



INTERVIEW: Professor Jeffrey Sachs on Ukraine's Failures, Israel's War in Gaza, China, and More

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Glenn Greenwald (GG): Good evening, it's Wednesday, May 15th, welcome to a new episode of System Update, our live nightly show that airs every Monday through Friday at 7 p.m. eastern exclusively here on Rumble, the free speech alternative to YouTube. Professor Jeffrey Sachs is a renowned economist, a policy analyst and has held many positions at Columbia University, where he is currently a university professor. He was on the faculty of Harvard prior to that. He has served as Special Advisor to the UN Secretary General, is credited with guiding several countries out of major debt crisis over the last four decades, and has become, in the process, one of the nation's most influential scholars on international relations. He has been on System Updates several times before. He is, for very good reason, one of our audience's most popular guests, and we are always delighted to talk to him and we are thrilled that we will do so tonight. During the interview, we will spend significant time in our discussion on what has now become the clear and obvious fact that Ukraine is now losing this war to Russia, that Russia is advancing, poking through the front lines, taking more and more territory while the Ukrainians retreat, exactly as many people, including Professor Sachs, have long predicted would be happening only to be accused of being a Russian agent for having told the truth. We also examine what US motives are still driving the Biden administration to continue to fund an obviously futile war in Ukraine, as well as the increasingly unhinged panic in many NATO states over what appears to be the inevitability of a Ukraine and NATO defeat, including French President Emmanuel Macron recently musing and then reaffirming that NATO may need to deploy combat troops to fight alongside the Ukrainians against the Russian army, which would essentially by definition, be World War Three. We also delve deeply into the ongoing support, financing and arming by the Biden administration of Israel's war in Gaza and where this war is headed. We talk about whether Biden's temporary suspension of the transfer of a few weapons constitutes a genuine restriction on the Israelis, or whether it's just an empty theoretical gesture and he offers a lot of insightful analysis about where the war goes from here, and offering a particularly concise and illuminating explanation about all of the incentive schemes in Washington that ensure the US will always be heavily involved in various wars. And given that he is at Columbia, one of

the campuses most affected by student protests against the war in Gaza, we also discuss whether the crackdowns on those protests is a threat to free speech and to academic freedom. And then we conclude the interview by talking about China and its relationship with the United States. Earlier this week, as we reported last night, Hungary's Prime Minister Viktor Orban met with China's President Xi and emphasised how central that partnership is for Hungary's future growth and prosperity, something we are seeing happening in more and more countries around the world and regions the US once dominated. It's an interview that we taped just an hour or so ago, and in it, Professor Sachs also analyses why this is and why this is happening, why China is attracting so much new partnerships and so many new allies, and how the US foreign policy is unwittingly fuelling and strengthening China's standing in the world.

Now, there are two notes before we present you with our show tonight and that interview. First of all, I need to correct an inaccurate statement I made last night as part of our reporting on a new bill pending in the House that would cut off funds for the US Defence Department, US State Department, and other agencies of the US government, unless and until President Biden reverses his temporary suspension of the transfer of some weapons to Israel. In other words, it would prioritise Israelis' needs over American needs by demanding that Israel get everything at once before Congress will fund our own government. As part of that report, we said that this bill, which was introduced by Republican House member Ken Calvert of California, was also supported by Democratic House Minority Leader Hakeem Jeffries of New York. That statement was inaccurate. Congressman Jeffries opposes this bill primarily because it denounces Biden, and he is concerned that many House Democrats will join with the Republicans and vote for it and enable it to pass. So we just wanted to correct the position of Congressman Jeffries' view of this bill.

Secondly, the Prime Minister of Slovakia, Robert Fico, was targeted by an assassination attempt earlier today, having been shot five times and is now in critical condition. Prime Minister Fico is one of the most interesting figures in EU politics. He was formerly a conventional left liberal in his two prior stints as Prime Minister of Slovakia, and last year he ran on a campaign based on ending all further aid to Ukraine in its war against Russia, as well as opposing court EU dogma on things like immigration and health policy. For that reason, we covered Fico's victory last year because it was so interesting and so revealing, kind of reflective of this new type of populism in the EU. Now, as of our show tonight, no information is yet known about who the assassin was or what motivated the attack. So we will definitely cover this event and what it means tomorrow night in depth once more is known.

Before we get to our show a few programming notes. First of all, we are encouraging our viewers to download the Rumble app. It works both on your smart TV and your telephone, and if you do so, you can follow the shows you most like to watch on Rumble and then activate notifications, which means that the minute any of the shows you follow begin broadcasting live on the platform, you'll be immediately notified. Secondly, System Update is available as well in podcast form. Every episode will be available to listen to on Spotify,

Apple, and all the major podcasting platforms 12 hours after they first are broadcasted live here on Rumble. And if you rate, review and follow our program on that show, it really helps its visibility. Finally, every Tuesday and Thursday night, once we're done with our live show here on Rumble, we move to Locals, which is part of the Rumble platform where we have our live interactive aftershow. That aftershow is available solely for members of our Locals community. And if you want to become a member, which gives you access not only to that aftershow but many other features, and it's really the community on which we most rely to support the independent journalism that we're doing here every night, simply click the join button right below the video player on the Rumble page, and we'll take you directly to that community. For now, welcome to a new episode of System Update and our interview with Professor Sachs, starting right now.

GG: Professor Sachs, it's always great to see you. Thank you so much for taking the time to talk to us.

