

Col. (ret.) Larry Wilkerson

The Inexorable Shift to the East: Our Answer Must Not Be Nuclear War

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Schiller Institute

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Good to be with you, and especially good to have heard three people, two of whom I count as good friends, and a third, Professor Zhang Weiwei, who essentially reminded me of my conversations almost 22 years ago with the gentleman who is now the Foreign Minister Plenipotentiary of China, Wang Yi.

Chas Freeman gave us an eloquent disquisition in wonderfully diplomatic terms—sometimes getting a little bit harsh, but diplomats have to do that, too—of the empire’s perfidy; of the crimes of the lackeys of the, for example, what I said recently on another podcast, “the worst Secretary of State since Thomas Jefferson.” And since the individual to whom I was saying that knew a little bit about our history, he said, “That’s all of them!” Absolutely, that’s all of them. Tony Blinken is a despicable, reprehensible representative of an already sinking, despicable and reprehensible in many of its actions, empire. The rest of the Biden administration is right there with him.

A Chinese Fountain of Vivacity

I also listened to what the Chinese speaker said, the professor, because I mostly agree with him. I agree in a very geopolitical sense; even if we could

invent a word above that, I would use it. Historical sense is not all-encompassing. But what we are seeing right now is another colossal movement of the center of focus, the center of economic might, and the center of financial transactions; you name it, the center of life, human life on this Earth, back to where it was 2- to 3,000 years ago, 1,500 years ago: Central Asia, with a fountain in China feeding that vivacity, that trade, that commerce and so forth. And what we’re seeing at the other spectrum end—

unbeknown to them, because they’re too stupid historically to understand this—but what we’re seeing is their intuitive notion of this colossal shift in power in all its dimensions, back to the East as it were, and away from the West. They’re fighting it tooth and nail.

Here’s why I am deeply concerned about this sort of cataclysmic, global struggle; because that’s what it is. We are, as I’ve said in many other places on many other occasions, the only empire in human history—all of it, whether you do 50,000 years, 5,000 years, 3,000 years, its inconsequential—to have invented the technological means to destroy ourselves literally overnight. And the nation right now on the face of this Earth most apt to bring us to that threshold of destruction is America. Fighting this inevitable trend of human life, if you will; vivacity, commerce, all those adjectives and nouns that describe power, shifting back to the East. It’s inevitable; it is inexorable; it is happening; it is going to happen further. The Belt and Road Initiative is a vein almost in that pumping heart. We’re looking at, in that respect—I love that term—the China-ASEAN community; probably 35% of the world. And we’re looking at incredible combined GDPs; probably north of \$100 trillion, all told.

That's a huge force to be fighting, and we shouldn't be fighting it. But why are we fighting it? As I said, we don't like it at all, and we don't have any people who know enough about human history, let alone the recent history of their own country and the Constitutional fabric that was developed for it, to do anything but fight it; and to fight it in any way they know how. We're embarked upon putting a President into office again who is quintessentially a not-know-how type of individual, and who apparently is assembling a whole cabinet full of people who are just as opposed as the current administration or more, to this colossal change in global power.

What does that mean in my terms—thirty-one years in the United States Army; what does it mean? It means that we are going to resist it with everything we have in our arsenal. And let me paint just one or two scenarios for you. They could start in Ukraine, or they could start, as many have spoken about quite frequently, in the South China Sea. What would we do in either place, were our bluff—and that is truly what it is, and NATO is participating in that bluff, because they're our poodle right now in all manner, except for Hungary and Slovakia and a few others who are thinking about it, like Germany and France. Look at their political situations right now; I predicted this six months ago. I said they would be falling apart; they are falling apart. And they are the central European powers other than Türkiye to NATO.

Will Putin and Xi Call the Empire's Bluff?

So, this is all brought about by our desire to maintain our power in the world; nay, to extend it. What will happen when either one of these scenarios looks as if the bluff is over, and we decide that we need to do what we need to do, which will be probably in the South China Sea. Defend Taiwan in a conventional way, or in Europe perhaps go even further than we have already in participating in the Ukraine conflict. Our bluff is called. I don't think Putin, I don't think Xi, either one of them, is inclined to use nuclear weapons. But if we get into a conventional conflict—this is my deep concern—we are so broken right now conventionally. We peaked with the first Gulf War in 1990-91. We peaked: we peaked technologically; we peaked am-

munitions stores-wise; we peaked maintenance-wise; we peaked equipment-wise; we peaked personnel-wise. You name it, we peaked. That's a lot of years ago. Ever since, we've been going downhill, and our military right now conventionally couldn't beat Iran, let alone battle-hardened Russia or Russia-China together.

And let me just take the South China Sea scenario. Let's say that we decided for some reason, whether China moved onto Taiwan with force or whatever, I don't even think it would take that under certain circumstances to have Taiwan convinced that it is now a part of China. Maybe a telephone call would be all it would take. And if we protested that, and we actually got into some sort of shooting war in the South China Sea, what would evolve is what my Marines used to call "the battle between the shark and the whale" or the shark and the elephant; they had different analogies. Shark and the elephant was the most potent one I think. And what they meant by that, simply, was that we would fight the war to attrit each other's air forces and navies by 35% to 40%; that's a couple hundred thousand casualties on both sides.

Americans haven't seen those kinds of casualties in their lives. What would happen when that was done? When the navies were attrited; the air forces were attrited, and no one in the military of the United States would contemplate landing on China into the belly of the elephant? Two, four maybe six million troops available at their beck and call. And China would not want to come to sea to fight the shark. So, we would contemplate using nuclear weapons. Every war game I ever participated in, that's the way the game evolved if the start point was the South China Sea or Taiwan or the Philippines or any place involving China. We would be the first to use nuclear weapons, as I think we would be in any conventional circumstance—even Iran—because we would be losing. We would be taking horrendous casualties; casualties the American people have never seen before. What that would mean, essentially, is that we would turn to nuclear weapons.

And as Scott implied, and as I will say again this afternoon at the National Press Club, and I'm sure Scott and the other interlocutors will, too, that's the end of the human race.