

Schiller Institute Webcast with Helga Zepp-LaRouche and Scott Ritter

Change Course Now! We Need a New Paradigm

The following is an edited transcript of the Jan. 8, 2025 Schiller Institute webcast featuring Helga Zepp-LaRouche, founder of the Schiller Institute, and Scott Ritter, a retired U.S. Marine Corps intelligence officer who served from 1991 to 1998 as a weapons inspector with the UN Special Commission (UNSCOM) in Iraq. The webcast was aired in both German and English. Helga Zepp-LaRouche's German language presentation was provided in English by simultaneous interpretation. Ritter spoke in English. The video of the webcast is available [here](#). Subheads have been added.



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Helga Zepp-LaRouche



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Scott Ritter

Helga Zepp-LaRouche: Good day, Scott! It's a great pleasure that you are participating in this webcast. You are very well known for speaking out very clearly about the political situation. The United States will have a new President in 11 days. Many experts have been asking themselves during this time whether a greater catastrophe could happen on behalf of the old administration to make President-elect Donald Trump's life as difficult as possible. So, the shaky situation is not over yet, but even if Trump enters office, the situation is still confusing.

On the one hand, you have hopeful signs: Some of his appointments, such as Tulsi Gabbard for Director of National Intelligence (DNI), and some others give us hope that he can actually tackle what some people

call the Deep State. And on his social account on Truth Social, he posted a [video](#) where Jeffrey Sachs talks about Operation Timber Sycamore, and attacks it. This was the CIA operation to destabilize the Middle East. You were a UN weapons inspector, and you have exposed the lies about the Iraq War. We are very grateful for your denunciation of these lies. What do you think? Trump has 11 days before he enters office. He is letting Jeffrey Sachs talk about these Deep State networks. Can we hope that he actually wants to eradicate these networks?



Donald Trump Facebook page

Will President-elect Trump station missiles in Europe?

Scott Ritter: I think that we're going to see that President Trump is going to be in every way, shape, and form, a game-changing President. This is not Presidency as usual; this is not what the duopoly in Amer-

ica normally produces—somebody from the establishment. It doesn't matter whether there's an R next to their name or a D next to their name; they do establishment policies. This is why you'll have Republicans and Democrats use the CIA to carry out activities such as Timber Sycamore in Syria.

Trump has said that he does not want to be the world's policeman. That means that not only does he not want to be fighting overseas wars, he doesn't want the CIA to be creating overseas conflicts for the United States to fight in. He has rightfully on several occasions called out the United States as being the greatest threat to the United States, meaning that the way we behave in the world is the problem. And the solution is not only to stop this behavior, but to bring down the organizations that help foster this behavior, that facilitate this behavior. The CIA is one such organization. The Deep State, the way the establishment interferes in the formulation of American policy.

Will NATO Survive Under Trump?

He's also looking to take down overseas architectures that have long been held to be sacrosanct, sacred to America, such as NATO. I don't believe NATO is going to survive very long into the Trump administration. Already, before he's President, we have NATO members talking about the potential for war between the United States and Europe. Now, I know they don't mean it, because they certainly can't fight it. But that's where we're at. Instead of the greatest unity we've ever seen, we're already seeing deep fractures, fatal fractures in the European architecture of government. And Trump will exploit this; Trump will do his best to disengage from the entanglements of NATO, of the European Union, and other treaty-related and alliance-related architectures that are out there.

So, I think there is hope. And people often look at his Cabinet and say, "Yes, he's appointed some outliers like Tulsi Gabbard." People are in love with Tulsi Gabbard. And they are very concerned about the Secretary of Defense nominee, or the National Security Advisor Michael Waltz, who is coming in. They say, "These are just Zionists; they're people who are going to foster certain policies promoting Israel." Perhaps, but they're also architects of change; they're not playing

the establishment game. People can be critical of their one-sided support of Israel, but you need to recognize that that same mindset also enables them to support Trump as he tears down NATO; Trump as he makes peace with Russia. Imagine that! A President who is actually talking about making peace with Russia, and stating up front that he recognizes that the reason this war happened is because of NATO expansion.

Zepp-LaRouche: Without doubt, any change by him on the status quo is certainly positive. However, we are going between hope and fear, because during his press conference in Florida, he said that the Panama Canal has to become American again; it would be nice if the border between Canada and the United States would vanish; he wants to purchase Greenland; the other NATO members should spend 5% of their budgets for military expenditures. Then he announced that he would have tariffs against China, but also against the European Union. All of these are actually utterances which do not really respect the sovereignty of other states. How do you see this?

Divorces Are Ugly

Ritter: Trump doesn't respect the sovereignty of anybody but the United States. This is the reality of Trump. But the world said they wanted change. Well, you've got change. You don't think America could produce someone capable of the changes that you applaud, who then also says, "I comply with international law; I comply with the rules-based international order." Understand, Donald Trump is divorcing America from the rules-based international order. It's a divorce! The marriage between the United States and Europe is over; finished. Divorces are ugly.

