

World War Danger and Financial Collapse: Convene Council of Reason Now

The following is an edited transcript of the August 7, 2024, weekly Schiller Institute dialogue with Schiller Institute founder and leader Helga Zepp-LaRouche. Embedded links have been added. The video is available [here](#).

Harley Schlanger: Hello, and welcome to our weekly dialogue with Helga Zepp-LaRouche. Helga is the founder and leader of the Schiller Institute. I'm Harley Schlanger and I will be your host today. You can send your questions and comments to questions@schillerinstitute.org or post them on the chat page.

Helga, most of the world has been on edge since the [assassinations by Israel](#) a little more than a week ago, of a senior figure of Hezbollah, Fuad Shukur, and Ismail Haniyeh, the leader of Hamas, the latter taking place in Teheran. There's a legitimate fear that a full-scale regional war is imminent, and the U.S. has been sending in air and sea forces, supposedly as a defensive measure to protect Israel in the case of an attack from Iran. Representatives of the war party in the United States have been calling for a strike against Iran. What can you tell us about where things stand now? And I have a question on this from Dominic in Thailand, who asks if there's a possibility that an all-out war could be avoided, possibly through action by the UN Security Council or the UN General Assembly.

Helga Zepp-LaRouche: Well, one would hope so. I think we are absolutely on the edge of the Apocalypse on two fronts: One is naturally the Middle East, and the other one is the escalation of the situation in Ukraine. I think it does require an extraordinary mobilization of

many people and many forces around the world to shift the situation, because one has the feeling that the NATO-related governments are on auto-pilot. For example, if you look at how the media is portraying this whole situation, it is unbelievable. Here was [Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu](#) in the United



Israel's assassination of Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh elicits legitimate fear that a full-scale regional war may be imminent.

States, addressing both houses of Congress, where he got 58 standing ovations to a war-mongering speech which had no point in diplomacy. Then, he goes back and immediately, a few days later, there are these two open assassinations from Israel of Fuad Shukur in Lebanon, and Ismail Haniyeh in Teheran, Iran, one day after the inauguration of the new President of Iran. Now, the press, when they are covering that, doesn't mention that the assassinations are what triggered the escalation. If you listen to the German media, for example, they report about the impending aggressive act by Iran

which, naturally, must be met with clear resistance. They don't say that whatever Iran may or may not do is a reaction to the assassination of two very crucial personalities. Haniyeh was the main negotiator from the side of Hamas. He mainly lived not inside Gaza, he lived in Qatar. He was the chief negotiator for both the release of the hostages and also a possible ceasefire. If you assassinate that person, the counterpart in the negotiations with Israel, the message is crystal clear that that deal is off. If you kill the counterpart in such a negotiation, you don't want the deal. So, this is very clear. Also, it should be noted that the new President of Iran won the election with the clear signal to the West that he is a moderate; that he wants to negotiate, he wants to improve relations with the West. When you do that [assassinate a foreign leader—ed.] in a clear violation of the

territorial integrity of Iran, what is the signal? You don't want that policy of Iran to be one of negotiation with the West.

So, it's all upside down, and I think, given the fact that there is so much open distortion and open lying going on, you cannot really believe anything which is being said officially. And I think we are sitting on the absolute verge of the abyss. That is not only the case with respect to Iran, but also with respect to Ukraine. But maybe we will come to that a little bit later.

I think we need to have a mobilization of the population. We have several initiatives: One I called for is the [Council of Reason](#); for wise people from all countries, or at least many countries, to step forward and make their voices heard, because the present course we're on leads to a potential catastrophe. Then we are also supporting an initiative by Chandra Muzaffar from Malaysia, who is promoting an initiative based on UN General Assembly Resolution 377, which basically says that if the UN Security Council is not functioning—and it has not been functioning due to the vetoes, mainly of the United States, in the recent period—that there is a mechanism by which you can shift the whole discussion on the situation in the Middle East—Gaza in particular, but now, obviously, the entire region given the widening of the conflict—into the UN General Assembly. So, if there is no more recourse, then all the governments represented in the United Nations have to have their voices heard, because if it comes to a general war, it affects everybody. Therefore, it is not the decision of a few people behind closed doors, but it is a question of the world public. So, I can only ask you to definitely get active with us—with the Schiller Institute, with the International Peace Coalition—because we need a shift in the situation as urgently as the air to breathe.



