick. Peter is also an author and has written a book with Hollywood film director and 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, we need to talk about this stuff because the world is going to hell in a handbasket right now.

**ZR:** Let us also hope that our discussion leads to some fruitful development. Let me begin with the Epstein files. In late January 2026, the US Department of Justice released approximately 3.5 million pages of previously sealed Epstein-related material under the Epstein Files Transparency Act. Let's start with the United States. Members of Congress, including Ro Khanna and Thomas Massie, publicly identified six previously redacted names in the documents, among them, Lex Wexner, the former Victoria Secret owner, whom the FBI reportedly described as a co-conspirator, though he's not been charged as of yet. The release has triggered institutional consequences, most notably the resignation of Goldman Sachs chief legal counselor and former Obama White House counsel Kathryn Ruemmler after emails revealed continued contact with Epstein, including exchanges of gifts. And the fallout has spread internationally. The files include correspondence involving Sultan Ahmed bin Sulayem, chairman and CEO of DP World, a Dubai-based global ports operator. In the United Kingdom scrutiny has intensified around Prime Minister Keir Starmer, who appointed Peter Mandelson as ambassador to Washington despite being aware of his past contact with

Epstein. Investigative reporting Drop Site News based on released documents reveals that Epstein had relationships with senior Israeli figures including former Prime Minister Ehud Barak, as well as references to Israeli intelligence official Yoni Koren and indicates that Epstein facilitated security and intelligence initiatives involving Israeli interests abroad. Peter, what revelations in the latest tranche of Epstein documents stand out for you the most and what impact is it having on the US political system? Can the Trump administration survive this in your view?

**PK:** All of the above, you laid it out perfectly. His tentacles had reached everywhere, and that was part of his strategy. I mean, it's a deliberate attempt to bring in as many people into this sordid, disgusting, despicable world as possible. We don't know the extent of his intelligence ties. We know some of his ties to Mossad, to Israeli intelligence, but there's also lots of speculation about British intelligence, MI6, the CIA. I mean, this guy just reached out, even reached out to good people on occasion, like Noam Chomsky. I mean there's very disturbing revelations about Noam and Valeria Chomsky in there. Some people he brought in because they were naive. They didn't know. I'm even mentioned twice in there. My students looked it up. But only as references to my work with Oliver Stone, people were telling him, oh, you've got to read and watch Untold History because it's so brilliant. But I never heard from him. But you can see how it can happen easily. You don't know who the guy is. He reaches out to you. And then somehow, you get minimally involved. You don't get involved in the disgusting stuff he does. But he could reach out to people who could be very, very naive and not know. But if somebody like Trump, who according to Jamie Raskin's name is in the files a million times or more, and you look at those videos of him with Trump, they're like two frat boys, Trump is this fat little frat boy ogling women as they are there on the dance floor. This is the world of people who are amoral, who seek power, have power, exercise it differently, without any sense of social responsibility. And they're like Bosch's Garden of Delights, these gluttons who see nothing beyond their own sensory needs, without any morality, which is what Trump said to the New York Times. The Times asked him: What are the constraints upon your exercise of power? He says there are no constraints. The only thing that limits me is my own morality, my own mind. I don't care about international law. I don't care about a rules-based international order, or the US Constitution, or the United Nations. And the irony, of course, is that the ones who are most concerned about this were the QAnon network. And they were right to a much greater extent than we realized, that there is an international group of pedophiles, but also an elite that thinks it's above power, and above morality and conscience, and above international law. And they should all be taken down, whether they're Republicans or Democrats. Will it be the end of the Trump administration? I don't know if you saw Pam Bondi's testimony this week before Congress, but it was the worst performance ever before a congressional committee. Jamie Raskin described it as her burn book with insults. In case anybody asked her questions that were tough, she would just come back with an insult and a shouting match of screaming and hysterics. She would not answer anything. She couldn't answer anything. She would say that: Oh look, why did you not ask this during the Biden administration? Well, that's fine. They should have asked it under the Bush administration, under the Obama administration, under the first Trump administration, under the Biden administration, under the second Trump administration. That's not an intelligent