Zepp-LaRouche: Yes, it can be positive and negative. Trump is coming into office January 20. About four weeks later, there is an election in Germany; a German parliamentary election, which is also cancelling the most disliked government of all time, the "traffic light" coalition [SPD, FDP and the Greens]. But if you look at the polls, it cannot be excluded that the Christian Democrats and Friedrich Merz, who is for sending the Taurus long-range missiles to Ukraine, could come to power and win the elections and form a





Team Trump Facebook page

President-elect Donald Trump welcomes Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni to Mar-a-Lago.



Viktor Orbán Facebook page

Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán.



Robert Fico Facebook page

Slovak Prime Minister Robert Fico.

government with the Social Democrats and the Greens. In any case, if Trump changes the rules in such a way, what do you think would be the effect on the election in Germany four weeks later?

Ritter: Germany needs to understand the following: The world is over as you know it. You've been raised for the past three to four decades operating under the protection of the United States; under the umbrella of the United States. That's over; finished. Trump is going to walk away from this. So now, when you elect your next government, let me make the following guarantee: If this Christian Democratic Party gentleman wins, and he tries to send Taurus missiles to Ukraine, Germany will be hit with tariffs like you will have never seen before in your entire life. The United States will shut your economy down, because, you see, you're interfering with a policy prerogative of a President of the United States. Germany doesn't get to sit at the same table as the United States; not with Donald Trump. You're not our equals. You're not our equals, so don't pretend that you are. This is the reality of Trump.

I'm not saying that I'm happy about this. You asked me a question about the reality, and the reality is, the game has changed. This is no longer about American Presidents flying to Germany and treating you with respect. This is about American Presidents dictating outcomes to you. So, the German people have to ask

themselves: Are they going to vote for somebody who is going to put them in conflict with the United States? Or are they going to understand that the path forward is a path that is radically different than the one you're currently on, that requires you to have peace with Russia? I will tell you that there is a party in Germany that is promoting peace.

Zepp-LaRouche: OK. I understand this, but there are also signs that Trump could potentially cooperate with European countries to solve some of the problems. For example, Giorgia Meloni, Prime Minister of Italy, was in Florida to visit Trump. Before that, Prime Minister Viktor Orbán of Hungary was also there, as was Prime Minister Robert Fico of Slovakia. Also, there are new developments in Austria of two days ago, where Herbert Kickl [Freedom Party of Austria] is about to become the new Chancellor of Austria, who also goes in this same direction to be critical against anti-Russian policies, critical against the European Union. Don't you see the possibility that there could be a new combination of— And oh yes, Mr. Elon Musk will also meet with German Bundestag member Alice Weidel [Alternative for Germany] to have an X Spaces [live talk](#). So, one could assume that there is a new option building up for trans-Atlantic cooperation. Or, are you excluding this entirely?

Ritter: No, not excluding it, no. But we shouldn't call it trans-Atlantic, because even though that's the

physical nature of what's happening, the trans-Atlantic relationship is linked to America and NATO; America and the European Union. What you're talking about is a relationship between the United States and Italy; between the United States and Hungary; between the United States and Slovakia; between the United States and Austria—independent nations; nations that have divorced themselves from the intellectual prison of the European Union.

Will Germany Remain a Prisoner of NATO?

So, when Germany goes to the polls, does Germany want to have a relationship with the United States as Germany, which the United States would respect? Or, is Germany going to continue to be a prisoner of this artificial entity called the European Union and this failed alliance called NATO? If Germany wants to be part of the European Union and part of NATO, then you'll have problems with the United States. But if Germany says, "No, we are independent; we are capable of forging our own path, and our path may coincide with that of yours when it comes to stability in Europe, peace with Russia," I think you'll find the United States is willing to talk to you.

Zepp-LaRouche: That sounds not bad, because I am actually of the opinion that the latest developments have shown that we, being within NATO, we are under a so-called security alliance, which raises the question of whether Germany would actually survive this. The recent decision of German Chancellor Olaf Scholz at the NATO summit, where he laconically said that the United States has decided to station long-range missiles on German soil, which was not discussed with the German Bundestag—there was no discussion with the German public. Scholz just said the U.S. has decided, not "we have decided," but "the U.S. has decided." And it's clear that the stationing of these weapons would make Germany the top target.

But how do you see this? Will Trump reverse this decision to station these weapons in 2026?

Ritter: Donald Trump respects strength. If Germany were to stand up to Donald Trump and say, "We choose peace; we choose stability, and we reject the instruments of war and instability. Therefore, we do not

want these missiles stationed on our soil." Donald Trump, I believe, would respect that. Remember, this isn't Trump's policy. The Dark Eagle [U.S long-range hypersonic weapon] isn't Trump's doing. Trump didn't make that decision; the Biden administration did. They're done; they're finished. This was an establishment decision based upon a strategic goal and objective of creating the conditions that weaken Russia and bring Russia down. Trump is not looking to continue this policy direction.

So, I think that an assertive Germany, standing up and saying, "I believe in what's best for Germany,"



German Federal Government/Sandra Steins

German Chancellor Olaf Scholz said the U.S. had decided to station missiles on German soil, claiming no role in the decision.

Trump would respect that. Trump doesn't respect a Germany that subordinates itself to the European Union and NATO. Trump doesn't have any use for that Germany. But Trump does respect strong independent voices.