Schiller Institute

Malaysia's Chandra Muzaffar has called for using UN General Assembly Resolution 377, to move action on a Gaza ceasefire to the General Assembly from the U.S.-blocked Security Council.

Schlanger: This is a question from a blogger in the U.S., which covers a little bit of what you were just discussing. He writes, “The killing of Haniyeh makes it clear that Netanyahu has no intention to negotiate a ceasefire to free the hostages. Everyone in the world can see that. Who do Blinken and Austin”—referring to the Secretaries of State and Defense—“think they’re fooling when they say they’re calling on Netanyahu to negotiate a ceasefire?”

Zepp-LaRouche: I'm not privy to the inside of the minds of these people, but I can only say that we have reached a point where those people who are thinking and are following world affairs with an open-minded attention, cannot trust anymore what the politicians are saying. I think this is reaching a



UN Photo/Manuel Elias

The UN General Assembly. It holds the power to override actions vetoed in the Security Council.

very dangerous condition, because if you have to assume that what is being said has a different purpose, all trust is gone. Trust is the most important thing in international relations, and I think that shows you why we need a different approach. Again, the Council of Reason was an idea I came up with, and if other people have other ideas, they are welcome. But we need a change in the course of policy, urgently.

Schlanger: We're talking with Helga Zepp-La-



Presidential Executive Office of Russia

Secretary of the Russian Security Council Sergei Shoigu flew to Teheran, hoping to prevent the regional crisis in Southwest Asia from escalating further.

Rouche, the founder and leader of the Schiller Institute. Here’s a question from Ollie; he asks, “Why do you think the former Russian Defense Minister went to Teheran? Can you see a possibility that Russia may get involved if war breaks out?”

Zepp-LaRouche: I think the fact that the Commander of the U.S. Central Command is right now in Israel, and the Secretary of the Russian Security Council, Sergei Shoigu, is in Teheran, shows you that we are not just talking about a regional conflict, but potentially about a world conflict. I think—and this has been clear for a very long time—that once there is a war involving Iran, all bets are off. Because I cannot imagine that Russia and also China would sit by idly and see one of their key allies, Iran, being attacked in a larger war where, if things escalate, it could involve the use of nuclear weapons. So, I think we are really looking at—I think this is a signal. In my view, Shoigu is coordinating things with his Iranian counterpart, but I think it’s also a very clear signal by Russia to the world that there is an end to crossing red lines without interruption.

For example, there was, this past Sunday, a very important interview by the Russian Deputy Foreign Minister, [Sergei Ryabkov](#), on the main Russian TV Channel [Rossiya 1]. The first question he was asked by the interviewer was: how close are we to the Apocalypse? He, in a very stern, very carefully worded way said, look, the times are over where Russia is making unilateral concessions. Then he made an incredible (under normal circumstances) statement, saying that the West better call off any plans for assassination against Russian President Vladimir Putin and others. I think this is incredible! The Deputy Foreign Minister of the, at this point, strongest nuclear power, says that the West better call off any such plans; that is very, very serious.

What does it refer to? I don’t know all the details, but one thing it could refer to is an [article](#) published in *Foreign Policy*, the magazine of foreign affairs, which has the title, “Would the United States Consider Assassinating Putin?” This is an unbelievable article, because it goes through all the different cases where the United States in the past was involved in regime-change operations, like Iranian President Mohammed Mossadegh in

1953, then President Salvador Allende in Chile, and various other examples. Then, unbelievably, it goes through a detailed description of who in the security environment of President Putin could potentially carry out such an assassination plan. That there would be such an article written I think really should alarm anybody. Every standard of civilized behavior—of diplomacy—clearly has broken down if something which clearly can only be read as a threat is published in this way. I would assume that whatever Ryabkov referred to, this is

definitely one element of it.

Then, he immediately continued to refer to Putin’s very stern announcement that if it ever comes to the installment of the [long-range American missiles in Germany](#) in 2026, then Russia will have symmetric



Russian Foreign Ministry

Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov: Russia will no longer make unilateral concessions to the West.

responses, meaning that it will also station long-range missiles in such a way that they target all the relevant places in Europe and elsewhere. So, that is where we are at. This installation of such long-range missiles in Germany is obviously completely unacceptable. It would mean a reverse Cuban Missile Crisis on steroids, because it would reduce the warning time, given the fact that these weapons could strike deep into the territory of Russia in less than five minutes—which obviously is the absolutely unacceptable red line of all red lines.

