

Peter Kuznick: Entering the Age of Nuclear Wars

Peter Kuznick is a Professor of History and Director of the Nuclear Studies Institute at American University. Follow and support the Nuclear Insanity Substack: <https://nuclearinsanity.substack.com/> Follow Prof. Glenn Diesen: Substack: <https://glennndiesen.substack.com/> X/Twitter: https://x.com/Glenn_Diesen Patreon: <https://www.patreon.com/glenndiesen> Buy Diesen merchandise: <https://diesen-shop.fourthwall.com/en-nok> Support the research by Prof. Glenn Diesen: PayPal: <https://www.paypal.com/paypalme/glenndiesen> Buy me a Coffee: buymeacoffee.com/gdieseng Go Fund Me: <https://gofund.me/09ea012f> Books by Prof. Glenn Diesen: <https://www.amazon.com/stores/author/B09FPQ4MDL>

#Glenn

Welcome back. We are joined today by Peter Kuznick, professor of history and director of the Nuclear Studies Institute at American University. Also noteworthy, as many people might know him from the 10-part or 12-part documentary series with Oliver Stone called The Untold History of the United States. So thank you for coming on the program. My pleasure, Glenn. So you've spent decades studying nuclear weapons and the history of nuclear confrontation, and you just led an appeal to Pope Leo regarding convening an international summit due to the growing threat of nuclear war. I was wondering if you could flesh out this argument. Why do you think this is so critical at this point?

#Peter Kuznick

Well, let me give a little background on this initiative. It was actually built upon Jack Gilroy. Jack Gilroy is an activist with Pax Christi and with Veterans for Peace, a longtime peace activist in the United States. And he drafted a letter to Archbishop Wester, who's the Archbishop for the Santa Fe region in the United States. And Wester is the most outspoken voice in the U.S. Catholic Church for peace and nuclear abolition. So Jack drafted a letter that I became part of, calling on Archbishop Wester to reach out to Pope Leo to urge him to call an emergency international summit, minimally, of Putin, Xi, and Trump, the three main nuclear powers, because there's so much more risk of nuclear war now than there's really ever been before.

So when I was in Italy, I met with Cardinal Semeraro, who's in charge of the Committee on Sanctification. He and I were at the same alternative university program that meets every summer in the Italian Alps called Tonalestate. And so I spoke to Cardinal Semeraro, and he promised that he

would hand-deliver the letter to Pope Leo. So at that point, we had gone beyond the Archbishop Wester initiative. So I drafted a new appeal directly to Pope Leo. And I thought of it as working on two levels. One, to urge, cajole, encourage the Pope to call this kind of emergency summit.

But secondly, to include enough information there about why the risk had grown so dangerous that we could also use it as an educational tool to mobilize the population pretty much around the world to say, get off this insane path of warfare and potential nuclear warfare. So I start the appeal by quoting Tulsì Gabbard, who occasionally had some very lucid moments. And on June 10th, 2025, Tulsì released a two-and-a-half-minute video starting off in Hiroshima and says that what happened in Hiroshima was peanuts compared to the weapons we have today. And then she said, "We're closer to nuclear annihilation today than we've ever been before."

And warmongers in capitals around the world are proceeding in that direction. Then in October, Sergei Naryshkin, the head of Russia's SVR, Foreign Intelligence Agency, said that civilization today is at its most fragile moment since World War II, and the risk of a new world war looms greatly. So the fact that the two intelligence chiefs understood this. Tulsì's warning was issued two days before Israel and the United States began bombing Iran in 2025. She must have known that was coming, but she's been alert to this threat for a long time. And then we've got this coming from other sources as well.

We've got U.S. military leaders talking about the threat of war with China. Philip Davidson issued that warning in 2021. General Mike Minihan in 2023 said he thinks the U.S. and China are going to be at war by 2025. Fortunately, that didn't happen. But then Admiral Buchanan said more recently that the United States can fight and win a three-front nuclear war against Russia, China, and North Korea, and still keep enough nuclear weapons in reserve to maintain its global hegemony. Now, that builds upon this discussion that's going on in the Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists, for example, which had written three articles discussing the fact that there are now two schools of nuclear planners: the old school, who believes in deterrence theory and mutually assured destruction, but a new school of nuclear planners who believes that a nuclear war can be fought and won, which Reagan and Gorbachev denied, which people have denied more recently.