Jeffrey Sachs (JS): Great to be with you. Thanks.

GG: So unfortunately, what we've talked about pretty much over the last two years, we've always had various American wars to talk about, and today is no exception. I guess in some way it's the nature of being an American. Let's start with the one that's going on for the longest, which is the war in Ukraine. I think every time in the past when we've spoken, we talked about how it seems very difficult to imagine the Ukrainians winning in the way that the West finds victory, namely expelling the Russians from every inch of Ukrainian soil, including Crimea. And yet the Western press has been painting a very rosy picture of how the Ukrainians are feisty and how they're performing better than anyone would think. Finally, now, clearly the media narrative has shifted in the West. Even I think the US government's tone has shifted, and it's obvious now that the Russians are breaking through Ukrainian front lines, are advancing or gaining territory, while the Ukrainians are gaining none, everyone except Zelensky I think, admit the situation is pretty dire. What do you make of the situation just on the battleground in terms of the war itself?

JS: Of course, the Ukrainians are being beaten. But what's what's very interesting, Glenn, in exactly in your line of work, if one listened not to the Western media, but also to the Russian channels and to independent media over the years, it's not as if there was some sudden change, what is happening right now, which is the defeat of Ukraine on the battlefield, is a steady process that's been happening now for more than two years. So there's no dramatic moment of change. There has been a war of attrition that Russia has been winning. The propaganda in the West has disguised that. And even until today, you have absurdly optimistic statements by Secretary Blinken and others. But if you listen to the facts on the ground, not in the New York Times or the Washington Post or the Institute for the Study of War, or all of the British media, but a much wider range of news, nothing that's happening now is a surprise, or even a shift from the underlying trend that has been underway now for two years. After all, Ukraine was completely bloodied and failed in its so-called counteroffensive last summer. It already lost significant areas of Bakhmut and others in the spring of last year and its key defence lines in the Donbas. So what's happening now, which is

dramatic, is not a surprise. And it's not even a decisive change of direction except in the Western media.

GG: I think as somebody who covers free speech and censorship and debates adjacent to it, quite often, one of the most extreme things I've seen in, let's say, the last five years, maybe in the last decade along those lines, is that the EU, just a couple of months into this war, made it illegal to give a platform to any Russian state media, such as RT or Sputnik. So if you as an American adult or a European adult more specifically, more accurately, wanting to hear what the Russian media was saying, wanting to hear what the Russian government's version of events was, not to believe it, but just to have the comparison, hearing both sides, it was basically a crime to platform them and the platform that our show is on, which is Rumble is actually banned in France as a result of their refusal to remove RT and Sputnik. And so this information bubble was deliberately cultivated and I think did quite an effective job in propagandising the citizenry, to the point probably a lot of people are shocked that Russia actually is doing so well. Now, one of the arguments that war proponents are making, because war proponents of the United States never admit error, there's never a moment where they say our predictions about the war didn't come true. It was misguided. It was an error. We made a lot of false assumptions. What they're now trying to say is, yes, Russia is winning, but the reason for that is that the Republicans held up the \$60 billion package for so long in Congress, namely for about three months. And if you go back in history, you look at every war where the US failed in its objectives, and they always make that same argument. Oh, we were constrained by war opponents. We would have won in Vietnam had it not been for the protest movement. We would have won in Iraq, had they unleashed more force. We would have won in Afghanistan, had we stayed longer. We would have won in Syria had Obama not tied the hands of the CIA. That's obviously what they're saying. Now, as you said, the evidence of Ukraine's failures predate by a long time the Republican impediment for a couple months or three months of the \$60 billion package. But what do you make of that argument? What's your response to it?

JS: First, let me say a word about the European bubble because I lived in Vienna for much of last year. I was completely shocked, even when I was scheduled to give a public address or an interview, sometimes the venues would cancel because they didn't want to hear an independent, objective scholarly assessment. They were afraid: Oh, that is too much pro-Russian. I'm pro-peace, by the way. I'm a pro truth. So it wasn't pro-Russian or not pro-Russian. It was pro-facts. But I saw the bubble in shocking ways all through Europe. I had the experience, Glenn, after Nord Stream blew up – the US blew it up, if anyone is still curious about that. But when I said it on American television, I was cancelled within literally 30s, and then subjected to a rant by the anchor for a few minutes; how dare he say these things? But then I was cancelled in Europe, the same way. In a very strange way, because I was an unpaid but formal adviser to the EU diplomatic corps, just as an academic expert. And when I said that, yes, the US blew up Nord Stream, I was immediately 'fired'. Again, there was nothing commercial in it. No funding, but I was taken off the list. They do not want to hear any of this. And this is absolutely amazing. So we have been living in this completely false narrative. It is absolutely not true that this delay in the armaments has to do with

anything, by the way. Look at what our General Petraeus said last year about Ukraine's counter-offensive. It's interesting to go back and read how Ukraine is going to prove it's going to slash right through the Russian defences and so forth, and all of this optimism and blather that we heard so many times in the US and it was all completely wrong. Completely. And when it proved completely wrong, no one ever had even a story to say, Well, what happened? We said somebody said this, and it turned out to be this, isn't that interesting?!

