

INTERVIEW: PROF. RICHARD SAKWA

Global Britain: An Archaic Project That May Bring Global Nuclear War

This is an edited transcription of an interview conducted February 25, 2022 by Mike Billington of the Schiller Institute, the LaRouche Organization, and the Executive Intelligence Review, with Dr. Richard Sakwa, a professor of Russian and European Studies at the School of Politics and International Relations at the University of Kent in the UK.

Dr. Sakwa has served as head of that school twice in the past. He is also a senior research fellow at the National Research Institute, the Higher School of Economics in Moscow, and an honorary professor in the Faculty of Political Science at Moscow State University. He's an author of dozens of books and many articles, a very active participant in both political and academic fora, and is a highly respected spokesman for global cooperation as the only means to prevent war.

Mike Billington: Greetings, Professor Sakwa. I'm delighted that you agreed to do this interview. On the day we scheduled this interview earlier this week, Vladimir Putin announced that Russia would recognize the independence of the Donetsk and Luhansk republics. Russia's Armed Forces have subsequently attacked military sites across Ukraine and moved some ground forces into the country. President Putin said the objec-



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Professor Richard Sakwa

tive is to demilitarize and de-Nazify Ukraine. You've studied and written about Russia for decades. How do you see Putin's move and how do you expect things will develop, going forward?

Putin Acts To De-Nazify Ukraine

Prof. Richard Sakwa: Well, it's a pleasure to be with you today. Obviously, we're meeting at a time of, how can I put it, a global turning point in all sorts of ways, even though it's a culmination of processes which have been going on for a long time. The Ukrainian crisis at this moment, this war, is the intersection of all sorts of trends. The big one, obviously, is the failure to achieve a unified, indivisible post-Cold War order, focusing obviously instead on NATO enlargement. But much more than that, the failure to establish some sort of overarching framework for security. And the sharp point of all of this, of course, is Ukraine.

It came to a head in 2014, as we



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The Donbas area of Ukraine has suffered constant war since the coup. Here, a house destroyed in the fighting in 2014.



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A destroyed terminal at Luhansk International Airport, September 4, 2014.

all know. And then, with the Luhansk and Donetsk People’s Republics, where nearly four million people have been living essentially under siege since 2014. You ask “Why has Putin acted at this time?” We had a Normandy format which has been going on, and an attempt to implement the Minsk Accords, which was a way of restoring Donetsk and Luhansk to Ukrainian sovereignty. Both failed. Both failed under President Petro Poroshenko from 2014 to 2019, and under President Volodymyr Zelenskyy since then.

Also, that’s nested within the larger question of getting an overarching European security order. There are at least three levels of conflict: the one in the Donbas; one over Ukraine more broadly—its neutrality or future place in its security order; and then the larger failure of European security. We could even add a fourth, the global tension pressure between the United States’ vision as a global hegemon and the resistance of powers like Russia and China to those hegemonic ambitions. We’re living at the intersection of multiple crises, and it’s not quite clear whether these crises will escalate to the top level: We’re really talking about a global war.

Billington: How do you see the Russian people responding to this situation?

Prof. Sakwa: It’s extremely mixed. I think everybody is shocked. No one really expected this. Just

like with the Ukrainian people, it’s a strange sort of conflict, one which was endlessly anticipated. Yet when it happened, was extremely unexpected. We’ve seen some protests across Russia. Leading political figures are condemning it.

At the same time, the elite seems to be relatively united on the view that the Ukrainian developments—moving into NATO, and possibly even what was most shocking, was President Zelenskyy’s comment at the Munich Security Conference that Ukraine may become a nuclear weapons power. That was shocking enough. But perhaps even more disturbing was the lack of response of the Western powers, the Atlantic powers, which of course, are blocking North Korea and Iran from becoming nuclear weapon powers. And yet it seemed as if Ukraine was going to be given a free pass. As Putin pointed out, and not just him, it wouldn’t be so hard technically to go that way with experts in Ukraine. This is not to justify anything which has happened, but certainly it’s the perception amongst a section of the elite, that Russia faced an existential challenge.

A Strategy for Durable Peace and Development

Billington: Elizabeth Wilmshurst, Distinguished Fellow of the International Law Program at Chatham House, the British empire’s preeminent think tank, accused Russia of “violating the prohibition in the UN Charter on the use of force, violating the obligation to



MaxPixel

A formerly productive Ukrainian factory, abandoned in 2016, as economic ruin engulfed the country in the period since the 2014 coup.

respect sovereignty and territorial integrity of other states, and violating the prohibition on intervention,” and then went on to lecture Russia on the meaning of international law.

