

Schiller Institute Conference

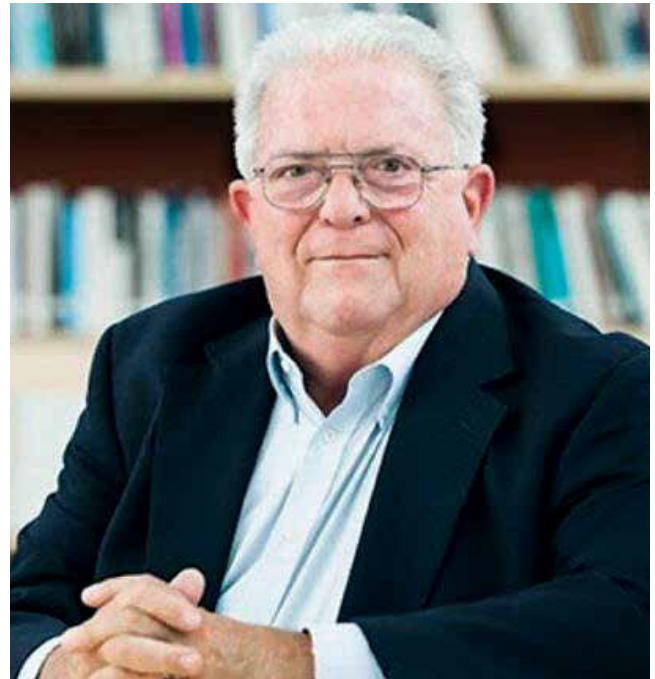
Ambassador Chas Freeman: 'Someone Must Speak Out for Peace'

Chas W. Freeman, Jr., senior diplomat (ret.) of the U.S. Foreign Service, and U.S.-China scholar, gave the following presentation June 15, 2024, by pre-recorded video, to the Schiller Institute–sponsored international online conference, “The World on the Brink: For a New Peace of Westphalia!” Ambassador Freeman spoke on the first panel, titled, “Europe after the European Elections.” The conference in its entirety can be viewed [here](#). The following transcript was prepared by EIR. Subheads have been added.

Ladies and Gentlemen: It is an honor to join the Schiller Institute in today’s conference. Someone must speak out for peace. Someone must advocate and organize diplomacy rather than war, as the answer to the tensions now afflicting Europe. I commend the Institute and Helga Zepp-LaRouche, its founder and leader, for speaking out and for convening us.

We are here to sound the alarm about where the cycle of escalation and counter-escalation between NATO and the Russian Federation is taking Europe, Russia, and America, and consider what to do about this. Red lines have been drawn, then repeatedly abandoned. Each side has said it will not do this or that, and then gone ahead and done it. Now, in response to NATO backing direct Ukrainian strikes on targets deep inside Russian territory, Russia is not only striking back at strategic targets in Ukraine, but threatening retaliation elsewhere. What has been a proxy war now risks becoming direct conflict between the United States, NATO, and the Russian Federation.

The good news is that President Putin has said that, at least for now, he does not plan to retaliate against Western escalation of attacks on his homeland with his enormous nuclear arsenal. But it is a sign of how dangerous this moment is that he has announced that he will instead arm the enemies of the United States and other NATO countries involved in attacking Russia. It is unclear whether he means to restrict this reprisal to states or whether he will include non-state actors. That



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is bad enough, but, given the short half-life to date, of any red line involving Ukraine, his next retaliatory step could well be nuclear.

Sometimes history is the product of strategic design, sometimes of miscalculations and blunders. The peace managed by the Concert of Europe (1815-1914—ed.) was an artifact of statecraft. World War I was a mishap that ushered in almost a half century of ruinous turmoil. Bretton Woods (1944 financial agreement—ed.) and the post-World War II order were the creations of statesmen. Ours is an age of irrational antagonisms born of strategic misjudgments and bungling. It is off to a dangerous start.

There is renewed warfare between great powers in Europe, and open antagonism between the United States and China. It is pointless to ask who is to blame. Future generations of historians will render judgments on this that transcend our current passions.

U.S. Administrations' War and Economic Warfare

The international system in which we have cooperated and prospered is disintegrating. For 73 years—from 1944 to 2017—the world was mainly regulated by internationally agreed norms, obligations, and conventions grounded in the United Nations Charter. This system was originally advocated by Washington, though not necessarily always respected by it. It worked out well for the United States until many Americans thought it did not. Then a disgruntled American electorate elected a populist administration that was long on resentment of the constraints of the international order, untutored in statecraft, economically nationalist, and indifferent to critical foreign opinion.

The current U.S. administration has doubled down on both its predecessor's national security-based protectionism and its economic warfare against presumed adversaries. And it has doggedly sought to extend the American sphere of influence in Europe to the very borders of Russia, while dismissing Moscow's objections and refusing to acknowledge, let alone address, its strategic concerns. Russia has not ceased to propose negotiations, to devise a security architecture in Europe in which it does not feel threatened by the United States and its European allies, and Europeans similarly do not feel threatened by Russia. The United States and NATO have consistently refused to talk with Russia about this.