If you follow this story closely, essentially, the US has been gambling repeatedly. They've been gambling with a guaranteed losing hand. This is important to understand. Obama did figure this out back in 2014. He figured out that Russia has what was called then escalatory dominance. That whatever we do, Russia would escalate. Why? Because for Russia, the stakes of what's going on in Ukraine are existential, but for us, it's a geopolitical game. Not more than a game, by the way, and that's how it's viewed by these game theorists. They want NATO in Ukraine. So everything, Glenn, that they banked on proved to be wrong. And the group that was banking on it is the same group as today. It was Biden, Sullivan, Nuland, who's now my colleague at Columbia University, she's out, Blinken, it's the same group. Now, they gambled in 2014 that they could help to instigate a coup, and that all would kind of settle down in the US favour. Gamble wrong. Because Putin did what he said he would do. No way you guys are taking away our Sevastopol naval base just because you launched a coup. And so Russia took back Crimea with that referendum in 2014, in March 2014. Okay, that was the first gamble wrong. Second gamble: There was the outbreak of ethnic Russians who did not want to be under this coup-led government of the Ukrainian nationalists. And so this insurrection started in the Donbas, and Russia actually said very constructively, peace and autonomy for this region. That was the Minsk Agreement. And not only were there agreements reached on how to end this post-coup conflict that our side didn't count on, but they were agreements that were backed by the UN Security Council and backed by Germany and France. US gamble number two, blow off these agreements, privately agree with Ukraine. No need to do any of that. We had our experts here saying how decentralisation in Ukraine would be a bad idea. Don't give autonomy to the region. Okay, failed again, because the war continued. Then Putin put on the table a security arrangement with the United States, a draft on December 15th, 2021. I called the White House afterward. I think you and I have spoken about that. I told them: Negotiate, avoid this war. Well, they gambled again. They felt, Ah, what's Putin going to do? It's all a bluff. We don't have to negotiate over NATO enlargement. No, nothing too much terrible is going to happen. That's what I heard. Wrong. Gambled again. Then in March 2022, just essentially, three weeks after the launch of Russia's special military operation – we can't say this started the war because that started in 2014, but the escalation of the war that started on February 24th, 2022 – Ukraine said, okay, okay, okay, okay, we'll be neutral. And under the auspices of Turkish mediators, they essentially initialled an agreement – very close. The US stepped in and told Zelensky: You don't have to do this. We've got HIMARS coming your way. We've got tanks coming your way. We've got crushing financial sanctions coming your way. We've got your back. This was another gamble. This was another escalation of a losing hand on the US side. What these people, Biden, Blinken, Sullivan, Nuland can't get is that for Russia this is really national security. For these people, it's a game. It's a game of expanding NATO. NATO doesn't have to be in Ukraine for US

security. It's to be in Ukraine, to, quote, "weaken Russia or to surround Russia". But Russia doesn't want the US on their border. And so our side does absolutely not understand that they cannot get their way. All they can do is drive Ukraine into dust, into now 500,000 deaths of Ukrainians. And the number is soaring now, often a thousand a day, 1500 a day, because there's a bloodbath underway. But nothing is shocking except the stupidity of the US policy, which is gambled and gambled and gambled. But I guess it's not their lives. It's not their money. It's Ukrainian lives. It's American people's money. So they don't care about this gambling, it seems. But nothing is a surprise, Glenn.

GG: Yeah, so we're talking about two different points, which was my fault because of my last question. I asked you about two different points, so I just want to break them down for a second. We're kind of talking about the discourse around the war and the tolerance for dissent and debate, and then also what the US policy has been. So let me just first focus on the question of the discourse. You know, I'm very aware that the US government propagandises a partnership with the corporate media, especially when it comes to foreign policy and war. Sometimes, though, it really is stunning to watch, as you said, for all the harsh critiques I had of President Obama's foreign policy and his continuation of the War on Terror, it is true, and you can go back and read this that he was attacked by members of both parties because he wasn't willing to send lethal arms to Ukraine. He didn't want to confront the Russians in Syria, saying it's not worth that kind of confrontation. And he gave an interview with Jeffrey Goldberg, the neoconservative editor in chief of *The Atlantic*, on his way out in 2016. It was a major interview on foreign policy called *The Obama Foreign Policy Doctrine*. And Jeffrey Goldberg kind of harassed him very critically, like, why wouldn't you do more to confront Russia and protect Ukraine? And what he said, President Obama, the beloved Democratic Party politician as recently as 2016, was: Look, what we have to understand – I think he used the phrase escalatory dominance, but his point was exactly that – that Ukraine has never been and never will be a vital interest to the United States, but it always will be, always has been and always will be a vital interest to Russia because it's in their backyard, not ours. And therefore it's impossible to beat Russia in Ukraine because if we try, they will just take over, not just Crimea, but all the Donbas and eastern Ukraine. And then a year later in the Democratic Party, it became taboo, evil, immoral, maybe a sign of your disloyalty to raise that exact point. And I think what changed was a lot of Democrats became convinced that Putin won the election.