Zepp-LaRouche: Then we will make sure that this dialogue between us is sent to all the parties that are participating in the German election, because if, in this situation, there is a clear statement, that would be very good—given that the traffic light government only has around 20% support. A lot of people in Germany are afraid of an escalation towards a big war. So, if now the changing situation could be utilized to finally start a strategic debate that has been suppressed for such a long time, this would be a window of opportunity, a

moment in which German history could take a completely different turn. What's your assessment?

Road to Success, or Off-Ramp to Disaster

Ritter: I think German history is going to take a turn no matter what. The question is, is it going to continue turning towards disaster? That's the direction you're headed in right now; what you call the traffic light coalition, what I call the failed government of Olaf Scholz, has taken Germany towards an off-ramp that leads to disaster. But there's a chance to keep Germany on the Autobahn towards success, but you have to change the driver. That means that these elections have to bring about real change, not just simply a restatement of the failed policies, but completely new policies, a new political direction.

The other thing I would throw out there for Germans to consider is that there are some people who say, "Trump will only be in power for four years, and we could just wait him out"; that at the end of four years, the United States will return to the duopoly of the past. It's tough to predict the future, but let's understand this: Donald Trump was elected on a populist revolutionary mandate. This mandate ran over the traditional Republican Party; it no longer exists. And the Democratic Party showed itself to be fundamentally flawed, perhaps fatally flawed. If Trump executes half of what he says he wants to do in terms of revolutionary change against the establishment, his designated replacement—J.D. Vance—will be President in four years. That means that there will be no change in the direction, so that's at least eight years, and Vance could very well win re-election—that's 12 years. And because the Democrats have no viability, they won't be able to find any traction, you could have a follow-on. You could be looking at 20 years of MAGA rule—Make America Great Again rule.

Germany has to ask itself, does it want to head down a path that puts it in conflict with a 20-year dynasty? Or, does it want to get in on the ground floor and be part of whatever success it is that this dynasty will be seeking? That's a decision that will be made in the election later this year.

Zepp-LaRouche: I also believe that Trump will



Palestinian News & Information Agency (Wafa)
Victims of Israeli bombs and bullets at Al-Shifa hospital in Gaza City, now completely destroyed by Israel.

bring the conflict with Russia in order. He has said he would do it within 24 hours, but he changed a little bit, saying he needs six months. But I also believe that, from the perspective of Trump, if a certain policy will be pursued towards Ukraine which would respect Russian security interests, this can be solved. So, I'm optimistic.

However, if you look at the Middle East situation, it is much more acutely dangerous, because it's a completely untenable situation. Syria has a new government, which, according to Cardinal Zenari, the Papal Nuncio in Damascus, should be stabilized because the population has suffered so much under the Caesar sanctions. Apart from that, Al-Jolani, or Al-Sharaa, no matter how you call him, the new leader of the government, had a U.S. bounty of \$10 million on his head. The whole group [Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham] comes from Idlib and has a terrorist background. So, that is a powder keg.

Today the *Jerusalem Post* reported that Israel has to prepare for a war with Türkiye, because it's already on the horizon that there is territorial conflict between them in Syria. Israel has the Eretz Yisrael [Greater Israel] policy, and on the other hand, there are clear signs that Türkiye wants to rebuild the Ottoman Empire. There's a clash. Additionally, the internal situation in

Syria is extremely complex; there are many factions that are at odds with each other. And you can see the course of the new government very critically, because there have not been calls for an Islamic state or emirate.

If Trump now says that Hamas should free the hostages before he enters office or all hell will break loose, this is in no uncertain terms an absurd remark. The hell is already there. What's happening in Gaza is hell. [Doctors Against Genocide](#), which is an American-Palestinian group, has started a mobilization about Israel's complete escalation in Gaza, where especially hospitals, doctors, and nurses have become targets to cut off the population from medical support.

With the new government and Cabinet that comes into office with Trump, I have certain questions if Trump can do anything to secure the situation. Do you see any hope on the horizon?

The Fate of Palestine

Ritter: If I were a Palestinian, or a supporter of Palestine, there's no hope whatsoever. In order for Palestine to exist, Israel must be strategically defeated, because only the strategic defeat of Israel will disenfranchise this far right-wing government that says no to any notion of a Palestinian state. You can't get traction with the idea of the creation of a Palestinian state if you have an Israel that says no, under no circumstances will they allow it. So, the only way that you can get traction is through the defeat of this government.

It looked, mid-last year, as if Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's government was on the verge of collapse. He faced crises everywhere. But then he had a miracle happen—the collapse of Syria. The fall of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad breathed new life and relevance into Netanyahu's government, and they are today firmly entrenched. And they will be entrenched when Donald Trump becomes President. And Donald Trump will do nothing to further the Palestinian cause. Remember, it was under Donald Trump that the Abraham Accords were finalized. The Abraham

Accords were a death sentence to Palestine. That's why Hamas did what it did on October 7, 2023. It had no other choice. But this gambit has failed; there will not be a Palestine. That's my sad assessment.

