Democrats CRUSH Trump — What Changes for Ukraine, Iran & Israel?

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Zain Raza (ZR): Thank you for tuning in today and welcome back to another episode of The Source. I'm your host Zain Raza. And today we'll be discussing the US midterm elections and their implications on US foreign policy, most notably Ukraine, Iran, Israel and Gaza. Before I begin this interview, I would like to remind you to like, share and comment on this video and also subscribe to our channel. All of these actions boost our algorithm and help us reach a wider audience. 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 also co-authored 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): It's good to be back with you, Zain.

ZR: Peter, the recent midterm elections have delivered a resounding victory for the Democrats, who have regained control of both chambers of Congress. According to the figures I checked just before this interview started, Democrats have secured 253 seats in the House of Representatives compared with 157 for Republicans. In the Senate, the Democratic caucus has secured 54 of their 100 seats. Democrats have also made significant gains in the state governor elections, defeating Republicans in states including Texas, Georgia, Ohio, Iowa and Nevada. How do you assess this political shift? What particular development stood out for you the most? And what implications could it have for the remaining two years of Trump's presidency?

PK: Trump's presidency got off to a very bad start. He had made a big deal about the Epstein Files. And one of the first things he did was make sure the Epstein Files weren't released. He was covering up. Everybody knew it was obvious that he was covering it up. And people were very angry and disillusioned, including his own base was demoralized by that. And of course he was coming up because he's all over the Epstein files. Epstein said that Trump was his best friend. And Trump has been accused of sexual predation by a couple dozen women, including a 13-year-old girl, or she was 13 when she said Trump raped her. So there's a lot

there that we don't know what's true, these are all allegations, but where there's smoke, there's often fire. And a lot of people point to all the different things. I'll tick them off quickly, then we'll get back. First was prices. Affordability was a big issue. The second was the Iran War, which is incredibly unpopular in the United States, and then is further worsening the high prices. Then there was corruption. Trump enriched himself in a way that we've never seen any president do, and do it in the most open-flavor way possible. Then there was his denial of climate change and his policies reversing climate change. His white supremacist policies, attacks on DEI, attacks on anything that had to do with women and minorities. I mean, there's such a long list. Everything we look at – his trade war policies, tariff policies, trade war with Canada, America's close neighbor and biggest trading partner. There are the boat strikes in the Caribbean and in the Pacific. It really was an election about Donald Trump.

And one of the points I've often made is that Americans have very little memory, and they forgot how much they hated Donald Trump by the end of his first term. Joe Biden beat him by seven million votes. It was a slaughter. And then as soon as they saw Trump again, they remembered why they wanted to vomit every time he spoke. He just lies constantly. He's ugly as a human being. You can't find a more vile human being – his tone, his attitude, his mocking people, his names that he has. And then this obsession with building – it's bizarre. His closing statement, the day before this big election, he was at the Reflecting Pool and talking about the Reflecting Pool, then his comments the day after the election. He was in the ballroom talking about how great his ballroom is. He didn't even mention the midterms until he was forced to. I mean, people said he was deranged, including one big Republican donor who said that his talk at the Reflecting Pool the day before the election was the equivalent of Joe Biden's debate moment. He's making threats, his vengeance – they didn't like his vengeance campaign. They didn't like the fact that he refused to focus on anything that was important to the American people and just made things worse. He surrounded himself with the most incompetent crew of advisors and cabinet members we've ever seen in this country. I mean, they would be laughable if they didn't have power. And then you got the Pete Hegseths, and the Stephen Millers, then Sebastian Gorkas – these foreign policy people who are fascists. And he comes in there with the Project 2025 playbook, which is for a fascist takeover in the US. And Russell Vought, his director of OMB, was really instrumental. He's behind the scenes. He is not as visible as some of the others.