But on the discourse – this is a thing that has really amazed me. You know, when I started writing about politics, I focused on the War on Terror and a lot of the abuses of civil liberties and American principles of due process and the like that I perceived was taking place. And at the time, anybody who questioned the War on Terror of Bush and Cheney, especially 2003, 2004 or 2005, was accused of being pro-terrorist or pro al-Qaida, that you weren't defending your own country's legal values and constitutional principles, but you must be on the side of the terrorists. And I thought that tactic kind of went away, that it was obviously manipulative and deceitful. There were a lot of reasons why you would object to the Bush-Cheney foreign policy without being pro-terrorist or pro Osama bin Laden. And yet, here we are throughout the last two and a half years, anybody who tried to introduce these ideas that you've been

talking about, which weren't just valid, but I think have been entirely vindicated, wasn't just excluded from the discourse, wasn't just told that you were wrong, but anyone who stood up and said it, and I know this, you know this, I've been put on official lists, as I believe you have been too by the Ukrainian government, they would accuse you of being a Kremlin loyalist, kind of like a very McCarthyite discourse that you are secretly getting paid by the Kremlin, that you were loyal to Moscow over your own country and that really did work. That continues to be the sort of primary tactic against people like yourself who have expressed dissent about this war. Why did that work? I mean, I honestly didn't think it would. I never thought it would when Hillary Clinton first raised it against Donald Trump with Russiagate. But it seems to have such a stranglehold kind of ability to influence people, to deter people from speaking out and to get other people really on board with this tribalistic notion that either you support your government's war or you're on the other side, why do you think that works so well?

JS: Well, let me say one basic point. The fundamental problem is that American foreign policy is against the interests of the American people, and therefore it is based on continuous lying. This is not new to Ukraine or to Gaza. Of course, it was part of the Iraq War. It was part of Syria. Because, how many Americans understand that Obama ordered the CIA to overthrow the Syrian government? Almost not discussed. US foreign policy is based on the idea that the US should be the world's hegemonic power, the unchallenged, unrivalled, power in every region of the world. Full spectrum dominance, meaning economic, military, technological, diplomatic, financial dominance in every part of the world. It's completely delusional. It's delusional. Well, maybe there was a brief period where after World War Two, the US stood dominant because the US hadn't been destroyed militarily. Maybe there was a moment, and there was, after the dissolution of the Soviet Union, when the US, in a way, was unrivalled. But life is a little bit more complicated than the United States holding all the pieces in the world. Since we don't, trying to do so means non-stop wars. And the American people, if it was explained to them, Hey, Americans, how do you feel about non-stop wars so that the US can be the unchallenged power of the whole world? People would say, are you crazy? Leave me alone. I gotta go back to work. I'm trying to raise my kids. You stop sending us so much threat taxes, trillions of military spending and so on. They never buy this stuff. And so the whole thing is based on lies. We have to go into Iraq. It's not us in Syria, it's the Russians in Syria. It's not us in Ukraine, it's Putin, unprovoked, and on and on. It's such sad nonsense. But since it's based on lies, it has to be secret, also. It cannot be that there's open discourse. You cannot allow open discourse when the lying is so relentless. And so it comes naturally that if you want to do something that is not possible, that is delusional and is not what the public wants, and you have at least a formal structure of democracy that we have elections and so forth and they are supposed to be some voice of the people, then you have to lie. And when you have to lie, then everything has to be confidential. Then the worst crime in America, as you know very well, because you reported on it more than anyone else in our country, is that you have to make the greatest criminal, the one who tells the truth, or the one who leaks the truth, or the one who exposes the lie, and that becomes the modus operandi of the imperial state. So to my mind, the whole thing starts with the wrong premise, which is that the only way the United States can be safe in the world is to run the world, which is both

impossible and extraordinarily costly and extraordinarily threatening to our survival.

GG: Yeah. I mean, it's one of the reasons why I focus so much on the need to protect the free flow of information, the free flow of debate, especially over the internet, because if the government or power centers get a hold of that and can control it, it doesn't just exclude dissenting voices, but more so it shields their propaganda and their lies from any kind of critical scrutiny. Let me ask you – so that was the first part. The second part is the identification of several, what you call gambles that the United States government made with respect to Ukraine that ended up failing. I know it's always difficult to talk about motive, because probably there are always mixed motives or multiple motives. But the thing is that not only was all of what happened predictable, it was actually predicted. We were just talking about what President Obama's view was about how after eight years in office, he developed a pretty clear foreign policy, and he knew that the Russians would react the way that they reacted if we tried to expand NATO into Ukraine. But way before that, in 2008, the current director of the CIA, Bill Burns, wrote a memo to Condoleezza Rice, and at the time, it was also Victoria Nuland. She was the US ambassador to NATO under George Bush and Dick Cheney, where they were obsessed with this idea that we have to expand NATO as a bulwark against Russia. And Burns in a memo said, You people are crazy. I spent a lot of time in Moscow and if we do that, it's not just Putin, but pretty much every sector of Moscow's political factions, including Putin's opponents, his liberal opponents who view NATO expansion into Ukraine as a red line, that that will automatically provoke the seizure of Crimea, their extreme interference with eastern Ukraine, just as a start. So everything that has happened was not a surprise. It was obviously known. I'm wondering, do you think that what happened was that the US either disregarded that knowledge or decided it was worth it to risk because of how important Ukraine was? Or was there some level on which that provocation was part of the plan? In other words, you know, we know that we tried to trap the Soviet Union in Afghanistan before. Other countries have done that to us. Was there some kind of sense of, yeah, let's draw Russia into a war, because that'll weaken them and keep them fighting in a way that will undermine their strength in other sectors?

JS: Well, first, that memo in 2008, everyone should go online and type in note William Burns "Nyet means Nyet", is one title for this memo. The reason, incidentally, that we know about it is that Julian Assange revealed it to us. Otherwise we'd never know about it.

GG: Which is why he's in prison.

JS: Exactly.