But they say that now, with advanced sonar technology, artificial intelligence, and other advanced intelligence, the U.S. can actually pinpoint the location of every Chinese and Russian nuclear submarine, preemptively knock them out, knock out in a preemptive strike the intercontinental ballistic missiles, and shoot down the fighter jets that would be trying to drop nuclear weapons. And the U.S. could win this. There have been people reasoning like this for decades, since the start of the nuclear age. And in 2006, Lieber and Press had an article in Foreign Affairs, the Journal of the Council on Foreign Relations, in which they said that the U.S. now has a first-strike capability and we can wipe out China and Russia in a preemptive strike.

And the people in Russia thought that that was official U.S. policy. It was published in a Council on Foreign Relations publication. The Washington Post reported that heads were exploding in the

Kremlin because they thought this was official U.S. policy. Now maybe it is official U.S. policy because there's so much more talk about the use of nuclear weapons. I mean, I can go on, but you can interrupt me if you'd like. But if not, I'll keep explaining why we did this. We know that there's pressure on Trump. I became a columnist for Al Jazeera. The first piece that Ivana Hughes and I wrote—we have written six pieces there for Al Jazeera.

Ivana teaches at Columbia, and she's the president of the Nuclear Age Peace Foundation. She's terrific. So the first piece we wrote was titled "Breaking the Nuclear Taboo." The reason why Trump, who's got this massive ego and is a pathological narcissist, he's being told by some people—Netanyahu, Stephen Miller, Pete Hegseth, maybe Marco Rubio, Sebastian Gorka—telling him, "You can go down as the greatest president in history. You've broken every custom, every norm, every tradition, U.S. law, international law. The only taboo you haven't broken is the nuclear taboo. And every other president has been afraid to break that for 81 years."

But you can do it. And we know, as Marjorie Taylor Greene, of all people, just warned, Trump is contemplating and being urged to use nuclear weapons, tactical nuclear weapons, in Iran, which we can get into in a few minutes. But we also know not only is Trump under that kind of pressure, Putin is under that kind of pressure. We've seen Russian leaders who are talking to Putin about the need to escalate dramatically. And when Putin met with a friend of mine a few months ago, he said that he's under enormous pressure from the hawks in Russia to act much more aggressively in Ukraine. Then we've got the recent comments by Elbridge Colby, the policy chief at the Pentagon, who just wrote last week that the United States needs, if fighting breaks out in the Pacific, the U.S. will need to resort to nuclear weapons.

Partly because the U.S. has depleted its missiles, depleted its interceptors, depleted its precision-guided munitions. And I mean, there is so much more of this kind of insane talk, because the Pentagon has been trying to wargame limited nuclear war for decades, and they never can do it. It always ends up in a full-scale nuclear war. And we've known forever, but especially since the 1980s and the work done on nuclear winter, that even a limited nuclear war can trigger a partial nuclear winter. As Robock and Toon and others have studied more recently, a limited nuclear war between India and Pakistan, in which 100 Hiroshima-sized nuclear weapons were deployed, would burn the cities and create a partial nuclear winter in which the sun's rays would be blocked from coming to the Earth.

We'd have famine, disease, and that limited nuclear war could cause up to two billion deaths. But we don't have 100 nuclear weapons. We've got more than 12,000 nuclear weapons, and they're not Hiroshima-sized. Most are between seven and 70 times the size of the bomb that devastated Hiroshima. So this is a reality that, as a species, we need to really think of this, along with global warming, as a planetary existential threat. But what we see is Trump wanting to make America great again. Putin wanted to make Russia great again. Xi wanted to make China great again. Modi wanted to make India great again. Netanyahu wanted to make Israel great again. We see nationalists.