But if you go into any part of this – ICE in the streets. People hated that. They wanted to see the border closed. They didn't want to see their neighbors and workers getting picked up and deported. Nice people, people who have been working here for decades, who never broke any laws, just getting rounded up and neighborhoods being terrorized by ICE thugs and police and the National Guard. This is not the America that people wanted. So what they did is they repudiated Trump's cruelty, because that's really what's going on. Cutting food stamps, cutting the food programs and SNAP, nutritional programs for school children, so they can give big tax cuts to super wealthy backers – they didn't want to see that. They don't want to see his relationship with the tech billionaires. Elon Musk – the fact that Elon Musk put in close to $500 million in this campaign to get people elected so he could control them. You don't need a South African Nazi in charge of the DOGE programs. What an image that was

created. And so you put this all together and American people were just furious and sick and tired. And Donald Trump said "Make this election about me, make believe I'm on the ballot, voters." Well, they did! And they said that we despise you Donald Trump and everything you stand for, the ugliness surrounding you. And so there's a lot more we can talk about in terms of foreign policy. His backing of Israel and Netanyahu in Gaza – for young people that was way over the line. So there's a lot to go into wherever you'd like to take it.

ZR: You mentioned foreign policy. And this election is being framed by the mainstream media, especially here in Germany, as being historic and perhaps transformative, progressive. But shouldn't we view this framing with skepticism because, for example, let's take genocide in Gaza, which began under the Democrats, the Biden administration, which provided extensive military and political support to Israel. In 2025, for example, Israel's Channel 13 reported that former Israeli ambassador to the United States, Michel Herzog, stated, referring to the Biden administration, and I quote him here, quote: "The administration never came to us and said, cease fire now. It never did.", unquote. Biden also failed to restore the JCPOA, the nuclear agreement with Iran, which was signed during the Obama years when he was vice president. And when it comes to Ukraine, we know that Biden never even made diplomacy a priority. Now that Democrats control Congress, Trump could simply blame them for obstructing his efforts to negotiate peace in Ukraine while the war will continue. And when it comes to Israel and Iran, according to the pro-Israel lobby AIPAC's own announcement, more than 234 candidates backed by its political network, have won their elections from both parties including leading Democratic figures in Chuck Schumer and Hakeem Jeffries. This of course raises serious questions about if the Democrats will even challenge the unconditional support for Israel, which has its own hegemonic ambitions in the region. Isn't it therefore fair to question whether this resounding democratic victory will produce any fundamental shift on issues of war and peace, whether in Europe or the Middle East?

PK: I think that we're going two different directions. I think they're going to put real constraints on Iran, on the US war with Iran. I don't know if they're going to put any constraints in terms of funding for Ukraine. But they're very different. The Iran war is extraordinarily unpopular. Among 18 to 29-year-olds, 87 % are opposed to the US war with Iran. So even though some of the Democrats, including Hakeem Jeffries and Chuck Schumer, who were on the take from AIPAC, have distanced themselves from Netanyahu. Netanyahu is toxic in the United States, is radioactive, is despised in the United States. So if Schumer and Jeffreies want to retain positions of leadership, which is doubtful at this point, or at least questionable, they're going to have to break with Israel very openly. What we saw that was fascinating was AIPAC has announced that it's not going to be officially endorsing candidates anymore. Because – as El-Sayed did in Michigan – AIPAC support is, at this point, not only unpopular, but smart candidates run against AIPAC, and the fact that AIPAC is supporting, just as they run against the tech billionaires. And the fact that if Musk supported somebody, it hurt that person in the campaign, because the Democrats who ran against them could use that. So, I'm more optimistic that one of the first things the Democrats are going to do is cut off the funding for the war with Iran. If they don't do that – the Democrats were in a position where they've got such big majorities in both houses now, it could end up being 56 to 44 in the

Senate. There are two more races that are still outstanding, in which the Democrats have very small leads. So that's a huge shift right now. And J. D. Vance was not wrong when he said that the big issue was Iran. And that's a big part of why the Republicans lost. And Trump comes down and says, "oh, I would do it again". Well. It was an absurd war. It was an illegal war. It's an immoral war, and it could be a history ending war if the worst case scenario gets played out. But I think you want to talk about that later. So I won't go into that yet.

