

Schiller Institute Weekly Dialogue with Helga Zepp-LaRouche

Schiller Institute Conference Breaks Through the Fog of War

The following is an edited transcript of the Dec. 11, 2024 weekly Schiller Institute dialogue with Helga Zepp-LaRouche, founder of the Schiller Institute. Embedded links and subheads have been added. The video is available [here](#).

Harley Schlanger: Hello and welcome to this week’s dialogue with Helga Zepp-LaRouche, founder and leader of the Schiller Institute. It’s Wednesday, December 11, 2024. I’m Harley Schlanger and I’ll be your host today. You can send questions and comments by email to questions@schillerinstitute.org or post them to the chat page.

Let me begin by saying for those not familiar with the Schiller Institute, we just celebrated the 40th anniversary of its founding, with a powerful conference on the topic of the dialogue among civilizations. We’ll provide a link to the four panels of the conference for you in the description section. And you’ll see that the Schiller Institute has become an increasingly influential forum for serious discussion among rational actors, globally.

Let’s begin with the dangerous and complex strategic conjuncture we face today, which was the major subject of the Dec. 7-8 weekend conference. Helga, the trans-Atlantic world and its unipolar order, dominated by the City of London and Wall Street, continue to escalate military confrontations, to prevent the emergence of a new strategic and development architecture. There’s talk of “winning” a nuclear war from a leading official of the U.S. Strategic Command, a new multimillion-dollar package of arms and weapons and aid delivered to Ukraine, and reliable reports of U.S. involvement in the toppling of the Assad government in

Syria. Where do you see this headed, and what can be done to reverse it?

Nonchalant Insanity

Helga Zepp-LaRouche: I think it’s heading towards nuclear war; all the signs are pointing in this direction. *Newsweek* of this week apparently has an article, “What Would World War III Look Like?”. I will spare you the fantasies going into this article.



Submarine Group 10 Facebook page

Rear Admiral Thomas Buchanan said in Washington Nov. 20 that the United States should be prepared to conduct a nuclear war if its world hegemony is threatened, and have enough nuclear reserves to handle any subsequent challenge.

As you mentioned, this is being officially discussed in the United States. On Nov. 20, there was a conference of the CSIS [Center for Strategic and International Studies] think tank in Washington, where Rear Adm. Thomas Buchanan, who is the Director of Plans and Policy at USSTRATCOM—that’s the strategic nuclear weapons command of the United States—he, in an unbelievable, nonchalant way, said in his [keynote](#), in an exchange with Heather Williams, that the United States

should be prepared to conduct a nuclear war in order to maintain the hegemonic position of the United States, to remain leader in the world. However, they should make sure that after such a nuclear exchange, enough nuclear weapons are remaining so that future adversaries can also be deterred.

And I really would urge you to look at that short exchange: When you look at somebody who is talking in such a way about the annihilation, the extinction of the human species—the idea that you could have a limited nuclear war, and then continue with your geopolitical games as if nothing has happened—is absolutely insane, and will not happen. The likelihood is that if it comes to that, all nuclear weapons will be used, and a nuclear winter will follow, and there will be no life left on the planet.

So, what this guy is talking about—in order to keep the leading position of the United States in the world, to risk the entire human species—if you watch this, and you don't have cold sweat running down your back, then you're not in the real world! It is absolutely mind-boggling that such a statement could be made, and with the exception of Scott Ritter and myself, to my knowledge, I have not seen anybody else speaking out against it!

I made this very important point in my speech at the conference you just referenced, and Scott Ritter did likewise, and he repeated it at an evening event that he had with some other forces in Washington on the same day—Pearl Harbor Day, December 7. But there should have been an outcry of people saying, “Is this the official strategy? Has this been discussed in the parliaments of the NATO members? Is that what we want?” Obviously, nothing of this sort has occurred, and I think, together with all the other signs—Defense Minister Pistorius of Germany talking about “making Germany war ready”; all kinds of preparations to beef up the war-readiness of various institutions in Europe—we are on the path to World War III, and therefore the population has to wake up!