response, but its attempt to deflect, which is the Trump strategy, which he learned from Roy Cohn decades ago. Don't ever back down, don't ever apologize, don't ever admit a mistake, just go on the offensive and attack the person who's criticizing you or questioning you. And Pam Bondi tries that because they all know that they've only got one audience, and it's not the Democrats and it's not the people in Congress and it is not the MAGA base. It's Donald Trump and he eats this stuff up because he is so vile. As I've said all along, Trump is not just an embarrassment to the Republicans, he's not just an embarrassment to his family, he's not an embarrassment to himself, he's an embarrassment to the human species. How do we create a monster like this without any morality, who's such a pathological liar, pathological narcissist, but he's got access to the nuclear codes?! There's nobody standing between him and pushing the nuclear button. And that's what's so terrifying about the New START Treaty, about the Board of Peace, about all the things he does and all the people who flatter him, who propitiate him. You know, all these servile, obsequious scum out there who want to be in his good graces. When the only thing you can do with somebody like that is stand up to him, call him out for what he is. Not only the worst American president in history, but the worst leader in the world since World War II. Has he done the crimes of a Nixon or a Johnson yet? No, fortunately, but he's certainly capable of that.

**ZR:** Let us now move to geopolitical issues and focus first on Iran. Let me recap some of the latest developments for our viewers first. In January, nationwide demonstrations erupted across Iran amid worsening economic conditions and political frustration, leading to violent clashes with government security forces. The Iranian government has put the official death toll at roughly 3,117 people, including civilians and security personnel. Independent monitors such as the US Registered Human Rights Activist News Agency cited 700 deaths, whereas an investigation conducted by the Guardian suggested around over 30,000. The European Union followed by designating the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps as a terrorist organization and approved additional sanctions tied to the government. On February 6th, 2026, the United States and Iran held indirect talks in Muscat, Oman. Both sides described the meeting as constructive first, but no follow-up round has been formally scheduled. Since then, Washington has reinforced its military posture. In the region, the USS Abraham Lincoln has now been joined by USS Gerald Ford. And yesterday, President Trump warned publicly that if an agreement is not reached very quickly, the consequences could be, quote, "very traumatic", unquote. The United States has expanded the negotiation beyond Iran's nuclear enrichment program. It is also pressing on limiting Iran's ballistic missile capabilities and its support for regional actors such as Hezbollah in Lebanon and Houthis in Yemen, while Tehran maintains that these things are off the table. Peter, there is a growing perspective in parts of Germany that the West should consider strong intervention given the scale of repression and authoritarianism in Iran. What is your assessment of that view? And secondly, do you think the current negotiations can reach an agreement, especially with the new matters on the table.

**PK:** Before we get to the serious questions, you said roughly 3,117. That sounds pretty precise, not a rough figure. This is one of those situations, again, where there are no good guys. There are only bad guys. The Iranian regime, we call it, or government, whatever you

want to call it, that's been in power since 1979 – it's interesting that in the US, the commentary always starts, the farther back it goes is 1979. It never goes back to 1953, never goes to the fact that the US overthrew Mosaddegh, the most popular. The US ambassador to Iran at the time said he had the support of between 95 and 98% of the Iranian people. He was a hero throughout the Arab world, throughout the third world, the unaligned nation. But what was his crime? He nationalized British oil interests, which were exploiting the hell out of the Iranian people and paying them almost nothing for the oil they were taking. And so he finally nationalized them. And then the CIA goes in there in 1953 and overthrows him and puts in the Shah and this repressive regime that gets overthrown in 1979 by an Islamic revolution. I don't like theocracies of any sort, you know, for up to me, we've somehow managed to get rid of religion because it's more of a divisive and delusional force than it is a positive force in the world. But we have a lot of religions and a lot of people who get comfort from religion. I know that. But in Iran, the theocracy has been extremely repressive. And the treatment of women there is outrageous. It has been since 1979. So I have no support for the Iranian government. However, the thought that they would be overthrown by Trump and by Merz and the even more horrific forces around the world is not the way this could be done. The crackdown recently on dissent in Iran was hard to watch and it was outrageous. But Trump said he wants if they don't stop cracking down and killing their own citizens, we're going to intervene. Trump supports protests and dissent in Iran. He doesn't support it in Minneapolis, doesn't support Los Angeles, doesn't report in Chicago where he can actually influence it. And there he wants to put people in jail. Trump's been arresting and bringing charges against anyone with influence who opposes him in the United States, but he loves protesters in Iran. What a crock, right?