Schlanger: I have a couple of questions for you on the Council of Reason, but since we advertised that in the discussion today we would bring up, as well, the meltdown in the financial markets, I want to take two



CC/Jade Phoenix Pence

An M1A1 Abrams tank at the entrance of a tank-manufacturing plant. Arms plants could be retooled to engage their skilled workforces in rebuilding the collapsing American physical economy.

questions on the economy, and then we'll come back to the question of the organizing process to reverse this.

We have a question from Sean in the United States, who says, “As the build-up for war continues, is there a connection between this week’s near-meltdown of the stock markets and the war danger? I don’t believe what the media are saying about it. Was this fake or real?” In other words, is it a diversion? And then, we have from Thomas, “Do you think it’s possible that given the terrible economic situation in the world, that Russia and China might call for an international conference to address it?” I assume he’s talking about something like the original Bretton Woods conference.

Zepp-LaRouche: Look at the plunge which occurred on Monday, starting with the Nikkei index in

Japan, and then spreading to Europe and going even to the United States. It was stopped, or it rather rebounded. Bitcoins were involved. We are sitting on an absolutely untenable derivatives bubble—debt bubble—which is a time bomb. There is no way to ever satisfy these contracts, because they are expanding, while at the same time, you have a collapse of the physical economy. The only area of the economy, especially in the United States, which is still functioning, is the [military-industrial complex](#). That is why there is this connection that they feel they cannot stop the war, because, if you stop the war, then that part of the economy which is still “productive” will not be relevant anymore. That’s why they have to keep this war machine going.

This is why my late husband, Lyndon LaRouche, already in [2005](#), made a very big push for the reconversion of the auto production in the United States, which was in trouble at that time. I see the only way—even if it sounds very unlikely—that this will happen right now, under the present constellation of forces, would be to [retool](#) that very productive part of the U.S. economy which is right now used for the military, and retool it and go into a massive, crash program to rebuild the American economy, which urgently needs repair: The infrastructure is a mess; the health system is in a mess; there is no fast train system in the United States. Many cities are in terrible condition. If all of that money and productive capacity which is being used for the military every year would be used instead to rebuild the United States economy, wouldn’t that be better for the American people? Wouldn’t that be better for the rest of the world? Then some arrangement could be found to cooperate with the BRICS.

Now, I would hope that China and Russia would call for such a conference. I don’t think it’s very likely right now, because the messages coming from the West are really signaling the opposite of cooperation. Look at the recent [NATO summit](#): They called Russia a direct threat to NATO, and China the most severe systemic threat. If you want to have cooperation, you don’t send out such messages. I think that the [BRICS countries](#) are right now preparing to have their own

currency. This is obviously not so easy, if you look at the difficulty it took to create the euro. If you put economies which are on a different development stage into one currency, it's very tricky; you have to really be very careful that you create mechanisms of clearing, of long-term versus short-term cooperation; you have to balance the difficulties. So, this is a very difficult process. Obviously, it would be the best if there would be, even in the UN General Assembly, some motion to say we need— this is part of what I proposed with the [Ten Principles for a New Security and Development Architecture](#). They are carefully designed to be exactly what— They don't have a lot of concrete details; they have the most essential principles of what would be required to reorganize the entire world system. So, I can only urge you to please read the Ten Principles I proposed; look at the proposal for a new security and development architecture, which must include the interests of every single country on the planet, or it will not work.

These are lessons from history—from the [Peace of Westphalia](#)—and I think there are several proposals going in a similar direction: one coming from [Putin](#) from the 14th of June, when he proposed the Eurasian Security Architecture which would be open to NATO countries. [Chinese President Xi Jinping](#) has made various such initiatives. But I think it does require now that people in the West really become serious, because if you go for military solutions only, the catastrophe of the annihilation of civilization is pre-programmed. We must get to a different course—that of negotiation and diplomacy, or else we will all not be here very soon.

Schlanger: I don't want to lengthen the discussion on this particular topic too much, because I do want to get to the Council of Reason, but we've been inundated in the United States these last days with a hysterical flood of programming about the Democratic Party Presidential ticket: the Harris-Walz ticket. There's a question that came from Calgary, Canada, that I want to pose to you. This person writes, "In watching the U.S. Presidential campaign, it appears to me that it is entirely pre-programmed: that is, who will be the candidates and what they say. I heard they no longer produce a campaign platform. What's going on in the 'world's greatest democracy'?"