Trump will do everything to ensure that whatever exists today that could be Palestine will never be; that Israel will be unified and strong. That's a tragedy for the Palestinian people. But Trump also wants to solve the problem of Israel's internal conflict with the Palestinians; he wants to prevent Israel from getting us entangled in wars. That was the importance of the Jeffrey Sachs interview. Because from that, Trump was

saying he blames Netanyahu for the wars in Iraq and Syria; and he blames Netanyahu for putting the United States on a potential path of conflict with Iran.

So, I think Trump actually will be working overtime to try and bring about a new relationship with Iran. You already see the potential of talks taking place between the Trump administration and the Iranian government about their nuclear program.

The news out of Israel about their concern over a resurgence of Ottoman-ism out of Türkiye is good for this.

Because, I believe, the assessment said that they've now deemed Türkiye to be a greater threat than the Iranian project. That means that rather than further empowering Türkiye by bringing down the Iranian project, Israel will now change priorities and support an American effort to bring about an end to a conflict between Iran and Israel. This will require Iran to give up its nuclear program, or at least the potential to make nuclear weapons. Iran may be in a position to do that; I don't know. But there's hope there. And when that happens, you'll see the United States put all the pressure it can bring to bear on Türkiye to keep Türkiye from posing a threat to Israel. Türkiye is very vulnerable to American economic intervention. The Turkish economy could be collapsed overnight if the United States chose to do so. Türkiye's in no position to be dictating outcomes to Israel and to be threatening Israel.

So, I think there's actually potential for big-picture



Benjamin Netanyahu Facebook page

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu: no longer gunning for war between the U.S. and Iran?

stability in the Middle East with a Trump administration. But two entities will be sacrificed because of this. The first is the Palestinian cause; I'm sorry to say, it's over. It won't resurrect for decades. There will be more death and destruction while the remnants hold on in Gaza, but it's finished. And the Kurds will likewise be sold out by the United States. We have done this before, and I believe Trump is prepared to do it again to bring about regional stability. He will not sacrifice regional stability for the cause of Kurdish independence or autonomy.

But as long as you don't care about the Kurds or the Palestinians, then this is a good thing. But if you care about the Palestinian cause, as I do, and you care about the Kurds, as people should, then this is a tragedy for those two peoples.

Implications of the Iran-Russia Relationship

Zepp-LaRouche: Well, I'm not sure whether the power balance in Iran is such that they will give up the powers of the axis of resistance. I think that Supreme Leader Khamenei is playing still a big role. Excuse me if I'm voicing my doubts, but there are strategic changes. On the 17th of January, Iran will sign a comprehensive economic and military agreement with Russia which could change the situation in an earnest way. The option that the nuclear facilities could be attacked without attacking the entire military network of Iran, Russia, China, North Korea, and by implication the entire combination of states of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO)—you would pull this all in. So, the option of Israel to make this step would be massively reduced. And despite the fact that the neighboring countries have done almost nothing for the Palestinian cause, I don't think this is the sentiment, the emotional situation of the people of the neighboring states. Maybe you could say something about this.

Ritter: Well, let's talk about Iran first of all. Whatever agreements are signed between Russia and Iran on January 17, I'll tell you what it's not. It's not a comprehensive defensive alliance; it's not a treaty that says Russia guarantees the security of Iran; that if Iran is attacked, Russia will come to its aid. Russia will not enter that kind of treaty with Iran, nor will Iran enter that kind of treaty with Russia. It'll be a treaty where they talk about enhanced security relationships.

Two, there is no Shanghai Cooperation Organization military capability, there is no BRICS military ca-

pability, there is no unified military capability whatsoever to align against the United States and Israel if they choose to attack Iran. Iran will be on its own. China will do nothing; Russia will do nothing—because they can do nothing. Russia is embroiled in a conflict in Ukraine. Russia is not going to seek a Third World War over Iran, especially if it's about an Iranian nuclear program that violates international law. Russia knows that Iran is a signatory to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. Russia knows that Iran is not allowed to have a nuclear weapons program.

If the United States attacked Iran, it would be to destroy nuclear enrichment capacity and other nuclear capabilities that give Iran a de facto nuclear weapons capability. Today, Iran is a nuclear weapons power. It is less than a week away from being able to develop a nuclear bomb when the political decision is made. This is unacceptable. It should be unacceptable to every nation in the world. But it's definitely unacceptable to Israel, and it's definitely unacceptable to the United States. While Donald Trump is not looking for a war, he is not going to let a situation develop in the Middle East where Iran becomes a declared nuclear power.

Attacking Iran Means Nuclear War

So, Iran will be given a choice up front: Negotiate or die. That's the choice, Negotiate or die. And Iran, I believe, has already chosen to negotiate, because they understand the consequences of choosing death—they will die; their state will be terminated. Now, they may bring a lot of people down with them, but understand this, too: When we speak of the United States attacking Iran's nuclear infrastructure, we're speaking of a nuclear war. So, it's not something where you say, just bomb the nuclear sites, and don't worry about anything else. No, the nuclear sites—Fordow, for example, the underground nuclear enrichment plant—cannot be destroyed by conventional means. That's why Donald Trump, when he was President, changed the nuclear employment plans of the United States so that it incorporates a new family of nuclear weapons specifically designed to destroy Iran's underground nuclear facilities. So, when we attack Iran, if we do, we will use nuclear weapons and we will use them decisively. This is the reality of a Donald Trump Presidency.