But the US is putting very heavy weaponry in that region, in addition to the 50,000 plus we have in the bases in Qatar and Saudi Arabia and other parts of the region. So it's very, very dangerous. Back during the 12-day war between Israel and Iran, the United States bombed the main Iranian nuclear sites, not only Fordow, but others as well, and tried to destroy Iran's nuclear capabilities. We had a deal with Iran. This was Obama's great foreign policy achievement. He didn't have many, this is probably the only one of note. And because it was Obama's, Trump needed to destroy it. Trump is envious of anything that Obama ever did. So in 2015, Obama concluded the JCPOA, the Iran nuclear deal. It was working. It was working brilliantly. It has some sunset provisions that Trump could criticize, but most of it was in perpetuity. And Iran was not going to develop a bomb. Iran shipped out 98% of its enriched uranium. It mothballed most of its centrifuges. It enriched to 2.7%, far from the 60% that it enriches to now and further from the 90% needed for nuclear weapons. So it was working brilliantly, but Trump didn't like it, so he blew it up, like he blows up every other treaty, most recently the New START Treaty. And then he goes in there and he bombs. And he thinks that that was a great success, his bombing. What it really was, was a sign of international recklessness and lawlessness on behalf of Netanyahu, the mass murderer, the genocidal maniac in Gaza, who's seen universally as the most evil leader in the world other than Trump right now. And so these two deserve each other, which is why they were together in the Oval Office this week, plotting how to, again, bomb Iran. And they do it partly even though it outrages international opinion, that's why they want to do it. Because Trump wants to show

that he's not constrained by any form of international law, international morality, international decency; that power is all there is. You know, as his leading advisor, the neo-Nazi, Stephen Miller, says, we live in a world, in the real world, that is governed by strength, that is governed by force, that is governed by power. These are the iron laws of the world since the beginning of time. But Trump surrounds himself with these fascists and imperialists. You look at them, Miller, Kristi Noem, Pete Hegseth, Kash Patel, I mean, he goes through the list. Marco Rubio is not a fascist, he's just an imperialist. He's just an anti-communist zealot who wants to overthrow Maduro and destroy the government in Cuba; who lies about it. You know, he says his parents fled Castro. His parents came to the United States in 1956, three years before Castro took power in Cuba. But he wants to be the viceroy of Cuba. And Cuba is very close to collapsing at this point. I'm disappointed. Russia should be sending oil to Cuba. Mexico is supplying other aid, but not oil. Cuba was getting 45% of its oil from Mexico, only 25% from Venezuela, some from Russia. But these countries should be providing that aid to Cuba. Again, the US has been trying to destroy and overthrow the government in Cuba since 1959. Even longer than it's hated the government in Iran by 20 years, and these sanctions and embargo have always reduced Cuba to bare subsistence. Now Cuba is threatened with a total collapse, because it doesn't have energy much of the day, doesn't have electricity, doesn't have computing, doesn't have power. So it's a tragic situation. But in a world, a dog-eat-dog world, the world of the Donald Trump's and Stephen Miller's, this is an easy target, to go after the low-hanging fruit first. And sadly, Cuba is that at this moment. So Iran is in the crosshairs. And Iran, as you mentioned, said that these things are non-negotiable. Under the Non-Proliferation Treaty, every country has the right to develop nuclear energy. And so Iran is not going to give up right to a rich uranium. It's not going to give up its missile program is the only thing that protects it from the Israelis. It's not going to give up its centrifuges. Iran has certain rights. I don't like the government there. I would love to see the Iranian people overthrow the theocracy and Khamenei and the others. But that's up to them and it's not up to the US and it is not up to Germany. Germany's got its own issues as well. I'm sure we're going to get to talk about it. Merz gave his speech today at the Munich Security Conference. And again, there's some signs of truth there, but the overall role that Germany is playing in the world, especially in Ukraine, is not a positive one.