I find this rather rich, coming from a country that invaded and destroyed several Mideast nations, which were no threat to anyone, killing and wounding millions and driving millions more from their homes. Perhaps you could comment on this hypocrisy.

Prof. Sakwa: It’s yet again another indication of the crisis of the post-Cold War order. We never really had a stable unified peace order—that fourth level I mentioned, at the global level. Double standards are the name of the game, and have been for a long time. When NATO’s being talked about as a “peace body,” a “collective defense body” only—we’ve seen the bombing of Serbia in 1999; not so much a NATO plan of the invasion of Iraq in 2003, and above all, the destruction of the Libyan state in 2011, which was all very disturbing. But Libya was particularly interesting, or affecting for me. That was because in 2008, Libya and Italy signed a development agreement, a long-term cooperation agreement. Italy, being the former colonial power.

This really did seem to be the way forward. Gaddafi, of course, had given up ambitions for Libya to become a nuclear power in the early 2000s. As part of this shift away from the old Gaddafi system of rule, his son, Saif al-Islam [Gaddafi] was leading a reform effort and was funding PhD students across the world. One of them came to Kent and I was working with him. It was fascinating. Every few weeks he would go back to Libya. His family was there, and he would meet up with Saif al-Islam. It was a genuine feeling between 2008 and 2011, just before the war, that Libya was going to change; it was going to be gradual and moving in a way we would all want, toward a greater freedom, respect, in different ways, but for dignity of the citizens and so on, while maintaining and keeping the developments which had happened in the Gaddafi years. All of that was destroyed in 2011.

So it really is a shocking evidence, a moment. All of the falsehoods which attended the attack. The UN Security Council Resolution 1973 was limited to a limited no fly zone and so on, but was used as a pretext to go far beyond it.

Of course, one wrong element doesn’t justify another. That’s why we all argue—certainly I do—against militarism on all sides; that we need to have a



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Vladimir Putin, President of the Russian Federation.

genuine strategy for peace and development.

Putin, the Man

Billington: You have written four books on Vladimir Putin. I’m certain you watched his extraordinary speech Monday night, Feb. 21 and subsequent speeches on the history of the Ukraine, recognizing the two republics; and then explaining why he was carrying out military action. Could you give us your sense of the man and your expectation of his role in the future?

Prof. Sakwa: In the light of these events, of the invasion of Ukraine, there’s been much speculation in the British media that he’s somehow, in some way, mentally unhinged or unstable or suffering from “late-stage despot syndrome.” I don’t see that. This is not to justify what’s going on, but I certainly don’t see that.

Putin’s speech on the 21st of February about Ukrainian history was meandering, but underlying it was a controlled passion—not desperation even, but anger—about the fact that Ukraine has become—may become, indeed, we don’t know how this is going to end—his nemesis. But the arguments he made were rational. Whether they were right or not we can all debate, but they were certainly rational. Despite what people have said, this speech did not say that Ukraine has no right to sovereign statehood. In fact, he simply said, you have a responsibility as a sovereign state to look after all of your people within that sovereign state, and at the same time, to ensure peace and development by working with your neighbors.

The desperation in his tone was because Ukraine had failed to do that, the elite had failed to do it in one form or another. That's one reason why, in the very last moment, he refused even to talk to Zelenskyy and others, because there was just absolutely a movement not to accept the legitimacy of Russia's security concerns, let alone their substance.



Schiller Institute

Dr. Natalia Vitrenko, chairwoman of the Progressive Socialist Party of Ukraine.

Billington: Natalia Vitrenko, a long-time friend of the Schiller Institute and the LaRouches, is the chairwoman of the Progressive Socialist Party of Ukraine. Speaking to a Schiller Institute conference February 19, she [presented](#) a devastating picture of the collapse of the Ukrainian economy and the influence of the neo-Nazis within the government and the institutions of Ukraine since the 2014 coup. Putin also addressed the internal breakdown of key industries of the economy and the social structure in his Monday speech.

This picture contrasts greatly with the Western media argument that the U.S. and NATO are defending “freedom and democracy” in Ukraine against Russian autocracy. You’ve written about Ukraine for many years. You have a quite famous book on Ukraine [Front-line Ukraine: Crisis in the Borderlands](#). What was the internal situation there as this Russian action began?

Prof. Sakwa: I think Natalia Vitrenko’s analysis is one of the best, and others, perhaps in the left tradition, such as Volodymyr K. Yushchenko, because they’ve understood the way that the model of post-communist capitalism and the way it has developed since 2014, has unleashed a neoliberal “shock therapy” on a society which has already been devastated and pillaged by inequality and by political intolerance.