Who speaks for the planet was the question that we were posing. And we said that sometimes Lula speaks for the planet, and Lula has called for, in this phone conversation with Trump a couple days ago, three days ago exactly, he called for a special emergency session of the United Nations to get us off this path of war. He's previously called for that in meetings with Putin and Xi Jinping. So that's along the same lines of what we're calling for. We said that sometimes Guterres, but it's mostly been Pope Leo XIV who has raised this clarion call for humanity. And he's talking about the need to end wars, the need for nuclear abolition, the need for a different course for mankind. So he's got a unique kind of moral authority right now.

And so we're urging him, through this appeal, to speak out for humanity and call on at least the leaders of the three major nations, but there should be more also, for an emergency summit meeting to get us off this path of war and nuclear war. And the reason why I think it is realistic at this moment: the United States is bogged down in Iran. You know, the Iranians have their foot on Trump's neck, and they're not letting him up. And Trump has been desperately trying to, either through economic pressure or military pressure, to get out of this war as quickly as he can, because the U.S. has already been defeated by Iran. But a similar situation, not quite the same, but in some ways parallel, with Russia in Ukraine, where Russia's making some slow progress on the battlefield, but Ukraine has been hitting Russian oil refineries, Russian shipping, grain shipping.

And so what we're seeing right now is that warfare as a means of settling disputes, problems, crises, is increasingly irrelevant. The U.S., the most powerful country in the history of the world, has not really won a significant war since World War II. And even that's questionable because Germany is leading the rearmament of Europe and Japan is leading the rearmament of the Pacific. So what did we win in World War II? But since then, the U.S. was defeated in Vietnam, in Iraq, in Afghanistan, Libya, quagmire, Syria. Where has the U.S. had a military victory? Maybe Gulf War I, but didn't have a diplomatic victory, and maybe Operation Urgent Fury in Grenada in 1983. And if the U.S. can't win in Iran... And Russia has been bogged down there for five years in Ukraine.

Maybe we need to find different ways to settle these disputes. And so this is what we're asking the Pope to do. And we've been getting heads of state, former heads of state, former leaders of militaries, former diplomats from around the world signing on, because I think there's a universal recognition that we're on a very dangerous path. And the pressure on Putin is enormous. And Trump could, in his moment of desperation, actually resort to using nuclear weapons because nothing else is working in the war in Iran. So that's why I'm so worried. That's why I started this initiative, building on Jack Gilroy's brilliant stroke, and why we're getting such a positive response, because people recognize this around the world, I think.

#Glenn

This is all very similar to how Dr. Strangelove feels sometimes. This kind of recklessness and how careless they are about the prospect of nuclear annihilation. Even if it can't be achieved, this nuclear first strike, if political and military leaders believe it can be, they will be much more reckless. They'll

be willing to go up that escalation ladder, assuming that their opponent would have to fold. But let's say such a nuclear first strike would be possible, knocking out all of Russia's thousands of nuclear weapons, the Chinese, the North Korean. I mean, this planet is not that big. We all reside here. You would destroy it for the winner as well.

It would be a horrible disaster. But it shocks me a bit how things we would never think about doing in the past are now almost commonplace. That is, remember those attacks on Russia's early nuclear warning systems, then the attacks on Russia's nuclear deterrent. And apparently the invasion of Russian Kursk had the objective of seizing control over Russia's Kursk nuclear power plant to use it as some kind of leverage. And as you said, now there's allegedly some talks in Washington about doing a tactical nuclear strike on the Iranians, hoping they will fold. And again, East Asia is a whole other story of its own.

I guess what I wanted to ask is, why is there no more fear of nuclear war? I listen to our governments, our media. I mean, it's as if it's a minor thing, something that belongs to the past. It's even considered sometimes immoral to be worried about nuclear war because before we called it nuclear deterrence or the nuclear peace; now we call it nuclear blackmail. That is, you know, in reference to Russia, if we worry about nuclear war, then we're essentially empowering Putin. So we have to strip him of this by calling his bluff. This is kind of the logic. I'm just wondering what future generations will say about the time we live in now, you know, the war enthusiasm, the demonization. Yeah.