**ZR:** Yeah, let's switch to Europe and talk about Ukraine as well as the Munich Security Conference. Let me first start with a small recap in Ukraine. In late January and early February, the United States, Ukraine and Russia held two rounds of US-brokered peace negotiations in Abu Dhabi, the first trilateral talks since 2022, aimed at exploring a possible pathway to end the war. The discussion resulted in a prisoner exchange involving 314 captives, 157 from each side. However, no breakthrough was reached on core territorial issues. Ukraine has agreed to continue talks, and additional rounds are expected to move to Geneva and potentially Miami. The Munich Security Conference that you mentioned is about to take place, and has already started. You mentioned Merz's speech. Also the US Secretary of State has spoken of a defining moment in a new era as he travels to Europe, where he is expected to hold a major speech. French president Macron also said in advance that Europe must prepare for independence from the US. This comes within the context of the entire thing that happened around Greenland, which many media outlets framed as a turning point or

major rupture in transatlantic relations. Since last year when Putin and Trump met in Alaska, one negotiation round has followed another, yet there have been no tangible results on the ground. There's a growing perception in Europe, especially in Ukraine, that this diplomacy may just be political theater rather than a general effort. What is your assessment of these ongoing diplomatic efforts within the context of what we talked about Greenland, the Munich Security Conference and everything?

**PK:** You know, again, as a historian, I've got to go back. I go back to the overthrow of the Soviet Union, the collapse of the Soviet Union, 1991; 1990, the meetings between Gorbachev and Bush and all the European leaders at that point. And Gorbachev never got it in writing, but they all said, if you allow the unification of Germany, then NATO will not expand one inch to the east. They all said it very explicitly. We have the documents. But within that year, NATO was beginning to plan expansion in 1990, before anything. And then it doesn't start the actual expansion until 1998. But even Yeltsin, who was Clinton's puppy dog, really, was horrified by the expansion. American statesmen warned this is going to lead to war. George Kennan, even Nitze and people like that, harsh, hard-cold warriors, they all knew this. In 2008, when George Bush says, we're going to expand NATO to Ukraine and Georgia, put him on the fast track, William Burns, who later becomes Biden's chief of the CIA, was US ambassador to Russia. He writes back a memo to the White House: Nyet means Nyet, was the title. Don't cross Russia's red lines. And they did and they continue to. And so Russia responded when the overthrow of Yanukovych in 2013 and early 2014 in the Maidan uprising with Victoria Nuland there handing out cookies and talking about who's going to be the next leader in Ukraine, Russia responded. I can understand why Russia would react that way to a coup after Yanukovych had agreed to hold elections in three months that were going to overturn his government. The Financial Times says that, going back to Brzezinski and *The Grand Chessboard* and Libby and the other neocons, they all wanted to separate Ukraine from Russia. As Brzezinski says: Russia will never be a Eurasian power. It doesn't have Ukraine. So the Financial Times says this has been going on for years trying to wrest Ukraine from Russia and Russia reacted. Did I like that Russia invaded in 2022? No. Did I support it? No, because I think in the nuclear age countries can't be invading other countries even if they have justification. But this argument that this was unprovoked, come on, this is the most provoked intervention in history. It was so provoked but there were three basic lies, one that was unprovoked. Two, that if the US keeps on supporting Israel and Ukraine with arms then Ukraine will overthrow the Russians and drive them out of Ukraine, nonsense. That was not going to happen. And number three is that if Russia wins in Ukraine then it is soon going to gobble up one piece of Europe after another. This is a crock. These are lies, but they're intended because what we see going on now, one of the big themes in Europe is rearmament. You know, Europe has got to rearm now, because now we can't depend on the United States. As the report from the security conference, last year's theme was multipolarity. This year's theme is destruction; that Trump has taken a wrecking ball to the international order. That's true. He's vile, but the idea that Europe's got to rearm and that it was a great victory for Trump, that Europe agreed to spend 5% of GDP on the military, where's that coming from? It's coming from what made Europe great, or at least admirable, it comes from housing, it comes from health care, it comes through the food programs, the social safety net. But instead

