

Col. Lawrence Wilkerson: Reflections on the American Empire's Disaster

Sept. 13—*The following is an edited transcript of the Sept. 6, 2024, address of Colonel (ret.) Lawrence Wilkerson to the 66th meeting of the International Peace Coalition. Col. Wilkerson spent 31 years in the U.S. Army, serving in Vietnam, in the U.S. Pacific Command, on the faculty of the U.S. Naval War College, and at the Marine Corps University. He served as Chief of Staff to General Colin Powell at the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the U.S. State Department. The video of his presentation is posted on the Schiller Institute's YouTube channel, and is available [here](#).*



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sophisticated these days, as the last presentation demonstrated, and will destroy us all.

I'd like to take you back to 2002 when the first National Security Strategy came out that I think is still very relevant. Very relevant because it was written by a lot of the people who are behind this, and their descendants if you will, who are still very much with us. That security strategy, summed up in its essence, said the United States, the American Empire, will not tolerate any opposition in the world to its primacy at all.

If It Stirs—Kill It

When Secretary Powell and I talked about it, he was somewhat disturbed by some of the wording, but he wasn't as disturbed as I thought he should be. When it boiled down to that I really wanted to impress upon him how disturbed I was, I said, do you realize that that means that we're on the top of the mountain, boss? We're at the peak of the mountain; the Cold War put us there because we won it. We're at the peak of the mountain, and if we see anyone stirring at the bottom of that mountain—a mouse, a rat, a beaver—anyone stirring at the bottom of that mountain—It doesn't matter what their intentions and capabilities are (which Dr. Postol referred to cleverly). Those are the two things you want to look at when you're assessing any enemy or potential enemy: what are his capabilities, and what are his intentions? And the latter is sometimes more important than the former. But this strategy says, if it stirs, we will kill it.

Well, the first thing I said to the Secretary was, that means we are going to concentrate almost entirely on the military instrument. We're going to become—if we aren't already—a national security state. If you want to know what a national security state is in microcosm, look at Israel right now.

I won't say it's a pleasure to be with you; not after [Prof. Postol's presentation](#), which I had some inklings of, but not in the detail that he just expressed that particular part of it. Helga [Zepp-LaRouche] stole just about everything I was going to talk about. So, I have been mentally revising, as I was listening, what I was going to talk about. So, Helga, thank you for your remarks. [Helga Zepp-LaRouche's opening address to that meeting, "Peeling the Onion: How Europe Lost Europe to NATO and Brought Us All to the Nuclear Brink," is in this issue of *EIR*—ed.]

I was rereading Shakespeare's play *Julius Caesar* a week ago, and I came to those lines in Act III, Scene 1, I believe, where a man who is setting his own destiny committing suicide essentially, Marc Antony, makes those famous words—whether he said it or not is moot—Shakespeare said he said it: "Cry havoc, and let slip the dogs of war." That's a perfect way to describe what Helga in detail gave us in political terms, and what Dr. Postol gave us in scientific terms. We have decided in the American Empire, to cry havoc and let slip the dogs of war. The dogs of war happen to be very

It is a national security state, and as long as it remains a Jewish state, it will be a national security state into the future until it is destroyed. What does that mean? That means that your entire intellectual capacity, your entire industry, your entire thought process is constantly aimed at—if not 24/7, close to that—the enemy; the people who might do you harm. And that’s the reason I say Israel won’t be a state much longer; not if [it] remains a Jewish state. Because it will always have an enemy, and Jews will not be very secure there, and therefore they will leave.

Well, imagine the United States of America, probably in many respects of the thousands of empires over the last two millennia or longer, the one with the most incredible capacity to do damage to the world. Imagine if it becomes a national security state. Oh, don’t imagine it; we already are. We are a national security state. Our *raison d’être* is our security. And that 2002 National Security Strategy said that in no uncertain terms. We’ve been manufacturing the capabilities to go along with that strategy ever since.

One of the reasons it frightens me as a soldier that this is happening, is because I know the incredible deterioration of what I would call our conventional war-fighting capabilities. That means those things that you use to fight a war other than nuclear weapons. We’re in dire straits in many respects in the conventional military. We’re in dire straits partly because we have decided that we don’t need it, and that decision has not been published for the American people to look at, except for proxy wars and brushfire wars. We don’t need it in defense of the United States because—bingo!—we have nuclear weapons.

Not only do we have nuclear weapons, but we are building out that complex associated with them at great profit to the niche military-industrial complex that is associated with it. We’re building it out to make sure that, as Dr. Postol’s briefing sort of suggested, we can survive. And we hope that the old mantra of deterrence still works, and that we will cow everyone in the world who is equipped with nuclear weapons—now nine states—so much so that we won’t actually have to use them. My fear is that they are going to have to be used, because we are going to, regardless of our disdain for conventional warfare and the instruments thereof, regardless of

that disdain, we’re going to get sucked into something that is initially conventional.