So, this is why I believe the Iranians will make the right choice. They don't need nuclear weapons. The Russian security relationship is such that it will be able to enhance their conventional deterrent capacity

so that Iran can survive. Given the changing geopolitical realities regarding who Israel views as their number one threat, allowing Iran to retain non-nuclear strategic deterrent capabilities isn't a bad thing from the Israeli perspective. And if it's not a bad thing from the Israeli perspective, it's not a bad thing from the American perspective.

So, I do think that there is a fundamental change. Remember, this new Iranian President was elected on a platform of moderation; was elected on a platform that said he wants to reach out to the West. The Iranian people voted for him. And while, yes, Khamenei is the Supreme Leader, he has to respect the will of the people. Therefore, I believe he will give this new President the opportunity to enter into negotiations that are designed to preserve Iran as an Islamic republic, because the alternative is the end of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Now on Palestine, well, I'll leave it there, and you can respond.

On the Subject of China

Zepp-LaRouche: I would like to talk about some other topics as well, so let's change the scene for the moment. The big question in regard to the Trump administration is, of course, what happens with the United States–China relationship? In the last Trump administration, things started with a ray of hope. President Xi Jinping organized a big reception in China. He spent the whole day with Trump and brought him to the Forbidden City to explain Chinese traditions and history to him. So, there was progress. But, when the COVID pandemic hit, Trump apparently listened to people like Steve Bannon, and accused China of the “China virus” narrative. You know the whole story.

Now, the situation is completely different than when Trump left the White House four years ago. Immense changes have occurred. China is well advanced in its goal to be the leader in ten technology sectors by 2025. An Australian website, the technology tracker website of ASPI [Australian Strategic Policy Institute], [reports](#) that China has already reached leadership in 37 out of 44 technology sectors, so China has made the leap to not only a productive economy, but also to independence. They don't steal technology from other countries, because they have made such technological progress of their own to become leaders worldwide.

Additionally, the BRICS countries, after 11 years, and also the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) of the New Silk Road, only within 11 years, have changed

the world. The BRICS have become a huge dynamic and factor, where they represent over 80% of the world population by cooperating with the Global Majority and the Global South. Just a few days ago, there was a dramatic development where Indonesia, which originally was only declared a partner country during the Kazan BRICS summit, has now become a full member. This adds more weight to the BRICS, and generally you could say this is a new system in the making.

And of course you are right, the SCO, or the BRICS, are not intended to replace NATO or to be in active competition to the United States. Xi Jinping often has reiterated that he wants to create a model of new great-state relationships. Former President Barack Obama did not accept Xi's offer to cooperate on the BRI, but this offer is still valid. And I'm convinced that if Trump would not go to a trade-war policy, but on the contrary would offer the Global Majority his cooperation, I'm 100% sure that he would be received with open arms. Do you see a potential that, with the combination of Trump's Cabinet, that the United States could be catapulted out of geopolitics and cooperate with the BRICS nations?

Ritter: I agree with your analysis that that would be a wise course of action. But this isn't going to happen. The United States needs an adversary in order to make policies resonate amongst the American people. There must be an enemy. And as Trump seeks to move away from traditional military-on-military adversarial relationships by ending the conflict in Ukraine and divorcing America from NATO, there will be economic tension between the United States and China.

Manageable Tension

But I think it's going to be manageable tension. What I mean by that is, if you take a look at some of the things Trump has said he's going to do, like securing the Panama Canal. Why? Because of concerns of Chinese control over the Panama Canal. So, the idea is to strengthen America in its own back yard. Why does Trump want to go and take Greenland? Because of concerns over the Arctic as global warming takes place and additional sea lanes and resources open up. China has been reaching out to the Greenland government to get economic relationships in the area. Trump wants to terminate that; Trump wants to keep China out of our backyard.

So, I think that's the kind of conflict we're going to

be looking at. Not war, but about markets. Who is going to control what markets. I think the United States is not going to yield the North American market or South American market to China. And I think you're going to see Trump fight very aggressively some of the inroads that China has made.

But the sacrifice, I believe, will be in the Pacific. Trump famously, or infamously, pulled out of the Trans-Pacific Partnership, creating a window of vulnerability that China exploited by replacing the TPP with the greatest free-trade association in history. Now, we have BRICS on the horizon. It's not just Indonesia which became a full member. Malaysia is seeking membership; Thailand is seeking membership. That's the end of it. Watch what happens in the coming years. The Philippines will be seeking membership. Then, watch what happens. Japan will be seeking membership; South Korea—because that will be the economic future for the Pacific. Trump, I think, will be satisfied to let America become Fortress America, and then operate from a position of strength.

Why compete with Chinese global supply chains when you can secure your own supply chains within Fortress America? I think that's the Trump approach; is to make America China-proof, and then compete with China economically, not militarily. Will it succeed? I don't know. But I do think that we're going to see years of tension between China and the United States, but this tension will be economic, not military.