We know that the Communist Party of Ukraine was banned in 2014, a rather shocking development, and the Socialist Party, the group Natalia leads, has been under permanent pressure. Ukraine is one of the few states whose GDP, both in nominal terms and per capita terms today, is lower than it was in 1991—a shocking development. Indeed, whole swathes of industry have died.

Reflecting these dire economic circumstances, with very, very expensive services, energy and so on, all pushed by the IMF, is the mass emigration. At least six million have left Ukraine as labor emigrants.

It’s interesting that as the events were developing this week, there’s been endless talk of “44 million Ukrainians,” which perhaps is indeed the case, but not within Ukraine. The population has fallen from 48 million at independence to an estimate now lower than 40 million living—before the

recent events—living in Ukraine itself. It’s a catastrophic position. And worst of all is that political atmosphere of these mobilized civil society militant groupings, which have effectively kept the society and politics hostage for many years, certainly since 2014.

What Happened to Zelenskyy, the ‘Peace Candidate’ in 2014?

Billington: In the 2019 presidential election in Ukraine, Volodymyr Zelenskyy was portrayed by many as a “peace candidate,” who wanted to make peace with Donbas and with Russia. He won in a landslide. Was that characterization accurate? And if so, what happened to that impulse, because it’s certainly not there, doesn’t appear to be there today.

Prof. Sakwa: He certainly did present himself as the peace candidate, just like, by the way, Poroshenko did in the election of May 2014. He was putting himself forward, and the people believed him, as an oligarch and somebody with economic interests in Russia. My profound belief until recently was that both the Russian people and the Ukrainian people wanted peace genuinely, profoundly, because they are in effect one people—not one state—but having very many links.

Poroshenko immediately betrayed that peace mandate, but Zelenskyy actually did try. He was elected in April 2019 with over 70% of the vote, an overwhelming landslide, because he did say, and promised, peace, which was very good. In the early years [of his Presidency] he tried to implement it, in particular, at the



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Azov Battalion members posing for the camera with weapons in hand. The orange tape on their sleeves marks them as Ukrainian. Mariupol, Ukraine, 2014.

meeting of the Normandy format in December 2019, when he met with Macron, Merkel, and Putin in Paris. This was a very important meeting, and it really did seem as if the Donbas question could be resolved. So he did make an effort.

However, even as these four were meeting, the militants were gathering on the Maidan and threatening Zelenskyy, even with a coup. Zelenskyy did follow up. His Chief of Staff did have some meetings, but all of that very quickly ran into the sand, because, effectively, the elected leader of Ukraine did not dare to stand up to the militants. This was in part one of the reasons for the frustration of the Kremlin leadership since 2020 and 2021. With the arming of this force, it became even worse: the failure of the peace movement, the failure to implement the Minsk Agreements, and then the increasing arming of Ukraine, and training. The British, of course, were in the forefront of this, with a major naval modernization contract, including modernization of the port not far from Odessa. It seemed as if time was running out, that peace was no longer on the agenda. And worse, that a more militant and more aggressive Ukraine was beginning to emerge.

Who, Actually, Runs Ukraine?

Billington: It sounds like it would be fair to say that the government in Ukraine is not run by Zelenskyy as much as by the neo-Nazi gangs.

Prof. Sakwa: Well, I wouldn't go so far as to say that because they are still the government. The economic bloc continues, the financial bloc—of course, much of it very much inter-penetrated by officials from the U.S. Embassy and other external organizations. It's a balance. Ukraine has always been a very diverse and plural and genuinely democratic society in certain respects with certain limits. There's a fundamental sense of dynamic pluralism in that society. Unfortunately, it's too often the case—as you're suggesting, and I agree with you—that the actual formal mechanisms are overloaded not only by corruption, but by these

informal pressure lobbies, which have had an extraordinarily deleterious influence on the political development. Unfortunately, Zelenskyy has not been able to stand up to them, and has thus become hostage to them.

Billington: Zelenskyy today said he was not afraid to meet with Russia, with Putin, to discuss security guarantees, to discuss neutrality for Ukraine. These are the very things that they refused to do earlier. Do you see any chance that in fact, Russia will negotiate and not demand regime-change through this process?

Prof. Sakwa: If only he'd said that a week ago, and if only when there was endless diplomacy, when we had Macron going to Moscow, we had Scholz going to Moscow—for which I laud them, I support them. Any attempt to try to maintain a peaceful development is to be applauded. But we seem to be in a total impasse with the endless talks; they were sterile. There was no substance to it. What Zelenskyy is now saying—guarantees of neutrality and mutual security—this has been exactly what Russia has been arguing for, for months, if not years.