#Peter Kuznick

Somebody coming down to the Earth. Remember the movie *The Day the Earth Stood Still*, 1951? And they get a visitor from some other galaxy, and he comes to bring the message of peace to Washington and immediately lands in Washington, D.C., and the U.S. Army shoots him. But then he has these magic healing powers, and he ends up with this threat, saying that we don't care what you do on your own planet, but if you threaten the universe, we're going to turn your planet into a burned-out cinder. But you mentioned Dr. Strangelove. When my friend Oliver Stone was in Moscow some years ago, when he spent 20 hours meeting with Putin for his documentaries about Putin, he asked Putin if he had seen Dr. Strangelove.

And Putin said he never had. And Oliver showed it to him on his computer. They watched Dr. Strangelove together. But all these world leaders, you know, I often say, for example, when Obama went to Hiroshima, from the day Obama got elected, I was urging him to go. Finally, at the end of his administration in 2016, he visited. NHK, Japan's public television, brought me over there to do commentary during the Obama visit. Obama says, "Death fell from the skies." Death didn't fall from the skies. The United States dropped an atomic bomb. Then he goes on to repeat the leading myth about the atomic bombings in World War II. He says, "World War II reached its brutal end in Hiroshima and Nagasaki."

That's the lie that's at the heart of the American empire. This idea that not only were the atomic bombs necessary because the fanatic Japanese would never have surrendered, but that they were humane because it saved half a million American lives and millions of Japanese lives. That's the lie, right? Because, as we know, the Japanese were desperate to surrender at that point, and the U.S. knew it. The U.S. knew that we could change the surrender terms, let them keep the emperor, which they were begging for and which their cables we had intercepted were all saying, or we could wait for the Soviet invasion.

U.S. intelligence had been saying since April that the Soviet invasion would finally convince all Japanese that further resistance was futile. Truman understood that. Truman had lunch with Stalin in Potsdam on July 17th, and he goes home and he writes in his journal, "Stalin will be in the Jap war by August 15th. Fini Japs when that occurs." He writes home to his wife, Bess, the next day, "The Russians are coming in. We'll end the war a year sooner now. Think of all the kids who won't be killed." But he wanted to use the bomb. The Soviet invasion began August 9th, and he had been told that, but he got the dates wrong.

But he wanted to use the bomb to send a message to the Kremlin that if they interfered with U.S. plans in Europe or the Pacific, this is what they were going to get, and worse, much worse. Leslie Groves, the head of the Manhattan Project, said that from two weeks from the time I took over this project, I understood that Russia was the enemy, and we ran the project on that basis. Jimmy Byrnes, who becomes Secretary of State and Truman's leading advisor, says the same thing. He says, well, we want to roll back the Russians in Eastern Europe. The United States had eight five-star admirals and generals in 1945. Seven of the eight are on the record saying the atomic bombs were either militarily unnecessary, morally reprehensible, or both.

Admiral Leahy, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Truman's personal chief of staff, said the bombings put us on the moral level of the barbarians of the Dark Ages. And I could go on, but, you know, this kind of crazy thinking has been around for a long time. And now it's gaining a foothold again. But the point you were making was that at the end of the Cold War, people assumed or believed that the nuclear threat was now over. In the 1980s, there was tremendous concern. You know, I was on campus, I was teaching, and that was the big issue. There were all these anti-nuclear groups and all this momentum in the U.S., the Million Person March in Central Park.

In fact, they just unearthed photographs of Pope Leo when he was a young priest participating in a 1983 German or Italian march of a million people against the positioning of the missiles in Europe in 1983. Leo was involved in those protests back then. So we've had this for a long time, but people went to sleep after the Cold War ended. But in recent years, it's happened again. One of the things I credit for the reemergence—well, first of all, my friend Dan Ellsberg, when he knew he was dying, he really doubled down and used every ounce of strength to warn the world about the threat of nuclear war and nuclear winter.