Zepp-LaRouche: Yes, but there are two factors that you have to add: First, the people in the so-called “collective West” have no clue about the dramatic changes that are taking place in the Global South and the so-called Global Majority. There is a renaissance of anti-colonialist sentiment and spirit, never seen before. I know what I am talking about—because we have been, since the 1970s, we have intensively discussed and worked with the Non-Aligned Movement for a new international order which is more equal.

And I know about all the setbacks, but there is a new resolution to create this new “win-win” perspective system, which is based on the system of the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence: respect of sovereignty, non-interference into the social spheres of the other nations, etc. And that's a model which is for Africa, Asia, and even for Latin American states, and clearly has made them see that it is more profitable to cooperate with China than with the United States, be-

cause with the United States, you're only used as, like a military base—I know what you mean with the “Fortress America.”

The countries that are cooperating with America in the military sphere have no economic gain and benefit. Those that work with China are now realizing they get roads, high-speed rail, industry, infrastructure projects, economic zones, education for their students. And as a process, evolving, this is all a blow-back reaction against the politics of the weaponization of the dollar currency, with the sanctions, etc.

The Neoliberal West Is a Sinking Ship

So, the countries of the Global South have come to the conclusion that the West, at least the part of the West engulfed by the neoliberal paradigm, that they are a sinking ship. They are a system that is actually crashing down, and they have the resolution to create their own system. For example, the Chinese and others are saying, “We have emerged out of a 5,000-year-old culture,” and it gives them the self-confidence to create their own future. It's a different spirit! You cannot compare it with the discussion in Europe, or sometimes in the United States, but it's real, and is motivating these states.

And I think it would be a tragic development if we in the West would not be able to relate to this positive development. That means, also, that we in the West, in Europe and the United States, have to return to our best traditions: In Europe it would be the Italian Renaissance, the German Classics, the French *École Polytechnique*, and other periods. And the United States would be the idea that the United States stop prioritizing the Anglo-American tradition as the basis of its foreign policy, but go back to the policies of George Washington and Benjamin Franklin, but also John Quincy Adams, who said the United States should not pursue foreign monsters, but we should have an alliance of equal republics, and cooperate with them.

So, therefore, I think that the future of the next 50 years or so will decisively depend on the question of whether we in the West are able to go back and remind ourselves of our best traditions, and throw overboard the excesses of the neoliberal dogma, and also its cultural elements, like “everything is allowed, there is no standard anymore.” And then, be in dialogue with countries in Asia, and Latin America, and Africa, on an equal level. This would be the cultural element of

the strategic situation, which I think would be the most important of all.

Ritter: I'm not disagreeing with you. I think that would be a wonderful, utopian world. But that's not Donald Trump. You say the United States should go back to the time of George Washington, to the founding, when we were 13 colonies becoming the new nation. But that's not the United States that Trump wants. Trump is seeking to revive Manifest Destiny, America at its imperial worst, America seeking expansion, domination. That's the America that Trump is talking about. And it isn't a "win-win" world—it's a zero-sum game world, where, if you win, we lose. So, for us to win, you must lose. That's the competition spirit that's coming in with Trump.

And I understand that the Global South may believe that it's ready to take on the collective West, and that the collective West is a sinking ship. Donald Trump isn't the collective West! Donald Trump is the United States of America, standing up, in all of its terrible glory. We aren't a sinking ship! We're the most powerful nation on the planet! We just haven't been managed properly. And I'm just stating the facts.

You may not want to hear the facts, but we will crush any opposition. I challenge anybody in the Global South to think that they're going to walk away from the dollar. Donald Trump isn't Joe Biden. Donald Trump is Donald Trump. He will not *let you* walk away from the dollar! He will destroy you, as you attempt [it]. And he has put BRICS on notice, and watch what BRICS does. They will not move aggressively to find a replacement currency, because that's not the war they want with the United States. There will be dollar dominance for decades to come!

Zepp-LaRouche: Well, so that the United States becomes great again, it would require—apparently the United States is wasting away a lot of its physical assets, or of its industrial potential in the military-industrial complex through the paradigm shift that started already a few decades ago, when there was a shift of production to its cheap-labor markets. The United States has outsourced a lot of the middle-income level jobs, and its power lies in the military component. But if you look at the middle-income section, and you look into other parameters like the infrastructure, it is in a desolate state. China has over 45,000 km of high-speed rail, the United States has basically none; and in China the average

speed is 350 kph, and now they're going to work on a test track for 400 kph.

Retooling U.S. Industry

It would be a possibility that Trump could make America great again by creating the investments or shifting the investments to the civilian productive sector, and start retooling the industry. For example, why does not the United States build a high-speed rail system among all the major cities? Why does the United States not realize the policy of the frontier toward the West and build new, modern cities in the central area of the United States?

America could be great again, if they would utilize the resources, which they're now using for military purposes of destruction, which are just feeding the coffers of the big money investors, which is only advantageous for a very small fraction of the population, but the masses of the population are not gaining from this. On the contrary, life expectancy within the recent five years has actually decreased, which is an indicator for a decaying economy. This can all be remedied, if Trump would say, "I'll do for the United States what the Chinese did for China, what the BRICS are doing for other countries in the Global South. I will rebuild America economically, so that it shines through excellence, and will be a peaceful partner." And the American population would have the greatest benefit! Do you see a chance that this would happen, or is it completely excluded?