The other major development, naturally, was the earthquake which happened with the collapse of the Syrian state, one has to say. It's not just the departure of Bashar al-Assad as President, but the strategic implication of the change, which, for the entire Middle East, is horrible! It's a catastrophe! And you can see how these major shifts are the kind of blocks of territory, or foundation of the world system, which start to shake and break, and that is a prelude to world war.

So, the only positive thing I can point to is our conference on the weekend, where we had an outstanding number of top-level people from many countries—from the United States, from Russia, China, the Global South—and we all engaged in a strategic discussion which was optimistic, future-oriented, solution-oriented. And I can only urge you, if you haven't done this yet, take the time on an evening or a weekend and watch these speeches. You will get a sense of how easy it would be to get society and the whole of world politics back on a rational basis, because these people are experienced diplomats, experienced analysts, have a relationship to sanity, and are not involved in this nuclear game-theory. And just the idea that they make war games with scenarios, saying this option, that option—this is all devoid of any sense of reality of what the human species is all about.

So please, watch this conference, because what we discussed there was the strategic situation, the economic solution to the migrant question, the question of the role of science in a future New Paradigm, and emphatically also, a very delightful panel on the culture of the different civilizations and why we have to have a dialogue to get us out of this Dark Age in which we are, presently. That would be my advice, because people have to equip themselves with a positive notion of the future, if we want to mobilize the energy to get out of this mortal danger of mankind.

Implications of Syria's Collapse

Schlanger: Helga Zepp-LaRouche is talking about the Dec. 7-8 Schiller Institute conference, that is posted on the Schiller Institute [website](#), and on the Schiller Institute YouTube [channel](#). You can go there and watch the four separate panels, and the Schiller Institute YouTube channel already has some sections of individual presentations and dialogue.

We've received a number of questions on the departure of Syrian President Assad, and its implications. Let me start with a sample of these questions from a regular viewer, Thomas. He writes: “The fall of the Syrian government will possibly change everything in the region and beyond that. It seems to be a major setback to the BRICS process and the Palestinian cause. Do you think the Israeli regime will be given a green light by President-elect Donald Trump to finish the job, because no country will do anything to stop them?”

Zepp-LaRouche: I don't know. I can only agree

with you that it's a major, major catastrophe for the entire region. I think it means, as of now, that the Syrian state is practically gone. The new leadership, Abu Mohammad al-Jolani, he was a person on whom the Western powers had, until very recently, put a bounty of \$10 million!—because he was al-Qaeda, al-Nusra; he came out of this entire network. And you have to think about it: This is the same network of jihadists which the United States claims was responsible for 9/11. And the West is now working with the people who at least had the blood of 3,000 people in the World Trade Center on their hands. I don't know how these people manage to do this!

What it means for Syria, which is, after all, one of the ancient civilizations with a very proud cultural background—I mean, this country is absolutely destroyed. And we should remember, that before 2011, before the so-called Arab Spring was sprung on Syria and other countries, Syria was a peaceful country, with an ecumenical balance of many religions; women were absolutely in a position to wear Western clothes; you had infrastructure; you had an absolutely functioning state. And what is now at stake is that Syria is in acute danger of falling into a situation like Libya, a failed state, where different factions continue fighting; nothing functions any more.

One can trace it back actually to the Arab Spring. It was always said that Assad started the civil war, and he was a brutal dictator against his own population. We were on the scene politically, although not in Syria, watching this at the time, and it was a destabilization of all Arab countries at the time. But a lot of the so-called “rebels” in Syria came from Libya, from Benghazi; a lot of weapons were transferred, and we should



UNRWA Facebook page

Aleppo, Syria. Thanks to years of U.S. sanctions, the living standards of the Syrian people have plunged dramatically. Even before Assad fell, about 95% of the population was living below the poverty line and was food insecure.

not forget that then head of the Defense Intelligence Agency Gen. Michael Flynn, tried to warn President Barack Obama in 2012, that the United States was backing all the wrong forces in Syria—which Obama didn't want to hear.