But the Oppenheimer movie also had a catalytic effect, you know, and I was surprised. I was teaching a course at American University unrelated to nuclear issues. It was right after the movie came out, and I asked my students how many had seen the movie Oppenheimer, thinking three or four hands would go up. Eighty percent of the students raised their hands. You know, so this is a generation whose burning moral issue is Gaza, you know, and they absolutely hated the Biden and Kamala Harris and Trump support for the genocide in Gaza. This really galvanized them, but they also are awake to planetary climate threats and to the nuclear threat. And I'm seeing a lot of momentum again in that direction.

When I was just in Nagasaki on July 25th, keynoting an international peace conference co-sponsored by Asahi Shimbun, the leading newspaper in Japan, the city government in Nagasaki, and the Nagasaki Peace Movement, six of my students went with me to Japan, to Kyoto and Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Then when I went to this conference in Italy and keynoted that, 11 of my students came to that. They don't get any credit. They pay out of their own pocket, but they care. They're really passionate in their concern about the future. And so that's what we're trying to appeal to. You know, we're saying that our generation might have screwed up in a lot of ways, the baby boomers. But, you know, they go back to, quote unquote, the greatest generation.

One of the things that Oliver Stone and I inveigh against is this idea of the greatest generation being so heroic. Yes, they won World War II, but they gave us Vietnam. They gave us the planetary destruction. They gave us these huge military complexes. And we need a very, very different kind of thinking. And Pope Leo seems to have embraced that kind of thinking. So we're giving him as much support as we can and as much encouragement to do the right thing for humanity. And anybody else who wants to take up that leadership, like Lulu's been doing, we encourage that. We want people to speak for the planet and not for this country or that country, this war or that war. We need a very, very different approach.

#Glenn

I like that the appeal was also to the Pope, because at least the Church has a possibility to take an independent position. One of the things that has been a great concern to me is how everyone essentially has been falling into line over the past few years. That is, there's very little dissent. Any government narrative which is pushed out is no longer contested, especially with the peace movement. This is very strange to me, that even peace movements are now appeasement. It's seen with suspicion about being treasonous. I did have a thought, though, about what you said about falsifying the history about the atomic bombs being used against Japan. And I can see why, though. I mean, nobody wants to see themselves as monsters. We all have our national narratives. History should inform, but also build up national identities.

But I think in that process, we also deprive ourselves of very important lessons: that we're all capable of evil. We also have to be restrained. Instead, it's always assumed that we have to do as

much as possible only to restrain others. But on that topic of restraint, though, we had nuclear arms control agreements. During the Cold War, we kind of learned to establish some rules of the game. And Washington, Moscow eventually developed all these mechanisms for crisis communication, reducing stockpiles. What they have left is transparency. Again, agreements, rules. All of these arms control agreements now, from START, INF, all of them appear to be melting away. And how does that affect the probability of miscalculation? Because there's no guardrail anymore, it seems.

#Peter Kuznick

Right, and there's no strategic stability talks going on either. Trump has managed—well, we start with 2002, when Bush got the United States out of the ABM Treaty. Then Russia began this major research on new delivery systems and new weapon systems after the U.S. abrogated the ABM Treaty. But then Trump has torn up every other treaty, as you say. And right now, there are no treaties between the U.S. and Russia. The first one was the Partial Test Ban Treaty in 1963. Ted Sorensen, Kennedy's speechwriter, said nothing Kennedy ever did gave him as much satisfaction as concluding the first nuclear arms control treaty. And when Kennedy announced it, he said—he talked about the old Chinese proverb that a journey of a thousand miles must begin with a single step.

He said, "Let's take that step." That's sort of how we're viewing this new effort. A journey of a thousand miles has to begin somewhere, and so let's take that step. You know, Kennedy had a lot of wisdom. One of the things that we point to in here, that Jack did even better in his letter, was talking about the Cuban Missile Crisis. Because during the Cuban Missile Crisis, Kennedy and Khrushchev both did everything they could to avoid a war. And they both understood that they had lost control. Khrushchev wrote Kennedy an incredible letter right after it ended, on October 30th. He wrote to Kennedy and he says, "From evil, some good must come. Our people have both felt the burning flames of thermonuclear war."