Ritter: Completely excluded, because the American people don't think like this. The problem is the American people! We elected Donald Trump because many Americans believe that his aggressive stance reflects what America is. We are still a nation that believes in American supremacy, in American dominance, and the need for American supremacy and American dominance. It's not because we've done an academic analysis of the facts and realized that mistakes have been made. We're people who wake up every morning, look in the mirror and say, "I'm an American. I'm the greatest thing in the world—even though I'm living in a house that's falling down, with bad plumbing, and I have to go out in the street with potholes, and all that." I fooled myself into believing this. And we're not going to allow the United States to behave in any fashion that doesn't reflect the dominant America.

Trump's 'Brute Force Model'

Now, this could change over time, but it's not going to change under Donald Trump. Donald Trump has as his mantra, "Peace through strength." And so, he will be seeking to revive American civilian industry, but he's going to do it, not by following the Chinese model, but by following the Trump model, and that's a brute force model.

For instance, I think we're looking at a period of extreme tension between the United States and Mexico, coming up. As we seek, we will try to return industries that have fled to Mexico and bring them back to the United States by imposing tariffs that make it financially impossible for those businesses to continue, while at the same time, shutting down the border, to address the immigration issue, and putting ourselves on a near warlike footing with Mexico over the cartels. That's brute strength. That's not about sitting down and working with people on a human-to-human basis, and all that. That's America dictating the outcome. And that's how Donald Trump is going to operate: He's going to seek to dictate outcomes.

Now, we know when he gets pushback that he will alter his approach. We see this with Russia. He was going to solve the problem with "one phone call." Now he says it'll take six months. Why? Because when they put their initial peace plan on the table for the Russians, President Vladimir Putin, in his End of Year press conference, said, not even going to consider it; isn't going to happen. And Trump realized that he's going to have to change his ways, because Putin stood up. Putin was strong. But there are very few nations in the world that can stand up and be strong to the United States, because there are very few situations where the consequences of the United States failing would resonate meaningfully back on America. Ukraine is one such place; Russia is another.

But the Global South? Who in the Global South is going to stand up to us? Brazil tried. This is going to be a very interesting year for Brazil, because they take on the BRICS chairmanship at the same time Trump is going to tell them, if you go forward with anything meaningful on BRICS, I will destroy you. He's already said that. No one in the Global South can stand up to the United States: that's a sad fact. And Trump is very aggressive.

So, I don't see the world going in a utopian way. I see the world becoming a playground between BRICS and Fortress America.

Zepp-LaRouche: If you look more closely, what China's doing economically, actually, comes very close to the American System of economy, as it was practiced and developed by Alexander Hamilton, and was dominating the first decade after the American Revolution, which was revived by Lincoln, and then by Franklin D. Roosevelt, with his New Deal and Reconstruction Finance Corporation. Kennedy had elements of this.

The American System vs. the British System

So, in other words, apart from ideological dogmas, if you look at the substance of the issue, China is actually putting the emphasis on the physical side of the economy and the general welfare of the people—which is actually the American System of economics—whereas the American System as it is practiced now in the United States is actually the British System of economics, as described by Friedrich List and Henry C. Carey. It would be great to organize seminars and conferences on these issues, where you would actually invite leading Chinese economists and American economists—of course, not from the Chicago School of neoliberalism, but more down-to-Earth, people who are bankers and who are connected to the real economy, and who would actually compare and discuss these parameters. You would come to the conclusion, I'm sure, that there is a form of cooperation possible.

And what you said about the situation vis-à-vis Mexico, of course it could turn out to be an ugly thing, if Trump in fact would try to push back 15 million illegal aliens and build a wall, and have a war against the drug mafia. This could be a very ugly scenario. But, there is a better way: We in the Schiller Institute made a [proposal](#) that you could actually go to the roots of the problem. Why are the refugees actually coming? Because their countries are plagued by war and poverty. But if you invest in these countries and the building up of their economies, you create an incentive for people to remain there, by creating productive jobs building up their own countries—which is the same case for Europe.

We have the chance: Either we will be seen by the entire world as the ugly people who are supporting genocide, and basically cast away the so-called "Western values," because we do have a double standard. Or, we are saying, we will prove that we are able to do better. And I wouldn't say this is a utopia, but it's more like statecraft, in the tradition of political leaders who had a vision.

You cannot say that some of the American Presidents that I've mentioned already were utopians, but they had a vision of how their own and other countries could look better. We are in a tectonic shift. I think that Xi Jinping is also discussing about a shift which hasn't been seen for 100 years. And I am saying it's a tectonic shift which hasn't been seen for 500 years! Because colonialism probably started around 1500, and if all of Africa, and many Asian countries, and Latin American countries, if there is an iron-clad will that they are going to create their own fate, and that they want to become middle-income-level countries, then we should support this. This is a way that all the problems in the world could be solved in a humane way.

And I wouldn't declare this utopia, but it's a return to a more humanistic conception for how to organize the world—and we, as human beings, we are the intelligent species. If we as the rational species are not able to solve the problems in a way that the outcome is a peaceful, humane coexistence, then I don't think we will make it at all. But I am optimistic, and I think we are endowed with rationality, and if you appeal to this rationality, you can find solutions on a higher level than those on which these problems were created.