of thinking, well, how do we work with Russia and China to make a more secure global order in which everybody can cut their military spending, everybody can cut their nuclear arsenals, the approach by Merz and Macron and Starmer, is that we're going to rearm, we're gonna go in a militarized direction. But these people have no support. Macron's support approval rating is between eleven and 15 percent. It fluctuates. Starmer's is 18 percent before the latest scandals. Now he's on his way out. Merz was 23 percent. I assume it's going to be less than that now. These people don't have support. The European public in this latest report out of Munich last year when they said, what are the 32 issues, they gave them 32 choices of the big threats to their security, Russia was number two in terms of those issues to almost everybody. Now Russia is number eight. People aren't as concerned about Russia, but the European leaders, you look at the head of the French military, the highest officer, Mandon, he made a speech to French governors, in which he said the problem with France is we've got to be ready to fight against Russia. But the problem is that the French don't want to risk losing their children. Well, they've got to risk accept losing their child. What kind of a lunatic. But we see the same thing in Germany, we saw Pistorius. We saw the same thing now with Merz, who says that Putin, if he wins in Ukraine then he's going to go after Europe. It's going to be like The Sudetenland in 1938. That's what Merz is saying. We see the same kind of thing coming from Tusk, who says that it's either the bullets and dollars or blood and that's the choice that Europeans have. They're either going to spend their money now to support Ukraine or they're gonna die. They're going to shed their blood against Russia. These people are insane because Russia can't even handle Ukraine. Russia's gained 1.3% more land in Ukraine since 2023. Yeah, okay, they're close to taking Pokrovsk again, again, again. But they don't want another war. I was in Russia this year. The Russian people applauded me when I said at the Moscow International Film Festival, when I said on national TV that the war has to end so that we can reintegrate Russia into the world economy. And they applauded me at the film festival. Everybody I speak to, they want this war to end. So we need this war to end. And Ukrainian people need it more than anybody. But the head of the Munich Security Conference Ischinger has said recently that we can't let this end, we have to keep supporting Ukraine so it doesn't end the war, because the Europeans are trying to scare their public into supporting this crazy rearmament scheme by scaring them into it. Scare-mongering works, sadly, in our world, but the Ukrainian public knows that energy and food prices and inflation and education and housing are far more salient issues than Russia maybe gaining a win in Ukraine. So I wanna see it end. I wanna see Russia be much more flexible. Maybe you have to give Ukraine a win, maybe give back the Zaporizia nuclear plant, which they're making a big issue of, and Ukraine should give Putin his win in the Donbas. It's a Russian-speaking region and a lot of those people probably would like to be affiliated. I don't know what the latest polling is. But in the nuclear age we can't settle things with armaments. It's just too dangerous and that takes us right to Trump's abrogating the New START Treaty, first he calls for new nuclear testing which is absurd and in the interests of China, North Korea, India, Pakistan, not in America's interest, the United States conducted over a thousand nuclear tests. China has conducted 45. North Korea has conducted six. Pakistan, what, one or two? I mean, other countries can benefit from nuclear testing. The United States doesn't need it. And Trump doesn't even know what he's talking about. He says, I gave orders to the Secretary of War to begin nuclear testing immediately. It's the Department of Energy, not the Pentagon, not the war department