GG: Just like we were talking about.

JS: Exactly, exactly. And the memo is fascinating because it describes precisely why everything the US is doing is wrong. Why it's dangerous, why it could lead to war, why it's very unlikely to work. I find it fascinating for so many reasons. First, the clarity of the message. Burns is very smart. He was ambassador to Moscow. He is our finest diplomat. I wish he were Secretary of State rather than head of the CIA. But he said it very clearly.

Second, it was ignored. So this is the second point. Third, we know about it only because of Julian Assange, which is another basic point, the one we've been speaking about. And it raises the question, so what is going on? Now, I have a basic theory, a basic theory that the main job of an American president, the overwhelmingly important job, is to keep a foot on the brakes. By the brakes, I mean stopping the war machine, which as a \$1 trillion a year business is always revving. There are always generals who want war. There are always military contractors who want war. There are always crazed ideologues who want war, and there's always people who want to test their new weapons systems. There are always people who want to beat the hell out of some place. There are always experts who want to punish somebody or do something. The war machine is always revving. You have a huge standing army. You have 800 military bases around the world in 80 countries. You're going to have war all the time. So the best presidents and they're very few, are the ones that know how to keep the foot on the brake. Because unlike a car that just idles and stays there – I know EVs are a little different – but you lift your foot off the brake, the car jumps forward. And this is why – you know, there are many motives for that. There's a lot of money in the war business. There are a lot of crazy people. There are a lot of generals whose life is war, after all, who don't care about diplomacy. They care about victory. Okay, whatever it is, the president is supposed to stop this stuff.

Now, Obama didn't stop a lot of it, by the way. Obama lifted his foot from the brakes in Syria. So we had this completely cockamamie idea, Hillary loved it and others, why don't we overthrow Bashar al Assad?! What could go wrong? What idiots. Honest to God. Sorry. It was obvious in 2011 that this was idiocy. But President Obama signed the presidential finding to send the CIA in to overthrow Assad. We barely heard about it. It's called Operation Timber Sycamore. The New York Times covered it, I think in three stories in a decade. So not so easy to know about or to hear about. But that was the president lifting his foot from the brakes. Another one was Libya. In Libya, Sarkozy and David Cameron, said: Why don't we take that guy Gaddafi out? For what reason? Well, why not, was the theory. And so they concocted the Benghazi hoax, right, to protect the Benghazi population, blah, blah, blah. He lifted his foot from the brakes. And we've now had Libya in chaos for the next 13 years. What could go wrong? In Ukraine, to his benefit, he kept the foot on the brake. And not completely, but pretty well, of course, Trump lifted it and Biden put on the accelerator because Biden played this game of regime change already back in 2014. We know it from the intercepted call of Victoria Nuland that says we're going to get the big guy, Joe Biden, to do the atta boys to cement the new post-coup government. You don't make this stuff up. It's absolutely clear. So Biden's been part of this for a long time, this very group. Now, you ask, why did they do it? Because it takes skill and fortitude to keep your foot on the brakes. There are so many war mongers around. There are so many members of Congress who make a living off of the military industrial complex. There are so many generals around. There are so many contractors around. There are so many ideologues around. And like you said, any restraint gets attacked by the right and the left, and you have to be very brave to to fight that. Being for peace is not so easy for an American president. That's why we almost never avoid wars in this country. Because we have an imperial state. It was founded in 1947. It is grown to gargantuan proportions and it's very hard to stop.

GG: Yeah, I think it's such a concise explanation about what happens in Washington and why. Last question on Ukraine. One of the things that you could kind of take comfort in for a while was the fact that almost every NATO country was saying the absolute red line we will never cross is deploying NATO troops or Western troops into Ukraine to fight against the Russian army, that would obviously be World War Three. But recently, and not just random people in media, but people like Emmanuel Macron, the president of France and others and throughout the West, I think because of panic over the fact that if they don't do something, they're going to get humiliated because they'll be defeated, but who knows why, but they've been talking, very seriously, it seems, and that's kind of what I want to ask you about, how it may be necessary to actually deploy troops in Ukraine and fight against the Russian army, or stand by the Ukrainians, behind them, to prevent this disastrous and humiliating defeat. And then, in response, the Russians very predictably announced that they were scheduling tests for battlefield nuclear weapons. Do you think that there's any seriousness, any real intent, to do something as obviously crazy as dispatch NATO troops into combat against the Russians in Ukraine?

JS: Well, first let me say that world history is filled with crazy actions and so never discount the possibility that something terrible goes wrong and therefore don't go up to the edge of the cliff – don't. Use prudence because something can go wrong. As John F Kennedy famously said once: There's always some S.O.B. who doesn't get the message. A plane goes off course. A general takes matters into his own hands. One of our allies does something absolutely crazy. We came within a moment of nuclear war in the October missile crisis, because a disabled Soviet sub that was out of communication with the surface didn't know that Kennedy and Khrushchev had reached an understanding and that the crisis was over. And even after that, the captain of this disabled sub ordered the firing of a nuclear tipped torpedo, and it was only countermanded by the fact that there was a more senior Soviet officer who said, that's not a good idea. Let's surface and find out what's going on.

GG: Because they thought they were being attacked, falsely, it was like a misperception. They thought they were being attacked.