Ukraine, we don't know, because there's a stupid idea in the United States that if you're a friend of Ukraine, you've got to be willing to fight to the last Ukrainian. You've got to be willing to tolerate another 100,000, 200,000, 500,000 dead and wounded Ukrainians, Ukrainians walking around without arms and legs, a Ukrainian economy that's destroyed. I don't know how that means being a friend of Ukraine's, but that's the way it's been framed in the United States. And even more so, as you know, in Europe. Whereas when Trump pulls back on support for Ukraine, the Europeans rush in and increase their support for Ukraine. More arms – Meloni talking yesterday about sending more arms to Ukraine. Merz is among the worst, if not the worst. Merz's, on a good day's approval ratings are 12 % in Germany. On a bad day's, under 10 %. Macron, the same thing, 15 % approval ratings. Burnham took over for Starmer, who was down around 10 %, and now Burnham is doubling down – "We're not going to invite Putin to the G20 meeting next year in Britain". This is stupidity. And the best thing, the little thing that occasionally Trump does, that might be right for the wrong reasons, is push back against this narrative on Ukraine. So are the Democrats going to counter him on that? Possibly, perhaps probably, unless we can prevail and talk some sense into them and make them realize that, as Modi says, this is not a time of war. We can't have wars in the nuclear age. We have to resolve things diplomatically.

And there's a big push for that, as you know Zain, you've got the Global South, you've the SCO, you've got the BRICS. All the African leaders were in Russia last week, meeting with Putin. Xi Jinping and Wang Yi had an international global leadership meeting in China. People are making clear that there's two alternatives now. There's the alternative of war and impoverishment and debt collection, and then there's the alternative of peace and peaceful economic development. Trump is on both sides of that on occasion. The Europeans are on one side and the rest of the world is on the other. So we need a settlement in Ukraine that's palatable for both sides. And Ukraine's got to buy into this also. If Zelensky isn't going to negotiate it, then get somebody else there who will. But we need a policy, a program, an agreement that calls for the rebuilding of the Ukrainian economy, making life better for the Ukrainian people, getting rid of the corruption, improving the school system again, and not just a punishing kind of deal like we saw at Versailles in 1918, 1919. And we saw how well that worked out. So we need something that enhances security for both sides. It's not going to be NATO troops in Ukraine. Forget about that. We need to bring this war to an end. We need to bring the Iran war to end. We need it to peacefully resolve the tension between China and Taiwan. We need to bring Europe back into a state, into a stance. When I saw General Fabien Mandon telling the French mayors that the problem with the French is that they don't want to lose their children in a war with Russia – that's the attitude I'm hearing from military leaders, political leaders, statesmen, across the board, intellectuals. Some intellectuals in Europe have

this attitude that once Russia gets a win in Ukraine, they're coming after Europe next. It's taken Russia five years, and they still haven't gotten the Donbass. They're really going to want to go to war with NATO? I don't think so. I mean, it would be the height of insanity. Putin – whatever you might say about him – is not irrational in that way. But I have heard that Medvedev and Karaganov and Dmitry Trenin and others say that Russia should use tactical nuclear weapons to end the war with Ukraine. I hear that going on everywhere right now, so much talk about resorting to nuclear weapons. And we have to end these wars before the lunatics do something like that.

ZR: I want to just focus on Israel's actions. I think until the United States does not pull away its unconditional support for Israel, which essentially means not holding Israel accountable – not only does it show the double standards of the West in terms of international law, but Israel's actions as we've seen are having inflationary effects. So we know from the New York Times that it was Israel's top officials that convinced Trump that they will have a swift victory against Iran and we should go to war with them and there will be regime change. And now we're seeing all these inflationary pressures and economic pain all across the world. So fundamentally I think a change in the relationship between Israel is needed. And I don't see that happening even under the Democrats. In other words, I think the Iran war will continue, but in other ways. How do you assess that? Do you think there's any change happening in the United States in terms of overall relationship with Israel, and is this being reflected at all in these elections, or do you just see this going on business as usual?