Then, this foreign-instigated rebellion was a major blow. And especially when the sanctions were imposed on Syria, and especially after the so-called “Caesar Sanctions” were imposed, the living standards of the Syrian population dramatically plunged. The recent reports, before the most recent developments, were that 95% or so of the Syrian people were living below the poverty line; were food insecure. And under these conditions, one can say that Assad “failed” to modernize the Syrian army, but it looks like they just did not have the means to do it.

I can only say that the Western narrative which is being presented about what happened, is like a parallel universe, and I can only advise you: There are a few

Middle East experts, who are very familiar with the history of the region, and you should take the time to listen to them. For example, I found the [analysis](#) of the Swiss analyst, Jacques Baud—who is coming from a neutral country; he still has a sort of official position in



CC/Khamenei.ir

Bashar al Assad, long an obstacle to the power-hungry Anglo-U.S. geopoliticians. London and Washington are now turning the country into a collection of satrapies.

the Swiss army—to be very, very instructive, because he takes it back to the failed interventionist wars during 9/11—Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, and what happened in Syria—as being part of that. You should listen to it, because he is in my view a very balanced analyst, who has no reason to be on one side or the other. It is an eye-opener.

Then others, like Alastair Crooke, former British diplomat and intelligence official, also gives a piece of the picture. Pepe Escobar has a very instructive analysis. Scott Ritter. There are probably many others I have not listed. But you should listen to this and get a real story about what happened in the Middle East, because the idea that people are jubilant, because “Assad the dictator” is now gone: This is so wrong, and can only lead to further catastrophe. Obviously, the Palestinian cause now is in an absolute nightmarish condition, because without Syria, and without Syria being the connection between Iran and Hezbollah, who will care now about the Palestinians? What we have been talking about many times, it will continue: The slaughter of the Palestinians is ongoing.

Türkiye is now jubilant, because they will have part



Swiss strategic analyst, Col. (ret.) Jacques Baud.

of northeast Syria. Israel will have part of Syria; they have now taken the occupied Golan Heights and even have troops up to 25 km from Damascus. The United States will, for sure, fortify their position, where they are extracting the oil and grain from their part of Syria. And the remaining part, basically the strip from Aleppo to Hama, to Homs, to Damascus and Latakia, that

is occupied now by these new, “liberal democratic” jihadists, as former U.S. Ambassador Chas Freeman, very ironically put it. (I forgot to mention Chas Freeman as one of these reliable analysts.) The reformed, liberal jihadist al-Jolani is now wearing Zelensky-style fatigues; wearing his NATO-style olive green uniform—I mean, this is absolutely terrible!

What will happen to Iran? They’re severely weakened; Hezbollah is severely weakened. However, the different factions are not homogeneous, because you have people allying with the Muslim Brotherhood; others are opposed. So, the whole situation has the signs of a future explosion, along the lines of Libya.

I don’t see a short solution out of this, unless you do what we discussed at our conference: that you really have to stop this, because it leads to the Third World



Staff Sgt. (res.) Abir Sultan

Israel Defense Forces (IDF) troops occupying the Golan Heights of Syria, another expansionist action of the genocidal warlord government of Benjamin Netanyahu assisted by the United States.

War. Because if this policy of demonizing Russia, China, and now Iran and North Korea, if that continues, and all this talk about limited nuclear war, which is “winnable,” I think we are on a short road to the end of this civilization. Trump has promised that he wants to end all wars. I hope (one should never give up hope!) that that may be the case. But I don’t know if his recent statements that Netanyahu should “finish the job” in Gaza as quickly as possible, if they really are reason to be very hopeful.

I can only say: We have to mobilize the population everywhere. We have to stand up for the existence of civilization; we have to go to a new paradigm. We have to absolutely overcome this geopolitical disease, and start to think about the one humanity first! Because if we don’t do that, we all may not exist in the short term. So, what we discussed at the conference, that we have to have a new security and development architecture, of which then the Oasis Plan for the reconstruction of Southwest Asia would be one major part, has to be put on the table as a joint package, because otherwise it will not work.

Schlanger: We have another question from a viewer from Southwest Asia, asking about whether there were hidden political deals behind Assad leaving. But given your suggestion of looking at the various analysts that you mentioned, from whom you can certainly find a lot of material there, let’s move on, because there are some very interesting questions.