We have to use that to our advantage. Let's eliminate every conflict between us that could cause another crisis. And Kennedy was a little slow, but he finally responded. And he asked Norman Cousins, who had gone there twice as an intermediary, who met with Khrushchev twice, and Khrushchev said, you know, if war breaks out, what difference will it make if we're capitalists or communists, if we're Russians or Americans or Chinese or Italians? Who'd be left to tell us apart? Who'd be there to tell us apart? And so Kennedy made that great speech at American University, I think it was June 10th, 1963, in his peace speech, in which he calls for an end to the nuclear arms race, calls for an end to the Cold War.

But the thing about that speech, he didn't let the Pentagon see it. He didn't let the State Department see it. He didn't let the intelligence community see it. It was drafted by Norman Cousins and Ted Sorensen and Kennedy himself. And it was, I think, the greatest presidential speech of the 20th century. But no American president has spoken with that same clarity of vision, that same moral

impetus that Kennedy had the last year of his life. And sometimes Obama said good things, but we've seen very little of that kind of vision. But the American people have to demand it, and we need that kind of grassroots movement again.

So the point I wanted to make before I got sidetracked was that during the Cuban Missile Crisis, Pope John XXIII issued a private appeal to Kennedy and Khrushchev. He used his moral authority to say, "Let's end this peacefully. Let's not start World War III." And Khrushchev actually cited the appeal from the Pope, and he said that gave him some of the cover that he needed to back down in the Cuban Missile Crisis. Sadly, Soviet leaders drew a different lesson: that they never wanted to have to back down from a position of weakness. And they built up their nuclear arsenal in order to match the United States. And then we had, you know, by—by what year? 1986, the world had 70,000 nuclear weapons.

#Peter Kuznick

I took students on a study abroad class in Kyoto, Hiroshima, and Nagasaki for 25 years. And the American students traveled with Japanese students from Ritsumeikan University and Meiji Gakuin University. And we studied World War II together, the U.S. atrocities, the Japanese atrocities against fellow Asian countries. Do you know that a big part of those killed in Hiroshima and Nagasaki were Korean slave laborers who the Japanese brought over, who were out there working in the fields and in the cities and got no support from the Japanese government and no medical care afterwards. There were close to 50,000 Korean slave laborers in Hiroshima alone the day of the atomic bombing.

But this message that the Pope issued in 1962, that we saw Pope Paul VI issue, that popes have made repeated statements about, have really been— and the Catholic Church has been in the forefront of this effort since 1962. And that's why this is something Pope Leo could do. He's shown great judgment. Aside from being a Chicago White Sox fan in American baseball, he's shown a lot of really good judgment on different things. And I think he could respond. And maybe Trump and Putin are looking for a peaceful way out of these wars right now, because the military solutions are really not working at this point. And then you've got these crazy people like Elbridge Colby going around threatening China with nuclear war. The U.S. just sent another ship through the Taiwan Strait. But the behavior is so erratic. So Trump threatens allies. Trade war now with Canada.

Threatening to bomb the city of Tehran. Canceling next month's war games with South Korea. I think that's fine. But it's the crazy way that Trump does things that make everybody think, you know, this buildup, as you see in Europe, this remilitarization of Europe and the statements from European leaders—Macron, Starmer, Merz, von der Leyen—you know, over and over again. You got Nawrocki, the president of Poland, saying Poland needs its own nuclear weapons. Zelensky saying, either let us join NATO or give us nuclear weapons. Tusk, you know, Macron extending a nuclear umbrella over Germany and other countries, saying this militarization in Europe is also mad. France's leading military figure, General Fabien Mandon, telling French generals recently that the French have to be willing to lose their children again in order to stop Russia.

And we can see these crazy statements, this remilitarization. Where are they getting the money for this? Now they want to spend up to 5% of GDP. Trump's pressuring Taiwan to spend 10% of GDP. Take the money out of housing, healthcare, education, food programs, and put it in the military. Why isn't anybody out there talking about diplomacy? Why does it have to be people like us talking about the need for diplomacy? Why aren't the leaders out there, other than Lula and sometimes Xi Jinping, talking about development and diplomacy rather than warfare? It became crazy during the Biden administration. This is bipartisan warmongering in the United States, although now the Democrats have gotten off the warpath in Iran to a large extent. Not entirely, but for the most part.