PK: No, I do see more of a change than you're suggesting. Israel was a big issue in this campaign, and a lot of the Democrats ran on cutting off US aid to Israel. At least until there's a two-state solution, or until Israel fundamentally changes. And there doesn't seem to be much indication. If you even look at this Israeli election, yeah, it was a bad defeat for Netanyahu, but Eisenkot is also a hawk when it comes to Gaza, when it comes to Iran. The opposition is not a lot better on those issues. They might be better domestically. They're not going to support Netanyahu on the judiciary changes and other fascistic elements of his policy. But they're pretty bad when it comes to foreign policy also. However, the United States has got to break with them. And the American people are demanding that. The American people, Republicans and Democrats, its very bipartisan that they are tired of the US support for the genocide in Gaza. They blame Trump and Netanyahu for this war. Yes, Netanyahu sold them a bill on goods. And he's been trying to find an American president stupid and reckless enough to go to war with Iran for three decades. And finally Trump is stupid and reckless enough. But Trump was also pushed in that direction by Hegseth, by Miller, by Gorka. Not Tulsi, Tulsi was opposed to it. Vance, even to his credit, was opposed to it, but you had Kristi Noem and you Russell Vought and you had so much of this incompetence in this administration who urged Trump to go ahead and do it.

What frightens me now, and just look at this logically: the Israelis have said very explicitly that not only an Iranian bomb, but an Iranian nuclear program represents an existential threat to Israel. And we know through the thinking of the Samson Option and the Begin Option that any country that poses an existential threat to Israel has to be destroyed. Even if that means

destroying Israel, it was well in the process. And Netanyahu said that an Iranian nuclear program is a second Holocaust. That's the thinking: Never Again. The Jewish people, the Israelis are never going to be victims in a way passively that lets there be another Holocaust. The Iranians, on the other hand, more and more Iranian leaders are saying openly and publicly that Iran needs a nuclear bomb as a deterrent against another US and Israeli attack. Well, if they had a bomb, that might be a deterrent. If they build a bomb now, that would be an invitation to the US and Israel to wipe Iran out. Trump makes these lunatic threats – "an entire civilization is going to be destroyed in 24 hours". Like in his recent speech in September at the United Nations – "well, should I wipe out Iran or not? Should I annihilate?".

But we know that he's thinking about this. We know that the Israelis are encouraging, at least there's evidence that suggests Israelis are encouraging the US to use nuclear weapons. We know some Israelis have come out publicly and said Israel and the US should use nuclear weapons. And the reason why they would need to is first of all, they're both losing the war. Iran has got the upper hand and is not going to negotiate, it's insisting on its seven points before they negotiate and open up the Strait of Hormuz. But also because the intelligence from the US and Israel is saying that Iran's nuclear program is now buried under 300 feet of granite at Pickaxe Mountain. Well, the US, and Israel do not have a bunker buster conventional weapon that can penetrate 300 feet of granite. The only thing that could penetrate 300 feet of granite and blow up the Iranian nuclear program is a nuclear weapon. Israel has between 90 and 250. They don't publicly admit to it, but we all know they have got them. The United States has got 4,000. So could they use a new tactical nuclear weapon against Iran? If they plan to eliminate Iran's nuclear program, yes, that's the only option they really have to do so. It would be madness. We don't know what it would lead to. The Pentagon has tried a war game for limited nuclear war for decades, and they're never able to stop it after a limited nuclear war. It always ends up in full-scale nuclear annihilation. So that's what keeps me up at night.

Dr. Ivana Hughes, president of the Nuclear Peace Foundation and Professor Columbia, and I have a piece that came out yesterday on Al Jazeera Arabic that's being republished on all these outlets in the United States, warning that we are very close right now to a nuclear strike on Iran. Tucker Carlson had a big posting on this this week. And Tucker said he has an informed source who's telling him that Netanyahu calls Trump every day to urge him to use nuclear weapons against Iran. We don't know if that's true, what Tucker knows and doesn't know, but I've been on with other conservative Republican hosts who've interviewed me, who claim they've got direct ties to the White House, and they know for certain that this is being seriously considered right now. Trump has threatened to attack Iran again right after the midterms. Even said so again yesterday, that he's seriously considered. He's weighing his options. He's threatened to use the mother of all bombs. Well, the mother of all bombs, like the MOP, would only do surface damage, and would not penetrate deep into the earth like that. And so that's not going to work.