This is from a peace activist in the United Kingdom. He writes: “The interviews given to Tucker Carlson by Russian President Vladimir Putin and Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov convinced me that they are trying to reach out to the American public. Millions heard those interviews. I think the same intent is seen in Russian participation in Schiller Institute events, the latest being the interesting contribution from Dmitri Trenin at your event on Saturday, Dec. 7. Do you think their voices are being heard in Washington, London, and Brussels?”



CC/Therealbey

“Reformed, liberal jihadist” Abu Mohammad al-Jolani. Only yesterday the U.S. State Department had, for this “Specially Designated Global Terrorist,” a \$10 million bounty “for information leading to his capture.”

An Urgent Need To Mobilize

Zepp-LaRouche: We are doing our best that they are being heard, by putting such a program together. I can only ask all of you, including you from Great Britain, why don’t you take these packages? We already have the panels out on our website, but we will, for sure, make shorter versions, like the different panels separately, but also certain combinations of people talking about specific topics, so that it’s easier to watch. Why don’t you take that, and get it around everywhere? Put it in your social media, get it out to all of your networks, friends, colleagues, family members, and especially members of parliament. We have to have a mobilization on the parliamentarians, that they should not send the Taurus, in the case

of Germany, not allow the Taurus to go to Ukraine, which is another red line. But take the material from the conference and get it around widely. Because we did this conference, not just for people to watch it live on one day, but it is meant to be ammunition for organizing afterwards.

And there are a lot of things that are so much in flux, like, for example, one topic we discussed, which several speakers were touching upon, is Putin’s use of the hypersonic missile Oreshnik. And Ted Postol made an analysis, based on the material he had available at the time. But Putin keeps talking about— He just made a statement yesterday again, where he said, Russia is at the point where they do not have to change or upgrade the nuclear doctrine any longer, or not much longer, because the focus on the Oreshnik technology and the ability to launch a large number of such missile systems, would make nuclear weapons obsolete. And I find this extremely intriguing.

It’s a complicated issue, but I cannot imagine that Putin would say this repeatedly if he had not very solid ground to say that. And the idea to make nuclear weapons obsolete, rather than having arms-control treaties only, is very important. Because if you look at the arms-control treaties, all of them



European Union

German Chancellor Olaf Scholz agreed, without parliamentary or popular consent, to the placement of U.S. medium-range missiles on German territory as of 2026, and now faces a no-confidence vote in a volatile environment.

have been cancelled! There is not one single one existing between NATO and Russia any more. And that puts the question of making nuclear weapons obsolete a very urgent question, and this was discussed in some depth at our conference, but it for sure requires further debate, research, and thinking.

My advice to you is to get this material out as widely as you can.

Schlanger: And join the Schiller Institute, so that you can help us do that. Now, we have an email from Ron Ride-nour, who says he’s an author, a journalist, and longtime peace activist. And he says, “I would like to know why you would think the German state, not only the idiotic government, but in general, have allowed the Yankees, that is, the Americans, to destroy Germany’s economy. First the sabotage of Nord Stream; then selling Germany and others its fracking gas; forcing it to send money and weapons and sanctions to murder Ukrainians and Russians. What is wrong with those people?” he asks.

when they say, “Oh, no. We won’t put nuclear weapons, or the Americans will not put nuclear weapons on these missiles”—*after* all the many lies, like former Chancellor Angela Merkel, who almost looks like a



European Union

Former German Chancellor Angela Merkel: Just an ounce better than Scholz? We agreed to the Minsk process only to buy time to arm Ukraine, she admitted.



Frank-Walter Steinmeier Facebook page

German President Frank-Walter Steinmeier: A participant in the Maidan coup in Kiev in 2014 and silent on the Minsk betrayal.

better option, even though I really didn’t like the way she lowered the intellectual level in Germany over her administration. But she admitted that she and former French President François Hollande only agreed to the Minsk process, not to enforce it with the Ukrainians,

Germany: A Modern-Day Tragedy

Zepp-LaRouche: [laughs] Yeah, that’s the 64-million-dollar question!