Will America Join the New Paradigm?

Ritter: Again, I don't disagree with anything you said from a logical standpoint. Donald Trump is not a statesman, and he is not creating an administration capable of traditional statecraft. This is a revolution that has taken place. It's a revolution that will transpire domestically, as Donald Trump seeks to tear down the very establishments that you would seek to appeal to. The traditional bastions of academic thinking, intellectual thought in America, are not going to survive this revolution. They're going to be torn down and rebuilt in the image of something new. We don't know what that is, because I don't think Donald Trump knows what that is. But what he does know is that what we call the Establishment, is the enemy of the MAGA agenda.

And so, there's going to be a conflict here, and there's going to be a conflict abroad, as the United States redefines its relationship with the world. Donald Trump is not seeking to enter into masterful diplomacy. He's seeking to impose his will upon the world.

This is the reality. And it will probably fail! I mean, I'm not saying this is going to succeed. This revolution will probably fail; it will probably play itself out, be-



C-SPAN

Secretary of State nominee Marco Rubio, no paragon of diplomatic skill.

cause it's unsustainable. But it could last for 12 years; it could last for 20 years. And during that time, unless the United States is onboard, none of the things you're talking about can happen. It can't happen without America being onboard. And I don't believe America's going to be onboard. Name the great intellectuals of the Trump administration; name the philosophers that have brought about the MAGA movement. There are none.

Who is our lead diplomat? Marco Rubio. You know—right there, your smile says everything. You acknowledge that we don't have diplomacy! That we have sycophants, that we have toadies, we have yes-men, we have neoconservatives and neoliberals captured by the MAGA movement, but we don't have great intellectual thinkers, people who have thought this thing out and said, this is the approach. The MAGA approach is *brute force*. That's the approach that Trump is taking. There's nothing sophisticated about his approach. And unfortunately for the world, the United States has enough retained power that brute force will be effective, for a period of time.

I agree with you! I would like us to take a more structured approach, like China has, toward how it's economically developing. But there's a difference: China started with nothing, and has great latitude to create change. America had much and is a rotting system. And now, we're trying to fix the rot. It's the difference between building a new building, and renovating an old, decrepit building. It's much harder to renovate the old decrepit building, and America is an old, decrepit building, in great need of renovation.

China's building new buildings. But we have a different problem, and I think the Trump solution might be to tear down the decrepit building, and then to start anew. I don't know. Can we afford that? Is America ready for that? You know, the American people voted for something they don't understand. They don't understand what's about to happen; this revolution that's going to transpire. The world doesn't understand what's about to happen, because nobody knows what the ramifications of this will be.

Zepp-LaRouche: OK, well, unfortunately our time has come to its end. I'll take from what you've said, take away an optimistic picture, because if everything is not more clearly defined, I think there's an immense chance and opportunity for all, intellectuals as well as business people, academicians, scientists, artists—It's a moment in time, where a situation that has been completely rigid is now breaking apart. It has all the difficulties that you have mentioned, but if you intervene with a clear concept and a vision of how to create a better future, I think, in my opinion, it's not without hope.

And I would say, thank you very much, Scott. I

think what you said was very useful for the audiences in Europe. And I would suggest that we meet again, after a certain while, after Trump has been in office, and you are very welcome to join us again.

Ritter: Well, thank you for having me. I look forward to that. I would love nothing more than to be proven wrong on many of the things I've said, because what I'm saying isn't what I want. I'm saying what I believe is going to happen, but it's not what I want to happen. What I want to happen is a world very much aligned with the one you discussed, where human beings meet together through logic and humanity and well-reasoned thought, to come up with solutions. I would love that to be the world that we live in. But unfortunately, I don't think the MAGA revolution creates such people. But who knows? Let's find out, in six months, and let's see where we're at.

Zepp-LaRouche: You're also an American, and if you want this, a very important point has been made. Thank you very much! See you soon.

Ritter: Thank you.

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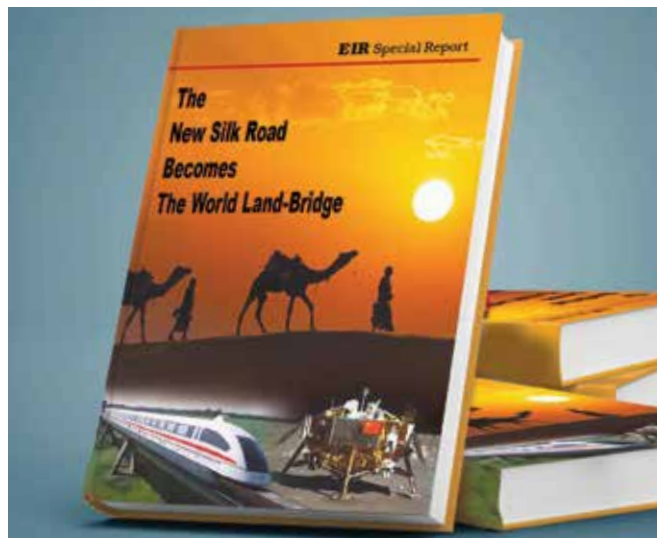
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