Zepp-LaRouche: I think the greatest democracy of the world has now been openly transformed into a plutocracy. Because before this series of events [leading to the Harris-Walz ticket] happened, you had the NATO summit, then the [assassination attempt against Trump](#), then the whole story around Biden's cognitive abilities—finally he was convinced by whomever in the back room to give up his candidacy for the next election. So, some people, like Trump, have said this was a coup; for sure it was arm-twisting. That brought up the whole question, in any case, that if Biden's condition has been so bad—and it has been bad for a long time, not just in the last days or weeks—the [question is](#), who is running the United States? Who is making the decisions? Trump was leading in the polls, and then all of a sudden, Kamala Harris, who was pretty much not-[visi-](#)



White House

Vice President Kamala Harris is all of a sudden a media darling, despite her glaring incompetence and subservience to the policies of the billionaire club.

ble in the last three-and-a-half years or so, all of a sudden she appears. Oh, she is the great winner, the magic figure; her picture is everywhere on billboards and advertisements.

The answer of how this miracle occurred is very simple: seven billionaires from Silicon Valley put in literally hundreds of millions—I don't know the exact figure—but an enormous amount of money, buying all of this advertising; creating the appearance that Kamala is the shooting star. I think it's a lot of hype, and the reality is that money buys U.S. elections. Look at what just happened to the Congresswoman [Cori Bush](#)—if that is her name—who was perfectly moderate on many points, but somebody didn't like her stand on the

Middle East. So now she has been defeated by enormous amounts of money to her opponent, who is much more clearly pro-Israel. And if these things happen, how could the rest of the world—the rest of the world which is looking at things much more critically than ever before—[not] believe the story that the greatest democracy is indeed dead?

I think it does require the average citizens to act as state citizens, and take the context of the Declaration of Independence seriously. When the government is not doing its job, the people have the right and the duty to look for a replacement, which at this point is obviously very difficult, given the complications, just to put it mildly.

Schlanger: You are right; it is Cori Bush who was defeated in the second case of the American-Israel Public Affairs Committee pouring in millions of dollars to her opponent.

OK, let's get to the Council of Reason. There are a couple of questions that I think are important. Sibylla asks simply, "The Council of Reason is a good idea, but who to compose it with?" Then we have from Takis in Greece, who writes—referring to the Council of Reason—"The idea of creating groups of sages in the countries is excellent. This is what they did in ancient Greece, and throughout the history of Greece. The definition of a wise man by Socrates was 'A wise man is not the man who can solve complex mathematical problems, but the one who can make the right choices in his life.' The problem is, the global elites are looking for a Third World War. In the two previous world wars, Europe was the victim. Today, we're already in World War III, and Europe is the victim again. How shall we face it?" So I think these are two good questions on the Council of Reason.

Zepp-LaRouche: Well, it is obviously an effort to test whether humanity has produced enough human beings who are capable of pulling mankind back away from the edge of the abyss or not. I can only say this idea of a Council of Reason, is basically the concept that each nation has produced extraordinary people.



Official photo, Rep. Cori Bush

U.S. Representative Cori Bush narrowly lost her race when a flood of AIPAC pro-genocide money went to her opponent, because she wasn't sufficiently "pro-Israel no matter what."

Most of them have extraordinary people who at one point were in government, or had a leading position in the field of science, military, clergy, artists, academics. But it has to be people who have first of all no ego; who don't step forward because they think that's a great idea for them to shine. It's the idea of people—maybe old people. Not only old people, but many times older people have no longer this egomania-driven desire to be in the limelight. There are elder statesmen; there are people who have a scientific contribution or are true artists, loving truth more than fame. There are

many qualifications, but I think everybody knows that there are such people who are respected because they have, through their life's work, demonstrated that they have no ulterior motives; no egomania motives.

I'm asking all of you, actually, to help us to put such a Council together. I can tell you, since we started this, which is maybe ten days or two weeks ago, we already have a couple of people who are obvious candidates, and who have agreed that they would be willing to serve in such a position. But we are really still at the beginning of this search. I would ask all of you, if you know of one or two or whatever number of people who fit this category, please tell us. Help us to get in contact with them. Let's enter a dialogue.