Is it now a credible offer? I personally am always in favor of negotiation. Talk—talk as much as you can. I would say, OK, take him up at his word and let him send an emissary to Moscow with a substantive brief, and also to ensure that the Atlantic powers back it up. Be-



Volodymyr Zelenskyy, President of Ukraine, speaking at the Munich Security Conference.

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cause clearly, what we've had so far is that Macron, who has been saying for a long time that we cannot build a European security order *against* Russia; it only can be *with* Russia. Yet he is not able to deliver either, because of the framework and bloc discipline within the Atlantic power system.

So Zelenskyy simply needed to have said this a week ago; this is what is so astonishing. Instead, he went to the Munich Security Conference and threatened to make Ukraine a nuclear power. It could not be more absurd: You had the Western powers saying that Ukraine had the freedom of choice, of any sovereign power, to join any alliance that they want, which is of course, a fundamental absurdity. Imagine Cuba saying that it's going to become a nuclear power, or the Republic of Ireland next to Britain. If Ireland declared that they wish to join the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and that the Chinese are welcome to pop some missiles into Ireland, that wouldn't last five minutes; it was just fundamentally absurd.



Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev and U.S. Secretary of State James Baker III in Moscow, 1990.

GWU/National Security Archive

And yet he's now saying, with his back to the wall—again, one doesn't necessarily approve of it, but this sort of coercive diplomacy of the mobilization of Russia's army around Ukraine for the last few months was all an attempt to open up negotiation. It was an attempt to achieve precisely what Zelenskyy is now offering. So I wonder how credible it is. Certainly, it should be explored. Send an envoy, send a concrete proposal, obviously, to avoid bloodshed and to avoid conflict. It is always important.

The Lost Chance for Peace in 1991

Billington: Stepping back, you have written often about the lost chance for peace at the end of the Cold War, when the Soviet Union collapsed. If a new security architecture uniting all of Europe, including Russia, had been established at that time, the world would obviously be a very, very different place today. What happened?

Prof. Sakwa: Two parts to my answer: At the end of the Cold War, there were two peace orders on offer, both reasonably good in some ways. The first one was Mikhail Gorbachev's version, based on "charter internationalism," the Charter of the United Nations and the subsequent international body of law built on that, and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The model there is "sovereign internationalism," which is good, and this is the one that Russia and China pursue.

The second model is one of hegemonic peace with the expansive so-called liberal international order, with two legs, the economic one with the peculiar model of the economy, and of course, with NATO. You may say that this model delivers certain public goods, but it meant that the rest of the world had to be a subaltern, a subordinate, accepting the dominance of the Atlantic power system.

So these two models developed. They've been in conflict; ultimately, this underlies the con-



EIRNS/Dan Sturman

National Security Advisor Zbigniew Brzezinski speaking at the Center for American Progress, Washington, DC, March 16, 2016.

flict to this day. Then more specifically, we had this NATO enlargement—all the promises in 1990 that it wouldn't enlarge. But even Zbigniew Brzezinski, in his famous book, *The Grand Chessboard*—a very intelligent book in a strange sort of way, but really profoundly disturbing, because it sees not nations and peoples as living subjects, but only as pieces on a chessboard, which is a really frightening image—Jimmy Carter's national security adviser in the late 1970s, even Brzezinski, who was ferociously in favor of NATO enlargement, said it should only be done within the framework of an overarching architecture of some sort of agreement with Russia. Even he understood that unmediated NATO enlargement would lead to a catastrophe of the sort that we now see.

That's why we lost the peace. There are lots of other factors, but the two models of world peace: one, sovereign internationalism, sovereign development, of countries coming together, building and using the huge opportunities of technology and of science and human talent; and the other, a much more dependent sort of capitalism, more exploitative. Of course, the end of the Cold War took place just in a rising wave of neoliberalism, outsourcing, and all the other pathologies of our time.

The Belt and Road in Europe

Billington: At that time, Lyndon LaRouche called for more than a new security architecture for Europe,

but rather called for bringing all of the Eurasian continent together through a series of development corridors connecting the Pacific and the Atlantic oceans by rail—a new Silk Road. Russia at the time was being looted by Western carpetbaggers and could not accept LaRouche's proposal. But the Chinese welcomed the idea and co-sponsored with the Schiller Institute, a conference in 1996 in Beijing on the New Silk Road, which Helga Zepp-LaRouche addressed in a keynote. What is your reading on the impact of this New Silk Road, what's now called the Belt and Road Initiative since Xi Jinping officially adopted the Belt and Road in 2013? What do you see as the impact of that development on the continent as a whole?