#Glenn

Yeah, the criminalization of diplomacy doesn't go very well with this kind of nuclear escalation. But, you know, I'm a bit shocked as well by this militarism because, you know, a lot of this was predictable, and you would have thought we would have learned from history. I say predictable because many predicted that the whole post-Cold War order would break down. That is, that hegemony would be temporary. We would exhaust ourselves. Eventually, rivals would appear. And then, of course, conflicts would break out. Panic would set in. Everyone would then begin to arm themselves to the teeth, willing to take greater risks, even war.

And, but there's no willingness to discuss the fundamental problems in the international system and how to, I guess, reorganize. And instead, all we do now is demonize and come with this cheap emotional rhetoric of, you know, the virtuous us versus the belligerent other. And I just wonder if this is just a curse of humanity, though, that each generation needs another big war in order to learn to fear war. I mean, making matters worse, we kind of had 30 years of small wars, which are far away, inferior opponents. In the worst case, we can just pull away and leave them in a messed-up situation. But now we're transitioning into these great power conflicts again: China, Russia.

Yeah, you know, maybe Iran's not a great power, but it's certainly quite a formidable power on the southern end of the Eurasian continent. So I just, I don't understand. Again, I know I asked a similar question before, but when everyone talks about diplomacy, the need to, you know, not wait until after a great war before we start to reorganize or adjust to new realities, it appears that the only page in the history book people have these days is the appeasement of Hitler, that we can't under any circumstance appease, so we have to confront. So, you know, I think the Pope is a good choice, but those leaders, the Kennedys, the Russians, where were they today?

#Peter Kuznick

You know, all the European leaders use the Munich analogy for why we've got to arm Ukraine to the teeth and stop Russia. Because if they, you know, as Rutte says, you know, if Russia gets a win in Ukraine, it's coming after the rest of Europe next. That's the thinking. Some years ago, I had Robert McNamara come into class. You know, McNamara was known as the architect of the Vietnam War.

He was there with Paul Warnke. And the two of them said part of the problem was false historical reasoning, that all the leaders were using the Munich analogy, that we've got to stop Vietnam or else there's going to be this domino effect and communism is going to spread throughout Asia.

But that false reasoning, McNamara said, was what really threatened—what got the United States to think that Vietnam was so crucial. You know how many people? When McNamara was in my class, he said he accepted that 3.8 million Vietnamese died in the war. Last year, I was in Hanoi meeting with Vietnamese leaders, and they said that the figure they now use is 5 million Vietnamese died in the war with the United States. And, you know, the number is so beyond comprehension. But the point you're making, that in the nuclear age, we don't have the luxury of war, because in the nuclear age, war is the enemy. Because if war spreads and turns to nuclear, it's—the chances of humanity surviving are scant, if at all. So especially in the nuclear age, war is obsolete, and diplomacy has got to take over.

You know, and the Pope calls for that, and Lula and Guterres and academics like us, and a lot of people have been signing our appeal, and former leaders. But we don't have world leaders today making steps. Why, instead of spending billions and trillions of dollars on rearming, why aren't we trying to figure out a way to live in peace? I mean, it's in Russia's interest and China's interest as much as it's in America's interest and Norway's interest and Germany's interest and Brazil's. I mean, it's in all of our interests. It was back in Arbatov, when the Cold War ended, Arbatov said something really important. He said, "We're going to do the worst possible thing that we can do to you. We're going to leave you without an enemy."

And the U.S. quickly manufactured new enemies, including Iran, and then Korea, North Korea, and Libya, and then Iraq. I mean, we have a lot of enemies. We don't have wisdom. It was back in 1929 when Freud wrote his brilliant, though very depressing, book, *Civilization and Its Discontents*, in which he talks about the human death instinct. And maybe we have it in a planetary way. But he says we need to construct civilization to curb this death instinct. He said it's a battle between Eros, the life instinct, or the death instinct. He always had his binaries. But he, like others, was so demoralized by World War I that they had a very pessimistic view of human nature in the 1920s and '30s.