The stated war aim of the West is to “isolate and weaken Russia.” The results of this policy and the sanctions adopted to promote it have been:

First, to decouple Russia from Europe and North America and reorient it toward China, India, the Middle East, and Africa. Second, to revive the Russian economy, and deindustrialize Germany and other members of the European Union formerly dependent on Russian energy exports. In purchasing power terms, Russia now has the largest economy in Europe. Third, to double the size of the Russian defense budget, armed forces, and armaments production and to stimulate Russian development of effective counters to NATO's military doctrines and weaponry. And fourth, to catalyze the alienation of the so-called “Global South” or “Global Majority” from the West and to isolate the West in global institutions.

For Ukraine, whose abandonment of its neutrality provided the *casus belli* for Russia, the war has been a national catastrophe. Ukraine has lost one-third of its

population and an entire generation of brave men of military age. It has already lost one-fifth of its territory, and it lacks the capacity to prevent further losses. Its infrastructure has been devastated. Before this war, Ukraine was the poorest and most corrupt country in Europe. It has been further impoverished. War fosters corruption, and Ukraine is more corrupt than ever. Ukraine's democracy has been superseded by martial law. Its political parties have been outlawed, its media nationalized, and its elections canceled. It is now more authoritarian than Russia and far less tolerant of ethno-linguistic diversity.

The West's proxy war on Russia has clearly been a failure. It has enhanced Russia's global influence and strengthened it militarily. It has not prevented Russia from gutting Ukraine. And it has raised, rather than allayed, fears of a wider war in Europe. It now threatens to go nuclear.

You might suppose that what has happened would lead the West and Ukraine to stop reinforcing failure, and to seek a diplomatic rather than a military solution to a situation that increasingly threatens, not just the peace and prosperity of Europe, but escalation to the nuclear level. But no.

The United States and NATO are doubling down on a purely military approach to managing European security and relations with the Russian Federation. The West has no strategy that holds out any realistic prospect of regaining any of the territory that Ukraine has lost. Ukraine is, in fact, in danger of losing still more, possibly endangering its access to the Black Sea. And there is no war termination strategy. Instead, the West proposes to fight to the last Ukrainian, and continues to dream of imposing a humiliating defeat on Russia—the very outcome that Russian military doctrine stipulates would justify Moscow's use of nuclear weapons against its attackers. Meanwhile, President Zelensky has joined the West in insisting that there can be no negotiations with Russia to end the war.

‘Never Fear To Negotiate’

The course we are following is based on miscalculations and blunders. It is a march of folly that, if continued, leads only to tragedy. It is destroying Ukraine. It has taken us to the brink of nuclear war between the United States, NATO, and the Russian Federation. But it is not too late to take another path.

Once before, the world trembled at the prospect of

a nuclear exchange that would have made our planet uninhabitable. That was the Cuban Missile Crisis of 1962. It led President John F. Kennedy to the conclusion that we should “never negotiate out of fear. But let us never fear to negotiate.” That is as sound advice today as it was 62 years ago.

We should learn from the contrast between the way in which the Napoleonic Wars ended, and how we ended World War I. The convenors of the Congress of Vienna were careful to include their former French enemy in the crafting of what became the Concert of Europe—an arrangement based on a balance of power that kept Europe largely at peace for a whole century. The victors in World War I excluded both Germany and Russia from any role in the management of the peace negotiated at Versailles. The result was World War II, followed by the Cold War. There can be no peace in Europe based on the ostracism of Russia or any other great European power.

In many ways, the breakdown of the post-Cold War peace in Europe has brought us to what Chancellor Scholz called a *Zeitenwende*—a turning point in history that demands the crafting of a new order in international relations. Helga Zepp-LaRouche has likened this challenge to that faced by the nations of Europe after the Thirty Years’ War. It took protracted negotiations to overcome the religious, territorial, and regime-change impulses that had devastated Central Europe, in the Peace of Westphalia.

The understandings that grew from that peace live on. They were affirmed by the newly independent states

of the post-colonial era at Bandung in 1955, in the form of the “Five Principles of Peaceful Co-Existence.” These are: mutual respect for each other’s territorial integrity and sovereignty; mutual non-aggression; mutual non-interference in each other’s internal affairs; equality and cooperation for mutual benefit; and peaceful co-existence. It is time for Europe, including Russia, to rediscover and adapt this diplomatic heritage to the challenges of the day.

The outcome of the recent European Parliament elections suggests that Europeans are ready for new thinking about Europe’s future. Interestingly, it is the European Right, like the American Right, which is most disillusioned by the forever war in Ukraine and most dissatisfied with the economic decline of the West. There is a basis for something like the conferences in Münster and Osnabrück that crafted the Peace of Westphalia (1648—ed.): to explore and affirm principles for a new European order that can bring peace to Ukraine; refashion European-American relations to enhance European strategic autonomy; bring Russia back to an appropriate relationship with the rest of Europe; and create international understandings to sustain security and stability in Europe. But are there leaders with the imagination, drive, and diplomatic skills to accomplish this?

We must hope there are. If there are not, the risks are high and the prospects dire. I look forward to a lively discussion among the distinguished participants in this conference, for the roughly two hours in which I will be able to join it. Thank you.