that does the nuclear testing. They can't do it immediately. Those test facilities in Nevada are rusted. It would take two to three years before they're ready to test again. And the US wouldn't benefit from this. The US has a stockpile stewardship program that is far more advanced than any other country's sub-critical testing program with lasers and radars. I mean, the United States doesn't need this. We know exactly how our nuclear weapons are going to work. But what we're seeing now with the end of the New START Treaty is that all countries can expand their nuclear arsenals. In 1986, the world had 70,000 nuclear weapons. We managed to get that down to a little more than 12,000, which was great. Not good enough, but at least going the right direction, and now Trump wants to reverse that. Putin offered, appropriately, to extend the New START Treaty for another year while we negotiate a new treaty, but Trump doesn't like it, partly because it goes back to democratic governments, but also Nixon, but also because it puts constraints on the United States. What I'm afraid of is that Trump wants a new nuclear arms race. He thinks the US can win it, number one. Number two, the nuclear planners are divided into two camps. The ones who believe in deterrence theory, which I think is idiotic to begin with, but at least those are the ones who think that we can avoid a war by having a strong second strike capability to retaliate if anybody attacks. But there is another school of nuclear planners who are convinced that we can win a nuclear war. The US can strike preemptively against Russia and China and they won't be able to retaliate. We can even take out the most stable part of the triad, their nuclear submarines. Now with new sonic technology and AI we can pinpoint them and take them out in a preemptive attack and then we can use nuclear weapons without having to worry about retaliation. And third I'm afraid he really believes in this idiotic, childish fantasy about a golden dome. The golden dome isn't going to work. At best, it's going to be a golden sieve. We saw what happened with the Iron Dome in Israel when Iran launched missiles. And that's a country the size of New Hampshire. It's not going to cover a country that's enormous like the United States. It's a childish fantasy. And every expert who's worth his or her salt knows that. But Trump doesn't care. And it's going to be a massive multi-trillion dollar boondoggle for the military contractors who Trump loves. And so it's very dangerous. Because if the US does start putting multiple missiles, multiple warheads on its intercontinental ballistic missiles like it's planning, then Russia's got to do the same. If it does put more missiles into Europe, then Russia's gotta do the same or retaliate. Russia's already got a big lead on tactical nuclear weapons. So I'm afraid we're in a very dangerous moment. You put that together with the trade wars, you put that together with the kidnapping Maduro, you've put that together with what's going on in the Gulf of Iran, you put that together with Trump's announcement of the Board of Peace, which is to replace the United Nations with a Trump-dominated board that nobody wants to join, but some people feel they've got to join in order to propitiate Trump or buy him off, bribe him like they're doing, massage his ego. But none of the major powers are going to join. And it's just this destructive attempt to replace the United Nations with a Trump-dominated body. And you look at all the things that are going on, and Trump's breaking up the European alliance by saying he wants Greenland, Trump threatening Canada, threatening Colombia, threatening Nicaragua, you look at this and the Munich Security Conference report is correct to say that Trump has taken a wrecking ball to the international order. It wasn't very good before, but at least there was something, which is why now China and Russia and India and the Global South and the African Union and the SCO, the BRICS,

have got to get together and say, you know, call Trump's bluff, not in a nuclear way, not in a military way, but an alternative path to global peace and development. But it can't be led by the European leaders, the Merzes of the world, the Pistoriuses are not the ones who should lead it. We need a very, very different orientation, but the world is looking for that.

**ZR:** Let us conclude with the Asia-Pacific region. In Japan, Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi coalition won a major election victory on February 8th, 2026, strengthening her mandate to increase military spending in response to what she calls China's rise. US President Donald Trump publicly congratulated her and endorsed her peace through strength agenda. In recent months, Takaichi has taken a firm stance on Taiwan, saying that if China were to attack Taiwan Japan would stand by its side with the US and come to its aid. She also has suggested that Japan should at least discuss and rethink its long-standing policy of not possessing or hosting nuclear weapons, arguing that the regional security environment has changed. You already mentioned the START Treaty, which I was going to introduce there and provide context to it. Can you also provide your assessment on the geopolitical developments happening at this front in the Asia-Pacific region?