If you look at what happened to Syria, it’s a tragedy. If you look at what is happening to Germany, it is also as bad a tragedy; not quite as bad yet, but very close. Because as you correctly say, the pursuit of the present policies, including allowing the U.S. medium-range missiles on German territory as of 2026—which Chancellor Olaf Scholz agreed to! Can you imagine: This Chancellor goes to the NATO summit in Washington and then shortly afterward declares, “Oh, by the way, the Americans have decided they will install medium-range missiles in 2026 in Germany.”

Now, obviously, these missiles are nuclear-capable, and why on Earth should the Russians believe anybody in Germany

but no! just to gain time to arm the Ukrainians up to a NATO level. She admitted it publicly, and it's being quoted the whole time by people all over the world since! Or President Frank-Walter Steinmeier.

At our Schiller conference, Ján Čarnogurský, who was the former Slovakian Prime Minister, said that he was especially disappointed by Steinmeier, because Steinmeier was in the middle of the Maidan coup! He was in Kyiv when this happened, or the day before, and he knew all the forces involved, because he was in charge of intelligence when he was cabinet chief of former Chancellor Gerhard Schröder before. And I've said this many times: Why did Steinmeier not speak out? It would have made a difference.

So, I can only say, you have to understand the entire postwar period of Germany, and even taking it back long before. But especially, if you start with the postwar situation, how the soul of the Germans was attempted to be driven out with the Congress for Cultural Freedom. Then the Frankfurt School. The 68ers were the beginning of this paradigm-shift, becoming anti-technology, largely Maoist. When China abandoned the Cultural Revolution, because Deng Xiaoping decided to bring China onto a course of economic progress, the people who had belonged to the K Groups [Kommunistische Gruppen, mostly Maoists] in Germany made the long march through the institutions: They became foreign ministers, and all kinds of things. That did a lot to undermine the character of Germany, of the kind of Germany that was reconstructed in the postwar period, creating the economic miracle. Then you had the Club of Rome inventing the ecologist movement, and on and on. It had many phases.

Naturally, there was a system whereby the occupying powers would select who would be in a leading position in the parties, and other institutions. So, despite the fact that Germany did formally regain sovereignty, in the 2 Plus 4 Treaty in the German reunification, in reality, it never materialized. And whenever a politician took a tiny step in this direction, something horrible would happen to undo it, like the assassination of Alfred Herrhausen on Nov. 30, 1989, which was a signal to Chancellor Helmut Kohl, not to go in the direction of sovereignty.

So, the answer to your question is very, very complicated, but it does not excuse the Germans from not acting and taking responsibility. Especially because of our history, we should not allow a return to the dark chapter of the 12 years of National Socialism. And that

is in a different form, which is threatening the world right now, not from Germany alone, but from the power structures that be. And Germany does have a responsibility to learn from history, but I'm very concerned that a lot of my contemporaries are just disgusting cowards.

Schlanger: We have a relatively longer question from John Mulkins, who is the host and producer of the Peaceful Political Revolution in America podcast, which I'll send you separately: But he invites you to join him on his podcast to discuss this, and he says, "I wish this sincerely and with gratitude for your works."

I have two more questions here: "While there is much focus on the instability of governments in the West, especially the U.S., UK, France, and Germany, there's little attention in the Western media about what is happening to NATO allies in Asia. The fall of the Kishida government in Japan in October, and the chaos unleashed in South Korea when President Yoon declared martial law and was then nearly impeached. Do you think this political chaos is related to the attempts to extend NATO to the Pacific?"

Democracy Is Officially Buried

Zepp-LaRouche: Absolutely! What you see right now is a phenomenon where democracy is officially buried. You had an election in the country of Georgia, where the population basically votes pro-Russia and not so friendly to the EU, because the EU behavior in the recent period to its members is giving them good reason to be very critical. So, what happens? You have an attempt to repeat the Maidan coup, by mobilizing NGOs, by a President who is—I don't know if she's Georgian; she was born in Paris, she worked for the diplomatic corps of France for decades, she even worked for NATO. So she is now basically saying this is all Russian-instigated, which is a dubious claim.