JS: Apparently some asshole in the US navy was dropping live grenades rather than depth charges onto this sub. And they thought that there was a war raging on the surface. So things can go terribly wrong. So you don't do this kind of so-called strategic ambiguity. This is insane. What was explained to me by a very senior person, I won't name: Oh, Macron was trying to create strategic ambiguity. Are you kidding? With a nuclear superpower on the other side. What the hell are you doing? I know President Macron. I've spoken to him about this issue at some length. When I spoke with him, he knew that NATO was a provocation. That was the cause of this. Now he's talking about putting troops in which absolutely could not only get his troops blown up, but easily have this escalate completely out of hand. And you have the Latvian president [Edgars Rinkēvičs] tweeting: "Russia delenda est", that is "Carthago delenda est" from Cato the Elder, that Carthage must be destroyed. And you have a president of a Baltic country tweeting that Russia must be destroyed. Boy, is this clever?! Is this how we're going to survive? Is this how we're going to end these conflicts? The British

are nuts, by the way, the British are the worst russophobes in the world. We learned a lot of our russophobia from Britain. British russophobia goes back way even before the middle of the 19th century to the 1840s. Why? Because he wanted to create some strategic ambiguity. Meaning, put him on a, you know, not so sure what to do. No, this is not the way to do things. The way to do things is to sit down and negotiate. And the core of negotiating has been clear, absolutely, since 2008, but really well before that is, no NATO in Ukraine or Georgia. Thank you very much, the rest is all negotiable.

GG: Yeah. And that could have been the solution at the beginning, as you said. All right. Let's move to a different US financed, armed and backed war, which is the Israeli war in Gaza. When we've spoken about that over the last six months or so, seven months since it began, you often expressed frustration that obviously a lot of people shared about how unwilling the Biden administration seemed to be to impose any limits on the Israelis at all; just kind of here's all the weapons, here's all the armed, here's US diplomatic protection, do with that what you will. Ten days ago or so, the Biden administration announced what they called a temporary suspension of certain weapons being transferred to Israel, presumably in retaliation for the fact that Biden declared the invasion of Rafah to be a, quote, "redline" and Netanyahu immediately said, We don't care. We're going to do it anyway. And then did it maybe not in full, but certainly did it to a significant extent. A lot of Israel supporters look at that and say, this is an abandonment of Israel, Biden hates Israel, etc., whereas a lot of people on the left who support the Palestinian cause are saying, Oh, this is pure theatre, this is just symbolic. The Israelis already have all those weapons. It's just very temporary. Then announced just yesterday, the day before another billion dollars in arms to Israel. Where on that spectrum do you fall in terms of how you see this announcement of a suspension?

JS: Well, I think Biden is pathetic, sad, very weak. I'm not sure how much he's really in command and with it, but he's very weak. And he is unable to communicate properly with his people. That's us, with the American people, and certainly, unable to carry real diplomacy with Israel and with the Arab and Islamic states. So I think he probably is pissed off at Netanyahu. Who could not be?! But Biden's too weak to do anything about it. And in order to do something about it, yes, he would face domestic political opposition. He would face the Israel lobby, which is real. And it's powerful. He would face calls from both parties. He would be told, Don't do this by his political advisors. But you know what? Presidents are hired actually to do things that keep the world from blowing apart. That's, if they do their job, that's their job. And Biden should stand up and say: No more, Bibi, we're not doing this anymore. And there is going to be a two state solution and we're voting in the Security Council for UN membership of Palestine. And Biden should explain to the American people what this is all about. And he would find overwhelming support. He'd actually probably get a big boost for his re-election, because what he's doing right now is utterly unpopular and utterly against the will of a large part of the American people. It's clear, only about 30% say they support Biden's approach in the Middle East. So he fails to communicate. He fails to take any action. I don't think it's a fake. I think he's just a very ineffective president.

GG: The times we've talked before about the Israeli war, we've talked a lot about what their

motive is, like, what are they really after in this onslaught that has no end? And we talked about, you know, the stated goal is to destroy Hamas, eliminate Hamas, make it no longer exist in the Gaza Strip. Other Israeli officials obviously want, because they've said, a complete annexation by Israel of both the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, they consider part of Greater Israel. I think now there's starting to be a pretty big recognition that Israel isn't going to achieve any of those goals. They're not going to eliminate Hamas. There's no chance of that. And they also have no plan for who will govern Gaza after this is done. When you have 2 million, 2.2 million Palestinians there, how is Israel going to possibly manage that at the same time, when you have them expanding their control of the West Bank? It seems to me, I guess I'm wondering whether you agree, that a big part of the Israeli motive at this point is simply a desire for vengeance and bloodshed, kind of a hatred that has been accumulating against Palestinians in that country, a leadership that has encouraged that and then October 7th, understandably, like 9/11 provoked a lot of anger and rage and desire for bloodshed in United States, provoked that as well. But it didn't endure for this long. What are the Israelis doing in their mind? What do you think is their thinking behind all of this?