[00:25:58] But you've got these crazies like Hegseth. There's a lot of pressure right now on Trump to remove Hegseth. And Tom Massie, before he leaves the House, has said he's going

to bring impeachment proceedings up against Hegstheth. That would be bipartisan. That would probably pass, would probably have enough votes to overturn a Trump veto. Hegseth is particularly vile. But Rubio has joined him. And even though Rubio might have started off as a neocon, he's ended up as a neo-fascist. And a piece that I'm writing for a new publication in Russia edited by Dimitri Simes is going to talk about the shift from traditional anti-communist Cold War republicanism to the neoconservatives that took over during the Bush administration, to the liberal hawks who dominated from the center of the new American security during the Obama and Biden administration, now to the neo-fascists in the Trump administration. When Miller says we live in the real world, a real world, a dog eat dog world, the stronger prevails, the use of force is necessary, nothing is going to constrain us – that kind of thinking, which we see from all the top Trump foreign policy people and Trump himself, his bullying, his shooting down the alleged "narco-terrorist boats" in the Caribbean without any international law… You see these rants. That's what we're talking about right now.

ZR: We know you have to go to another interview, and we have only a few minutes left. I just wanted to get your take on all of these students' movements happening right now across Europe, in France and Germany. There's also movements happening against the housing crisis and inflation. At the same time, we're seeing, as you know, the expansion of the military state, nuclear proliferation around the world. As a professor of history, how do you evaluate these movements within the historical framework and where do you think this will lead to? Do you think this will develop in the future to induce meaningful change?

PK: Yes, it's very exciting what's happening. We haven't really seen this since 1968. I mean, you mentioned a couple examples, but in Italy and France, the students are out there protesting about the schools, the dilapidated conditions. Their countries keep sending more and more aid to Ukraine to kill Ukrainians and Russians, and they're not investing in the schools. In Brazil, how did Lula win? The young people mobilized and brought out millions and millions of more voters for Lula. In India, the cockroach movement, right? Somebody disparagingly called them cockroaches. They adopted the name, and they've got millions of supporters and Modi's trying to repress them, but it's not going to work. You see Greece, Albania. I loved the sign and the theme of the October 16th student protest in Germany. The theme was, "the rich want war, the youth want a future". You put together global warming, AI, nuclear threats, the gap between rich and poor, the lack of prospects for a meaningful future for young people, and their rising up.

As I said, in the US, 87 % of 18 to 29-year-olds are opposed to the war with Iran. We never had that high a percentage during Vietnam, during Iraq. This is amazing. And so the question is, how do we kindle this? Saying you're young enough to be out there with them – well, I did get invited two weeks ago Friday to address a student-led anti-war rally at the Washington Monument, which was great. And I told them I was so happy to be there. I said, it's been a long time since I dressed for an anti-war rally, partly because there haven't been any in the United States for many years since Iraq. And I talked about the global student uprising and how exciting it is. I said that the last time I was at an anti-war rally was on the set of Oliver

Stone's movie, *Snowden*. And Oliver asked me to come down there and hold a sign up as Joseph Gordon-Levitt and Shailene Woodley walked by in front of the White House. It's exciting. It is very exciting. If we don't blow up this world, if these motherfuckers don't blow us up, we've got a lot of potential – the SCO, the Global South, we even see a lot of signs of that. Lavrov's comments two days ago. There's a lot of hopefulness. I'm working with groups in Russia and Israel and Toronto and London who are trying to build this new movement globally. And I think it's possible. We just have to stop the warmongers from destroying us beforehand. And we need to push for nuclear disarmament. We need to deal with the climate crisis and we need to put guardrails around AI. We live in a world where the richest six people have more wealth than the poorest 4.5 billion people. That's obscene. We have to change that. And I think young people understand that.

ZR: I think, Peter, it's a good time to end the interview with a positive smile and a positive message. Peter Kuznick, professor of history and co-author of the book *The Untold History of the United States*. It was a pleasure to have you. Thank you so much for your time.

PK: Always my pleasure, Zain. You take care.

ZR: And thank you for tuning in today, if you liked this interview and would like to follow us going forward then make sure to click on the subscribe button below. And don't forget to donate, we are an independent and non-profit media outlet that does not take any money from corporations and governments and we don't even allow advertisement with the goal of providing you with information that is free from any external influence. I thank you all for your support and for tuning, I'm your host Zain Raza, see you next time.

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