Prof. Sakwa: The Belt and Road Initiative and its maritime equivalent are extraordinarily important because they provide an alternative source of development financing for all those countries who sign up to it. It's criticized much in the West as becoming exploitative, as becoming a sort of debt trap to get their countries subordinate to China. Many good studies have demonstrated that this isn't quite the case. Clearly, there have been some issues. But what China has offered is a genuine effort.

I'll give you the example of Kenya, which signed up to it. I have studied and looked at Kenya since I was a boy. For many, many years there were plans to build a new railway line from the capital of Nairobi to Mombasa on the coast. Endless plans, endless funds, and it all disappeared, it never happened. The Chinese came in as part of the Belt and Road Initiative and pretty quickly built it.

There are issues—I think they should use more local sourcing of infrastructure, of steel and of talent and so on. They come in as sort of a closed bubble, turnkey, with their own cooks, their own security guards and everything. Nevertheless, the railway, a splendid railway, has been built. The Kenyans occasionally complain that China stocked it with old second hand rolling stock from one of their cities, but still, it is far better than anything they've had before.

All development is always complex and it always has to be balanced with local concerns and so on. Yet, the Belt and Road Initiative is a project for the 21st Century. I'm someone who believes that infrastructure is important, that it isn't just consumption, but in the building, using the technology to open up human skills.

It isn't just the infrastructure. Mombasa, for example, opens up markets and opens up facilities, and can be transformative if the infrastructure is balanced together with the social capital, with cooperative forms of social organization. You could call it socialism, you could call it other things, but development which is not exploitative, but genuine, where profit and the dignity of labor, as we used to call it, is manifest, in combination with the infrastructure.

We've seen a huge backlash against the Belt and Road Initiative from the Atlantic powers. Lithuania, for example, has now left, and there's a whole stack of attacks on it because it is a model, an alternative model, not just of world power, but an alternative model of world development.

Revive the Bering Strait Tunnel?

Billington: Which has certainly been lacking in the colonial world and the post-colonial world for many, many decades. Extending that idea even further, on April 24, 2007, there was a conference in Moscow, organized by the Russian Academy of Sciences' Council for the Study of Productive Forces, titled

"Mega-Projects of Russia's East: A Transcontinental Eurasia-America Transport Link via the Bering Strait." A [paper](#) by Lyndon LaRouche was presented there called, "The World's Political Map Changes: Mendeleev Would Have Agreed." This conference promoted the idea of a tunnel under the Bering Strait. At the time, there was significant optimism that this was going to take place, that it would be constructed and would thereby physically connect the U.S. and Russia by rail. What do you think such a great project would have meant for the world and for U.S.-Russia relations then? And what would it mean to try to revive that today?



A stretch of the Mombasa-Nairobi Standard Gauge Railway in Kenya, completed in 2019.

CGTN

Prof. Sakwa: As I say, I'm actually very keen on infrastructure development: railways, less on highways, but that's also important as part of it. As for this one across the Bering Strait, I'm not sure that it would become—it's a fascinating idea. What I do think—and this is what Russia is certainly now talking about, and Volodymyr Ishchenko [Deputy Director of the Center for Social and Labor Research (Kiev)], and many more—is that given the fact that Russia is going to be hit with such sanctions, that it will have to focus on the development of Siberia and the Russian Far East.

I don't think that Russia and U.S.—you're right, in some ways, this physical link

would then have been a symbolic development. But it would have cost billions I think would have been better spent. Russia, of course, as the Soviet Union, spent billions on developing Ukraine. And what did that help? It should have been spending it on developing the Urals, Siberia and the Russian Far East. We now know the equivalent of this is that there are regular trains from China going all the way to Hamburg, Germany. What we failed to achieve in that visionary idea of Lyndon LaRouche, of going from the U.S. to Russia, has now been built between China and Russia, that physical link. And of course, the other one of these links is the northern sea route. As the warmer seasons become longer and with their nuclear-powered icebreakers, the maritime link will perhaps serve as a functional substitute.

'Global Britain'

Billington: LaRouche always identified the British Empire as basically a tool of the City of London, the banking center, and that in that sense, the Empire still very much exists and together with Wall Street, is dragging the entire Western world into a monetary and fi-

nancial crisis, a hyperinflation which could well mean the end of the Empire and even the House of Windsor. As a British subject, how do you see the role of the British in the world today?