Scenarios for Nuclear War

I can describe [to] you scenarios in Taiwan in the South China Sea, scenarios elsewhere with China, and other scenarios that might be conducive to just that thing. Look at Ukraine, look at Israel today. I could see them going regional very rapidly, and at first without nuclear weapons used. But eventually, the dynamics of such a conflict, matched with that national security strategy that I just described to you, and the ethic and the thought process that accompanies it, will lead to nuclear weapons. Once again, the American Empire, as it was in 1945, will be the country to use nuclear weapons first. Because in that conventional struggle, which as in Ukraine and Israel might start out as a proxy struggle, in that struggle, once we start losing—which we most assuredly will—then bingo! And footnote this, if we do what Bibi Netanyahu wants us to do, and take on Iran in a serious way, that could be the very struggle I’m talking about that eventually will lead to nuclear use. And we will be the ones to use it first.

I think that’s one of the reasons distinctly lying behind the idea that Dr. Postol just briefly suggested to us, in trying to build this invulnerability into what we want to do with our nuclear weapons. It’s not just for deterrence; it’s also for war-fighting. To magnify and emphasize that, I am hearing for the first time since I read about it in the early 1950s and all the way up to 1962, ’63, and ’64, I’m hearing high-ranking military officers talk again about nuclear weapons in a fashion that they did at that time: That they do have utility; that they can be used.

Then, footnote that and think about missiles like the Russians have now, which they are now showing in Ukraine in brief episodes that go—yes, they go 32,000 km per hour. If you do the math, that’s about 19,000 miles per hour. These are incredibly fast missiles; they cannot be shot down, there is no ballistic missile defense for these missiles. The one that just hit the facility in Ukraine that caused a big hurrah because it was a training facility is about a 4,500 mile an hour missile. These are incredible developments on that side of the field, as well as those that were expounded earlier on our side of the field.

This is a very dangerous time. And as you've heard me say before, and I'll say it again here, we—the American Empire, no one else in the world—abrogated every single nuclear weapons regime treaty that we had so carefully crafted during the Cold War, to include the most successful one of all, the one that eliminated an entire class of nuclear weapons—the most dangerous in my view—the INF Treaty. We took them all out. And something we don't realize too is that we took out the Conventional Forces in Europe Treaty (CFE).

Escalate To De-Escalate

Why would I say that in connection with nuclear weapons? Because CFE was very important in connection with the INF Treaty and other nuclear weapons treaties. The distance now between conventional weaponry that is so accurate it has nuclear ground effects, if you will, on the battlefield, and nuclear weapons themselves in actuality, is very thin. When we were watching the Russians in 2013-14, fundamentally through the eyes of the Swiss and the Finns and the Norwegians who were observing their exercises—army-size, corps-size exercises—we found the reason they were building a doctrine that later became called Escalate to De-Escalate, was because they feared NATO's possession of precision-guided munitions (PGMs).

Now, go back to Dr. Postol's presentation, and you understand in a conventional sense why they were afraid. It's because they thought the advantage NATO had with PGMs was so great that it had the impact of a nuclear weapon. By the way, we were saying that, too. We were saying at one point that we didn't need tactical nuclear weapons anymore because PGMs would do the same thing when carefully concentrated. So, their doctrine became, if NATO attacks the CSTO—the

Collective Security Treaty Organization—that we will blunt that attack with a nuclear weapon; a small-yield nuclear weapon or two or three. That's Escalate to De-Escalate; because they felt their disadvantage against NATO's PGMs was so significant that that's what they had to do.

That's evolved now, and Sergei Lavrov and Vladimir Putin have talked about this evolution. Incidentally, Putin was very dramatic when he said, "Our triad is better than your triad," trying to insinuate that if it were a nuclear war, it wouldn't be confined to Europe and it would be significantly detrimental to us, as well as the rest of the world.

All of this is going on now within the context of normality; of just "this is the thing to do, this is what's necessary." And it's all fueled by, as I said before, the military-industrial-scientific-think-tank complex out there that makes lots of money. And incidentally, the nuclear weapons complex is a very niche-like complex that makes tons of money for very few people. So, that's a motivator for this, too. They don't want this complex to die. I saw their fear; believe me I saw their fear in 1991-92 when we were destroying Russian warheads so fast it would make your head spin, and our own, too: going from some 30,000 warheads on both sides down to somewhere around 5,000 today—and with the full intent to go down to 1,200 on both sides. So, it scared the bejeezus out of the nuclear weapons complex; both those Senators in Congress who protected it, and those people at the labs and elsewhere who performed in it.

So, we have a huge problem in the American Empire, because we are letting slip the dogs of war. And the dogs of war are nuclear weapons. And there's nothing anymore to control those weapons, other than the insane leaders of that empire. Thank you.