The main idea would be to open up a window, a platform whereby a voice of reason reminds people what the basic values of humanity are; why we have reached in the history of mankind a phase where if we just stick to representing the interests of one nation only, it does not overcome geopolitics. So, if you say, "I will make my nation great again, and I don't care how the others are doing," I don't think that will work. With the emergence of thermonuclear weapons, if they ever are deployed, it can almost certainly lead to the annihilation of all life on the planet. We have to think about the one humanity first. I think it was Albert Einstein, commenting on the existence of nuclear weapons, who said that just the fact that they exist does require thinking in a new paradigm. The new paradigm is to think of the one humanity; how we will live together 100 years from now; how we can overcome all

the supposedly so important conflicts and really think of what it is that unites us as the human species.

So, if you know any such people, please help us to find them. I'm actually quite confident that this is an initiative which can work. But it has to work fairly soon, given the extraordinary trauma of the strategic picture.

Schlanger: Given what you just said, there are two final questions that I'll put together, that I think you'll find interesting. One is a direct one: someone asks, "Do you have a proposal for European politicians to grow a backbone, Madame?" So, that's a little bit straightforward. And then from another person: "Speak about natural law, Helga. You're the only person who mentions it." I think she's referring to the importance of what you just said about the unique quality of human beings. So, why don't you take those two points up?

Zepp-LaRouche: If the European politicians would be puppies, I would feed them a lot of bones. I don't know what you would feed European politicians, because they seem to be pretty determined to eat rubber instead of anything more sturdy, so their backbones can bend as the wind blows from Washington. I don't know; I think we need to replace them with better people. Because I think it's not that all of them are bad, but the system has made sure that right now we have a very high percentage of politicians in leading positions who are singing the song of NATO. I think that is not exactly in the interest of all the member states of even the NATO countries, but that's a whole other topic. If an alliance has a doctrine which, in the case of war, does not allow your survival, you may be in the wrong alliance.

On the question of natural law, I think this is very important to be studied, because I think right now what we see in the West, in particular, is the effort to replace all traditional values—and what I mean by traditional values is not traditions like what you wear in folklore or what you cook—I mean Classical principles; the principles of great art and great scientific discovery which represent the traditions of Europe, of Asia, of other continents. This is being replaced by arbitrariness, "wokeness." You can attack anything—dead white European males; everything is being thrown out of the window. I think that is a sign of a collapsing empire. Germany had the zero hour, so to speak, in 1945, when the horrors of the Nazi regime were just becoming known to the general public and cities were lying in rubble; hunger was there. People started to think about what can we do; how can we give ourselves a lawful-

ness so that this never happens again? There was a very vivid debate about natural law; there are still writings testifying to this. Unfortunately, that was then pretty quickly wiped out by the occupying powers that replaced this debate with John Dewey in education, and the [Congress for Cultural Freedom](#), and similar ideas. So that debate was quickly eradicated.

But throughout European history, for 2,000 years or more, there was the idea that [natural law](#) is something which exists in creation—in the physical universe; that there are eternal laws which are above what mankind in an arbitrary way can decide there and then. You find a similar idea in all other great religions and philosophies, because obviously this is something common to the human species: to think that there is a lawfulness in the universe which has something to do with a correspondence between the human mind and the laws of the universe, and that these laws are knowable.

So, I would really hope that there are thinking people who step forward and start to discuss these ideas again, because we have to cut through the shallowness and arbitrariness of the present non-existing discourse. I can only invite you. We have this coming Friday a very important meeting of the [International Peace Coalition](#), because it's the anniversary of the bombing of Nagasaki. And we decided that, given the extreme danger to the world situation, to try to make that an absolute meeting point of all important peace movement elements from all over the world. You should join it for sure, because that is definitely a place to come forward, hopefully with solutions.

Schlanger: That's your personal invitation from Helga to attend the meeting this Friday. She's been the moving force behind the 61 weekly meetings of the International Peace Coalition. You now have enough time to make plans for it. Join us this Friday.

Helga, any final comments? I think you've been pretty clear.

Zepp-LaRouche: No, I think people should really, in a moment in history like this one, you have to call forth whatever is good inside you, and make that the basis of your actions. And since I believe that human beings are essentially good by nature, I think the free will to decide to act upon the basis of the good is always a choice.

Schlanger: Thank you, and we'll see you on Friday.

Zepp-LaRouche: Yes, 'til Friday.