JS: I don't think it's simply vengeance and bloodshed. I think it is calculated. But like the calculations we talked about with regard to Ukraine, I think the calculations are wrong, but they're very clear calculations. The calculations of the Israelis, encouraged by both Trump and Biden is, you can have it all. You can continue to essentially be so-called Greater Israel, meaning, you don't have to really make any political concessions. You can run an apartheid state. You can essentially have control over the occupied Palestinian lands, and you can have peace with the Arab neighbours. That was Trump's idea, the so-called the Abraham Accords. And that is Biden's idea until today, which is we can, entice the Saudis by giving F-35s, by giving nuclear technology, by giving a defence agreement, we can entice the Saudis to normalise relations with Israel, despite what's happening right now, despite the genocide and despite everything. Through all of these incentives, Israel becomes secure, the Saudis are happy, the Arab world is okay, the losers are Palestine and we get on with it; that's the calculation. I think it's not only cruel and immoral, I think it's dead wrong. And I don't find these people very bright. I have to just say it. I don't think they calculate right. I don't think they understand what they're doing. I think it's an extraordinarily weak team and a very weak president. But I won't necessarily name individual names, but these people running around to Riyadh and so forth and then announcing we're close to an agreement with the Saudis, this is tactical stuff. The thing that is different for you and for me, we actually think, Oh my God, 50,000 people dead, probably, or 100,000 people dead. Of course, the official count is 35,000, but we know that it's multiples of that because of all the uncounted deaths, direct and indirect. But I don't think they count those numbers the way we do. They don't even count 500,000 dead in Ukraine, is all that big a deal. I mean, after all, what's 500,000 people, when we're talking about the stakes of global hegemony. So I think one difference is the cruelty is completely normalised among these players who sit around as if they're playing a game of Risk on the world map, and they don't find this so profoundly, profoundly awful, horrific, deadly the way they should, and the way you and I do. But I think this is the calculation that: Come on, why compromise? I mean, the Arabs are close to accepting life as it is, the Palestinians. Well, this has been going on for decades. And like the other calculations, no, I

don't think Saudi Arabia is going to suddenly agree on the basis of getting some F-35s to normalise relations with Israel. They keep saying every week when the US somehow unofficially signals that they say, No, there has to be a Palestinian state. We have had the Arab Peace Initiative since 2002. We have the Arab and Islamic leaders' statement from Riyadh, last November. And we say it every time, but you don't hear. And then the US again with Blinken, who's very weak and very pathetic, unfortunately, and not not at the top of this game, saying, Oh, we're going to negotiate. And there are a few of them around negotiating. So they're gambling the same way. They don't count the Palestinian deaths as being some horrific fact. Of course they should, but they don't. And that's what the gamble is. The gamble is that we can get a normalisation of relations with the major Arab states without a two state solution.

GG: Yeah, you can almost tolerate it a little bit more, if they were just sociopaths disregarding the value of life that they're ending, if they were very cunning strategists. But the fact that they're also inept and incompetent in that makes it sort of the worst of both worlds. And in the little time we have left, I want to ask you about China, but before I get to that, I just need to ask you about the following, given that you've been around academia for a lot of your career, you still are, there's obviously a big controversy over campus protests that have broken out, including at your school, over people, young people seeing all these images who do value these 35,000 lives at least, and as you say, it's far more than that, and they know it's coming, and there's been a crackdown on their right to protest, on the right to speak. Not people who are necessarily engaged in civil disobedience, but people who are just chanting things or who are a common, frequent presence on American campuses. What do you make of this? It seems like that free speech and the right to organise and protest is being run roughshod over because the cause of shielding Israel is so important. But you're closer to these campus protests than I. So what do you make of what's been going on there?

JS: Well, I, I'm very proud of the students. They see an outrage of grim historic proportion and they're protesting. And I'd be very worried if they weren't protesting. We're watching a genocide take place and our students are protesting and I say, thank God they're protesting, we're watching something absolutely horrible, transpire, and the students are aroused across the country to protest this and to state their opposition. This has caught the political class and the administrators of the universities completely off guard. When you tell lies like our government does for a living, and one of the lies is that we support the two state solution, blah, blah, blah, you don't expect truth to appear. And the fact that young people are aghast at Israel's actions is a shock to the political advisors, to Biden and his re-election, a shock to the Israel lobby. How dare they? This is a pro-Israel country. We've never heard from young people about this. And the administrators are basically responding in a completely wrong way to the pressures from Congress and from their donors. And they panicked and they did it all wrong. And they have really profoundly ruptured one of the most important institutions of any country's life, which is its universities and young people who need an environment to learn to be critical and to think critically and to understand what's happening in the world. I was on a call today with university presidents around the world, and one from New Zealand pointed out that in the New Zealand University law, this is a law, the universities are

identified as the critics and conscience of society. I thought how wonderful and how completely different from the American situation now where you have these thunderheads in Congress basically trying to break the university life and you have administrators doing their bidding for them. So it's very sad for America and very dangerous. And it's a huge abuse of the students who are afraid, who have been arrested, who have been expelled, who've been suspended for doing nothing more than speaking the truth and calling out the crimes of Israel and the United States, which is utterly complicit in this and gotten the police landing on their heads for what they've done.

GG: Yeah. I mean, I always conceived of universities, of academia, as being the most important bastion to protect the right to dissent. I always thought that that was why professors have tenure, why there's academic freedom. Precisely because that's the one place where we're going to allow dissent of all kinds to kind of thrive in order to make sure we have open discourse. And as far as the students are concerned, I think one of the main reasons why they're so motivated is because they've seen what's going on in Gaza, really for the first time, because of social media, things like TikTok and that's why the government, again, is so eager to take those platforms away because they're getting to see the truth. And that's the one thing we can't have. Let me ask you about China in the little time we have left. Earlier this week, there was this very interesting development where Viktor Orban, the prime minister of Hungary, who has kind of become a folk hero to the populist right in the United States and around the world, met with president Xi and he's done this many times, the relationship between Hungary and China has been growing. It's been solidifying. And Orban talked about how the partnership that they have with China is central to Hungary's future prosperity. We're seeing this in all of the regions where the US used to have full dominance, in South America, in Africa, in Asia. What role do you think the kind of resentment toward American foreign policy, this perception that America throws its weight around and starts wars, the last time China started a war, or was involved in a war was 1979, 45 years ago, is that resentment...