Prof. Sakwa: Well, I'm deeply critical of this Global Britain agenda in the way that it has developed, which reflects the worst aspects you've just referred to. Global Britain is an archaic project to try to re-establish influence, not in the framework of what we talked about just now, of peace and development. It's an old-fashioned "gunboat diplomacy"-type attitude, which has had enormous deleterious consequences over the years.

When Britain left the European Union, I wanted—and I would love to see—a global Britain that builds on the sort of idea we've been talking about—the idea of development, of moving beyond militarism, moving beyond the endless attempt of gunboat diplomacy, of the sort we saw in the Black Sea when that British ship went within the territorial waters of Crimea, and the aircraft carrier that has been sent off to the Far East, to the South China Sea, to wave the flag. This is a sort of 19th Century behavior. This is the worst sort of old-fashioned 19th Century imperialism, combined now with a 21st Century liberal empire of capital, which is exceptionally frightening in all sorts of ways. It's also, one has to say, the media in all of this, the way that media autonomy has become undermined by not only financial interests, but by the erosion of public debate.

Billington: Integrity Initiative.

Prof. Sakwa: Yes. Which is an excellent example of that, which is basically an instrument to intimidate and to destroy, to undermine alternative perspectives.

The Russia-China Statement of February 4

Billington: You have long called on Russia and China to put forward a positive perspective regarding the purpose and the importance of their cooperation for the rest of the world. And they have now done so in their February 4th "[Joint Statement](#)" of the Russian Federation and the People's Republic of China on the International Relations Entering a New Era and the Global Sustainable Development." This was issued on the opening day ceremony of the Winter Olympics. Did this statement meet your expectations?

Prof. Sakwa: It did. I thought it was a splendid

statement, because it put to rest the argument that Russia and China are revisionist powers. This is a usual term of abuse. What it has done, in fact, it has confirmed many of my arguments about these two models of world order at the end of the Cold War. It absolutely unequivocally committed the two countries to that body of international law, including human rights, as outlined in the United Nations Charter of 1945, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted in 1948, and all the rest.

They went on and on about this in the Joint Statement, including more positive perspectives about democracy; that each society has to shape its own destiny, and there can be no single model imposed from outside, which is, of course, [a reference to] the view of liberal hegemony after the end of the Cold War. So yes, it did meet my expectations. And more than that, it wasn't just the individual statements, but the fact that the two did it together was quite astonishing. Of course, it's now been followed up, with various comments by the Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi and others, reinforcing the principles enunciated in the 4th of February Joint Statement.

A New Security Architecture

Billington: We've discussed the failure of the Western powers—NATO and the U.S.—to respond to Russia's demand for a new security architecture for Europe. It's clear that this has brought us to the brink of not just the war in Ukraine, but a war between the superpowers—a war that could very well be nuclear. You have called for a Helsinki 2, to use the model of the OSCE—the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, which includes Russia, to bring all the parties together for a mutually advantageous resolution to this very severe crisis. What is your expectation about the potential for such a conference?

Prof. Sakwa: There is undoubtedly a need for this. It's absolutely clear, but it has to be well prepared, and therefore the foundations and the postulates have to be worked out. What would be on the agenda? You'd have a whole stack of things—first of all, Ukraine and its status, and also those frozen conflicts—Abkhazia, South Ossetia, even possibly even the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus, but certainly the Donbas, and Transnistria.

But more broadly, such a conference could take many forms. Yes, I think Helsinki would be an ideal



UN/DPI

In establishing the United Nations in 1945, the general principle of a Security Council, as a concert of powers, was agreed upon. Here, a meeting of the Committee of the Whole in the Economic and Social Council, at the temporary UN headquarters in Lake Success, New York, March 26, 1947.

way, because it would then avoid the taint of Yalta. Even though Yalta—the substance of the Yalta agreements in 1945—was actually useful and good. Not that some of those agreements were not fulfilled; the general principle agreement on establishing the United Nations was important. Yalta established a Security Council in the nascent United Nations. This Security Council, the five permanent members, is a type of concert of powers. So if we are going to talk about a type of confidence, it's useful to think back of other ones—a Congress of Vienna, possibly, which was the victorious powers at the end of the Napoleonic Wars. But one way or another, the issue is to establish a framework in which all of the great powers, certainly, other powers as well, buy into it, to establish the rules of the game.

I'm deeply pessimistic. I don't think this is going to happen, and therefore I have a feeling that the conflict will only intensify. I know that you've spoken about a new Treaty of Westphalia. In some ways I would endorse Westphalia, because it enunciated, for the first time, the principle of sovereign internationalism, of sovereignty, which is fundamental, so states then can devise models for their own development, and so on. But I'd be slightly hesitant about Westphalia, because the other side of sovereignty, in my view, is to find ways of working together, sovereign internationalism, which goes beyond. And that's why I really do like the charter

international system, because 1945 emphasizes the UN Charter sovereignty, absolutely, but it also provides a framework for internationalism, for genuine internationalism of the sort that Russia and China are beginning to devise today.