**PK:** You know, I was invited to Nagasaki by Asahi Shimbun, the leading newspaper, the most prestigious newspaper in Japan. There's an international peace conference in Nagasaki at the end of July, and they asked me to keynote it. I work closely with the Japanese, and I'm baffled by Takaichi's popularity, especially among young Japanese. They have no sense of history. They have no memory of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. No memory of World War II, Unit 731, Japanese atrocities against other Asians. They live in this fantasy world that somehow Japan is going to be a great power. I look at it, and I've talked about this. We recently commemorated Pearl Harbor. And now who's back? The warmongers, the Germans in Europe, the Japanese in the Pacific. And Takaichi's comments that Japan would come to Taiwan's defense militarily, we know that that's US plans. The Air-Sea Battle Plan calls for South Korean troops and Japanese troops and the US troops in those two countries to get to Taiwan. If China uses force to take back Taiwan, which is part of China, then the Japanese and the South Koreans would be the first ones there because it would take the US forces two to three weeks to get there because of the distance they would have to come. So that's the strategy. Takaichi is totally bought into that. She's even more hawkish than Abe. They've been history deniers for a long time. You can go back to Abe's grandfather when he was in charge in the 50s or his great uncle in the 70s. But Takaichi is very very hawkish, more hawkish than anything we've seen. So she's repudiated the three non-nuclear principles that have been the bedrock of Japan since the early 70s. And there's a lot of people in Japan who want to see Japan develop its own nuclear weapons. One of the things that I fear is a new round of nuclear proliferation. Japan has a massive stockpile of plutonium. Japan has technological and scientific capabilities. And now there's a lot of people in Japan who want to see developments on nuclear weapons. So we see Japan as a militaristic hawkish force in the region not looking for peace and wants to be the new hegemon and challenge China. And Trump, of course, is egging them on. They also want to dramatically increase military spending. We've always been able to look to the Japanese as the most pacifistic country in the world. Article 9 of the Japanese Constitution repudiates the right to an aggressive military

and to using force overseas. But they've abrogated that now. And they pass new regulations and laws saying that Japan can engage in collective self-defense and come to the defense of its allies in the region, meaning the United States. And now Takaichi has said that she's planning to do that. I know she's gonna lose popularity. I know that a lot of the popularity is because you've had one after another of these old men who are so boring. The only one who wasn't really was my friend Hatoyama with whom I co-authored a book, *The Untold Post-War History of the United States and Japan*. But he came into office and wanted to stop the base relocation in Okinawa from Futenma to Henoko. And who was it who crushed him when he tried to do that? Obama! It wasn't even the reactionaries like Trump or Biden, it was Obama. And that's why the world is so fucked up. We don't see any positive leadership, really. I urge Modi and Xi to play that role. And the Chinese have been the ones who've been talking about development, the Belt and Road Initiative, global development, and are posing themselves as an alternative to the United States. Wang Yi is going to speak at the Munich Security Conference and give a major address there. And he's going to counterpose himself to Rubio and Merz, to some extent, and say, let's see a different path of development. The BRICS represent that, but even the BRICs are caving in. Some of them are going to support Trump's Board of Peace idiotic notion. So we need countries to stand up to the United States when it acts like a bully and a tyrant and a hegemon and an imperialist and a warmonger not to try to flatter Trump, to bribe him, to say how great he is. When the world knows that this is a nightmare that he's trying to impose on the world right now. And it's very dangerous at this moment. We're at a dangerous juncture in history.

**ZR:** Peter Kuznick, professor of history and author, we'll have to leave it here. Thank you for your time and insights and let's hope for better days.

**PK:** Thank you, Zain. Let's hope so.

**ZR:** And thank you for tuning in today. If you like the journalism that we undertook in this video and would like to support us, then you can click on the like button, comment, or share this video within your network. And don't forget to join our alternative channels on Rumble and Telegram. You will find the links to all of them in the description of this video below. I thank you for your support and for tuning, I'm your host, Zain Raza. See you next time.

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