But we have to get off false historical thinking. We need to stop using this outworn Munich analogy because, you know, it's crazy to think that Russia, which cannot even defeat Ukraine, which has a fraction of its military might, of its army or its population—the fact that Russia cannot easily defeat Ukraine—why would Putin be crazy enough to want to go to war with NATO? Putin has dismissed this and said that it's lunacy. Tulsi Gabbard, again in one of her lucid moments, said that this was lunacy. And we should recognize that we need to figure out that China's Belt and Road Initiative is a step in the right direction, even though it's been denounced by the West.

We need peaceful development. The fact that the richest six people have more wealth than the poorest four billion people, it shows how much we need in terms of peaceful development on our

planet. Green development. China produces more green energy and infrastructure than the rest of the world combined. The United States has gone exactly the opposite direction, especially under Trump. We just need this kind of rational wisdom as a planetary civilization. You know, what divides people here from people in Korea or people in China is so tiny compared to what unites us, what our common interest is. And that's a message the Pope has been articulating very, very effectively.

#Peter Kuznick

Glenn, I can't hear you.

#Glenn

Sorry, I was saying, regarding the historical analogy, every time we go to war, it seems, if it's against Serbia, Iraq, Libya, Russia, it's always against another Hitler. That is, I think it's a very dangerous historical comparison because the conclusion then is always that negotiation is appeasement, and peace essentially demands that we choose war. That is, it has to be defeated. There is no other way. You cannot reason with this opponent. Also, I think it's an opportunity for our leaders to act sanctimonious as they beat the drums of war. But I just want to say I hope your appeal gets the attention it deserves and more people get involved in some peace movements that push against this march to war, because it doesn't seem like all evidence are showing clearly that's the era we're in, or that's the direction we're marching. Yet I'm not seeing any pushback, which is, yeah, shocking. I'm not sure if you have any final thoughts.

#Peter Kuznick

Yes. The point you're making about demonizing everybody as a new Hitler is exactly the crucial point. Because you can't, you know, as you say, you can't reason with Hitler. You've got to stop him militarily. So Putin becomes Hitler. George H. W. Bush turns Saddam Hussein into Hitler during the first Gulf War. George W. Bush did it again during the second Iraq War. I mean, we have to demonize these people. But what I'm asking the viewers to do is go to the Nuclear Insanity Substack, read and sign the appeal to the Pope. Spread it out. Get the word out to everybody you know. We need to make this multiply in such a way that the pressure is on the leaders so that they feel they can't deny this.

They can't ignore it. But people have got to take personal responsibility to get the word out to everybody they know. So go to the Nuclear Insanity Substack. That was started by Ivana Hughes and the Nuclear Age Peace Foundation. And our appeal is up there. And sign on. Those who are more prominent, give us all your identification. Sign on like Glenn Diesen did and I did. And get the word out because one of the other great nuclear war movies, and I teach a whole course on this, is *On the Beach*, a 1959 movie. And it shows these rallies. It's the last pocket of humanity is in the southernmost urban center in Melbourne, Australia. And Gregory Peck and the U.S. submarine crew are down there.

But they're waiting for death to come from the spreading fallout. And they have these rallies, Salvation Army rallies, downtown Melbourne, with this big banner up there: "There's still time, brother." And in the last scene in the movie, they show the banner, "There's still time, brother," and there's nobody left, right? While we're still here, there is still time to turn this around, to end this, to end the war in Ukraine, to end the war in Iran, to have peaceful development in Asia, to abolish nuclear weapons. We can do it, but we need everybody to mobilize, to take personal responsibility, not say somebody else needs to do this, but each of us needs to do this. Thanks, Glenn, for giving me a chance to say that.

#Glenn

Thank you. And yeah, I just want to say I like that message of personal responsibility, because I don't think there's necessarily anyone behind the wheel at the moment who is steering us in a different direction. So I would recommend everyone go to the Nuclear Insanity Substack, and I will leave a link in the description. And yeah, thank you so much for the work that you do.

#Peter Kuznick

Thank you, Glenn, for the work you do.