One final point on all of this is that Putin, for the last 18 months, perhaps for two years now, has been calling for a summit of the P5, the permanent five members of the UN Security Council. That may have been an important first step, as you would expect. Of course, there was the pandemic, but it could have taken place virtually. Of course, as always, it was rejected, as all of Russia's proposals over the last two, if not more decades have been rejected.

Billington: One of the reasons that Helga Zepp-LaRouche has emphasized the Treaty of Westphalia approach is that

it's global rather than merely Europe, or even Eurasia. If you consider the fact that it is really the entire world that is now faced with the general breakdown of the dollar-based international financial system, a hyperinflation that now everybody is aware of, and most of the financial institutions admit they have no idea how to stop it; it could get much worse.

And also, of course, the pandemic, which is not under control by any means. The Director General of the UN's World Health Organization, Dr. Tedros, said the other day that 83% of Africa's population has not even had their first dose of COVID-19 vaccine. And now the danger of a nuclear war, which of course, would affect the entire world.

In order to truly resolve all of these things, you simply have to have all the major powers, but really, the whole world, represented in a single body. The issue of this extreme crisis is obviously frightening, but at the same time, it forces people to reflect on the fact that they've had false assumptions about the future of mankind and the future of peace, and therefore, while dangerous, the situation has become also a moment of opportunity to bring about that kind of event that most people, if you're following the course of history in a linear way, you might think is impossible. What do you think about that?

Prof. Sakwa: Yes, I think that a transformative

agenda which could be implemented through such a gathering is fundamental. The shocking thing is that at the beginning of the pandemic, the feeling was, that all of humanity faces this enormous challenge, and the resolution can only be on a universal basis—that is, no one is safe until everyone is safe, when all of Africa and Asia is vaccinated. And more broadly, that health care, and developmental needs are addressed. All of that is absolutely right.

The problem now is, where is the societal push for this? It's not going to be granted from above and especially with the sort of leadership in evidence in most Western powers. Some people who've been working very closely, for example, for the peace movement, for so many years trying to say, "Look, we've got to halt the militarism of NATO," etc. have not got very far. And so I'm deeply pessimistic, though that does not take away the need. Our task, therefore, it seems to me always, is to formulate the agenda and that's the best we can do, and provide adequate analysis. And that's certainly what I'm going to do, and I know that you are as well.

Stop the War, and Operation Ibn Sina

Billington: On that question of how to bring that about, one of the things Helga LaRouche has emphasized is that the situation in Afghanistan, which is an abomination, after 20 years, 40 years really, of warfare and destruction by outside powers who then pulled out leaving the place to starvation: no food and no money. The U.S. has even gone so far as to steal \$7 billion of the Afghan central bank's money that they were having held at the Federal Reserve, which the U.S. is now openly declaring they're taking away from the Afghan central bank.

Helga Zepp-LaRouche insists that this is a situation which could and should bring the world together, because everybody will agree that we don't want Afghanistan to be a center for terrorism, the center for drug production, and so forth; that it would behoove the entire world to address this humanitarian nightmare, beginning with modern health care and immediately providing the basis for the development of Afghanistan to be what it once was, a prosperous hub for east-west and north-south trade. She's called this Operation Ibn Sina, named after the brilliant physician and philosopher from the 11th Century from that region.

I know you've been involved with the Stop the War movement in the UK. You appeared at a recent Stop the

War event with Member of Parliament Jeremy Corbyn, who, as I understand it, formed Stop the War after the 9/11 terrorist attack, with the purpose of preventing a war on Afghanistan and subsequent wars after that. I believe you or one of your associates said that every one of these efforts to stop these wars was ridiculed, but it's now been fully shown that we were right and the warmongers wrong with the disasters that unfolded. What do we have to do to awaken the world's consciousness on this?

Prof. Sakwa: You're absolutely right. The Stop the War Coalition and other peace movements have been absolutely right, and their critique of the hawks whose only solution to most questions is to bomb it and to zap it and to invade it and to occupy it. It's catastrophic that this sort of tendency has been unleashed in the 21st Century.