JS: And by the way, that was basically one month...

GG: Yeah, a one month border dispute, basically...

JS: A little punishment for Vietnam for its actions in Cambodia.

GG: Exactly, exactly. It was a one month war. So is this resentment helping China kind of attract and take away partners and allies from the United States? And more broadly, why is China having so much success in getting countries to migrate toward their alliance, toward their axis?

JS: Well, look, basically, China is doing a good job of economic development and technological advance. And over the period from 1980 until today, it's had the most remarkable economic transformation through very high saving, very hard work. Unbelievable the improvement in educational access and quality. They've just done a tremendously good job. China remains poorer than the United States per capita, or remains poorer than Europe per capita, but the advance has been tremendous. The improvement of the quality of life has

been tremendous. And because China's 1.4 billion people, compared to the 335 million people in the United States, four times larger, the size of the Chinese economy in absolute terms is larger than the US, if you measure it at a common set of international prices, what's called purchasing power, adjusted prices. China's done a good job. We should be pleased that 1.4 billion people have gotten out of poverty. We should be pleased that China is making available low cost photovoltaics, electric vehicles, wind turbines at low cost. The things that could make possible the ecological transformation, the energy transformation. Instead, we're in a profoundly neurotic state, in politics, in this country's leadership. China must be an enemy because it's large and successful. Basically, what's happening is China is a threat to US hegemony. It really is. It's not a threat to the US. It's not a threat to you. It's not a threat to me. It's not a threat to taking over the United States at all. But it is a threat to the claim that the US runs the world, and that is leading to a neurotic reaction. And if you want to see the neurotic reaction, people should look at Foreign Affairs Magazine, which is the magazine of the Council on Foreign Relations, the establishment institution. Every issue is: Are we still number one? What are we going to do? How do we stay ahead of China? How do we contain China? Everything is about China, not because China is threatening us, but because China is showing: We don't run the world the way we like to think we run the world. So most of the world is not gravitating to China. Most of the world is saying, Don't make us choose. Don't make us be on your side versus China's side. We just want to have life. We want to trade with China. We want to have a perfectly normal relationship. We want them to help us build a fast rail or a new power grid. Why are you telling us that if we do with China, we become an enemy of the United States? This is where we are so messed up. And when China has this big industrial structure, we now say that's overcapacity. This is a term that didn't even exist before. There's no overcapacity in China. The world needs what China produces. It needs solar modules. It needs wind turbines. It needs electric vehicles. We're in a climate crisis. So we need all that stuff. We should be encouraging this development. We should be encouraging China's making loans and investments in developing countries to help them make their energy transformation. But China is a threat to America's delusion that it runs the world.

GG: So every time you come on, I always think to myself, Okay, I want to spend a lot of time talking about China. Obviously a major part of the US-China, well, what some people want to be a new Cold War, but this adversarial relationship involves international economics and trade, which is your speciality, one of them, things in which you've worked for a long time, but unfortunately, we always have so many wars that we have to spend so much time talking about that we only got to spend a little time. So hopefully that will be a day in the future. I can't envision it now, but let's be optimistic when the US doesn't have a bunch of hot wars in which it's heavily involved, and we can talk more in depth about what the relationship with China should be; what's happening with it. Because, I consider you such an important voice on that question.

JS: By the way, Glenn, we should do it in part because not only is the relationship central right now to war and peace and to the future of the world, China has a really different perception of international statecraft than the US. And it's absolutely fascinating to talk about

because China really views things differently, and in fascinating ways, and very good for a discussion.

GG: Yeah. So then we're going to harass you for a China only conversation, because it's something that I think people in the United States could really benefit from, since all we ever hear is evil China, aggressive China, militaristic China. And I think people can benefit even just from understanding better the Chinese view of the world, since we hear so little about that, it's always a pleasure to talk to you. I think it's extremely nutritious and illuminating for our audience. It is for me as well, and I really appreciate your time.

JS: Great to be with you.

GG: Have a great afternoon. Bye bye.

GG: So that concludes our show for this evening. As a reminder, System Update is also available in podcast form. You can listen to every episode 12 hours after the first broadcast live here on Rumble, on Spotify, Apple, and all the major podcasting platforms. If you rate, review and follow our program there, it really helps spread the visibility of the show. Finally, every Tuesday and Thursday night, once we're done with our live show here on Rumble, we move to Locals, which is part of the Rumble platform where we have our live interactive aftershow. That aftershow is available solely for members of our Locals community, and if you want to join, which gives you access not only to those aftershows, but also to various interactive features that we have on there. It's the place that we publish transcripts of every show we do here. We publish professional written transcripts there. It's where we first publish our original written reporting. It's the community on which we most rely to support the independent journalism that we're doing here every night. Simply click the join button right below the video player on the Rumble page, and we'll take you directly to that community. For those who've been watching this show, we are, as always, very thankful. We hope to see you back tomorrow night and every night at 7 p.m. eastern live exclusively here on Rumble. Have a great evening, everybody.

END

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