Then in Romania, you have a victory in the presidential election of this candidate Călin Georgescu, and he is accused—not only accused, you have the highest court in Romania ruling that the entire election has to be repeated, because apparently, or supposedly (I don't know), there was Russian influence to cause this victory. And, basically, you have a similar thing happening in South Korea, where the President tried to oust the alleged North Korean influence for six hours, declaring martial law, and fortunately the Parliament intervened.

But the feeling you get from all of these incidents is that there is now an attitude that the voters had to

vote in the right way, or else they have to repeat the vote, until the vote is “right.” I mean, that is so blatant, you cannot overlook it. What it does, among other things, is that it completely discredits the “rules-based order”! Because, if everybody can see that these rules are being bent until they fit whatever the political intention is of the EU and NATO and so forth, the model loses its credibility. And these people may have in the short term the power to enforce it, but the erosion of the credibility of this system is explosive! You saw it with the Brexit. Now you see it with the collapse of the Macron government in France; you see it with the extreme instability in Germany, maybe with early elections on Feb. 23. We don’t know what will happen yet, in the no-confidence vote for Scholz next Monday.

So, the political institutions are completely discredited, and this is not good! Because it breeds chaos, it breeds instability, and that is why I keep saying, we have to have more intellectuals, and responsible people who say, “We are the intelligent species. Why don’t we try to give ourselves an order which allows our peaceful cooperation with everybody!” That was a big discussion in the young republic in the United States, where in the *Federalist Papers*, there were a lot of contributions saying what must we do, in order to govern ourselves? And I think we have to ask that question on a global scale.

Because of the UN Security Council veto power of the Permanent Five, the UN Security Council doesn’t function any more. The entire UN does not function any more, but it is the only institution representing all the countries on the planet, and there is a lot of discussion about the need to reform the United Nations, because we have to have such an organization representing all nations—and it’s really an urgent question. So please, enter with us into such a dialogue on how to make a new security and development architecture, using the model of the Peace of Westphalia, which, after all, did end 150 years of religious warfare, and is a precedent that warring parties can get together and stop, when they realize nobody would be the beneficiary if they continue.

Schlanger: U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken defined “democracy” as “You do what we tell you, or else.” And that’s the basic policy coming from the European Union.

Helga, we have a comment that is interesting from

Steve Kaylor, who talks about the need to establish a government in Syria. But he says, “Perhaps Syria could join the Belt and Road Initiative, along with 151 nations, and that would be a solution.”

The final question: Someone who wrote in as “a frustrated educator”: She says, “This is a question generated by the fourth panel of last weekend’s conference.” She says, “A glance at the cultural degeneration in the West shows that a Classical renaissance is urgently needed, as you suggested. But what can those of us who are not artists do to expedite the process?”

How To Create a Classical Renaissance

Zepp-LaRouche: Well, you can use various pedagogies. You can download presentations, you can show them; you can invite people from the Schiller Institute to teach ad hoc classes to your pupils. We will make more pedagogicals along the lines of the topics discussed at the conference. Actually, I would like to discuss this question with my colleagues, because it would be very useful if the Schiller Institute would put up a regular little program, which people like you could use: “What is *bel canto* singing?” “Why do you need a Verdi tuning in Classical music?” Basics about the well-tempered system, things like that. We could put out a lot of short pedagogicals, and we could do so much more, because we are a factory of ideas! But we need your support, and I don’t mean only you, who asked the question, but all of you.

Because, if you look at what the Schiller Institute has done in 40 years of our existence— And we have our present website, but also an archive website, which has an enormous amount of archive materials; a lot of original research which you do not easily find elsewhere, because it’s very condensed intellectual work by a lot of people. I think we could remedy almost any situation, but we need more people who have the courage, and passion, and love for humanity that can step in at this crucial, crisis moment and help us. Join us, become a member, join our activities. Because we could do a lot, a lot more if we had more people, more resources. Donate to the Schiller Institute, because it is right now one of the very few organizations that can claim that we really do know how to get out of this crisis. But we need to have more resources: We could do advertisements for our intelligence analysis, and things like that.

So join us! It’s the best thing you can do right now for peace.