But then you ask, "How can we work to stop it?" Optimism of the will and pessimism of the spirit, I suppose, is the only way forward, because I think the world is regressing. It's going backwards, massively. We're seeing public services eroded, the quality of governance is going down. It's going down in Australia, it's going down in Britain, massively. I've got a folder called Governance, and it's just shocking to see the undermining of local government, the quality of municipal government, the quality of democracy. The outsourcing of services has meant poor, poor services, with the profits linked off to multinationals, often even abroad, in the UK's context, to nationalized industries, Deutsche Bank, German railways, and so on.

How do we move on in all of this? I don't know, except that each person must maintain their integrity and warn of all of this. Even in this Ukrainian war, people are now condemning me, but I've absolutely nothing to be ashamed of. We, you—we have been working, and I've been working for years, if not decades, to avoid precisely this conflict which has now engulfed us. That is what has been driving me for a long time, and it's failing. We have failed. I failed in stopping this. We're talking at a time when the world is looking as dark as it has ever been.

The Treaty of Versailles and the 'Rules-Based Order'

Billington: You once compared the Versailles Treaty after World War I to the current argument by the Anglo-American NATO crowd of what they like to call

the “rules-based order,” which, as we now know, is quite distinct from actual international law, from the UN Charter. Can you explain what you meant about the Treaty of Versailles and the rules-based order?

Prof. Sakwa: There are two things. The Versailles peace, of course, was a victors’ peace against Germany. In the Congress of Vienna, 1814-1815, one of its great acts of statesmanship was to ensure that France became, even though a defeated power, part of that winning coalition, and thus France was very quickly rehabilitated. It worked, basically, and the Vienna peace lasted nearly a century until the First World War. Obviously, there was the Crimean War and other things in between.

But the Versailles peace lasted barely 20 years, because Germany was humiliated and was excluded from that peace. And why this Versailles analogy works for post-communist times, is because Russia was also excluded, and this is where this war is going on now. It took 20 years for Germany—and I’m not making the analogy that it’s similar or the same—but I’m just saying in systemic terms, we’re talking about a power which was dissatisfied for a long time. And Russia is quite clearly dissatisfied, though—and this is where we have to get the judgment right—it’s not out to grab land or anything like that. It’s out for security.

The Versailles peace was a disaster, as E.H. Carr describes in his marvelous book, *The Twenty Years’ Crisis, 1919-1939*. It was accompanied by massive idealism. And this takes us to this so-called liberal international order, the “rules-based order.” That idealism, in the interwar years, masked, of course, far more naked imperial and other Great Power achievements. Today, this so-called “rules-based order,” after 1989, after the end of the Cold War, and indeed after the Soviet collapse and Russian weakness, effectively substitutes for that Charter International System. It claims to be, in fact, the basic system of international order, the U.S.-led international order.

This is a massive act of usurpation, which both Russia and China—and indeed India and some other countries—are refusing to accept. That is, if you like, the deep, underlying fourth level, that deep, underlying conflict between normative visions of world order—one based on the Charter International System and the second one, the sort of usurpers, the usurped peace, which has ended up as no peace at all, which was effec-

tively the Versailles peace as far as Russia is concerned.

Today, the challenge is to ensure that the United States and its allies go back to the United Nations. That’s why Putin, when he called for a summit of the UN permanent five, it was actually quite a smart move. The Joint Declaration of Russia and China also stressed this point, to stop the usurpation, by the group of Western powers who claim to be synonymous with world order, rather than just being part of, and subordinate, to the rules of the United Nations and sovereign internationalism.

‘End of History’ vs. the Dignity of Man

Billington: Francis Fukuyama’s so-called “end of history.”

Prof. Sakwa: Well, indeed, one of the most hubristic concepts ever, and the worst thing about it was that it was based on Hegelian dialectics, and at one moment they abandoned Marxist dialectics and replaced it with this new form of Hegelian dialectics, the liberal one, that this is the end of history and it’s the solution to all of humanity’s needs.

Billington: Thank you very much. Do you have any other thoughts you’d like to bring up for the audience that we have at the Schiller Institute and *EIR*?

Prof. Sakwa: It’s been a pleasure talking with you. I do read your material. I’ve been particularly close to your Australian colleagues, but also your *Executive Intelligence Review*, and so on. All I can say is that I think that the vision which the Schiller Institute and you have, of combining technology, technocracy, to human needs, and to harness human ingenuity through major projects—we’re talking about ways in which to make life better for all—I think is a visionary agenda and indeed based on peace and cooperation. I wish you success, and I wish that more people would join us and work for that.

Billington: I certainly join you absolutely in that call and certainly invite you to participate with us and our subsequent conferences as we try to pull the world together around a sane approach to the dignity of man.

Prof. Sakwa: Thank you.

Billington: Thank you.