

II. Strategic

Helga Zepp-LaRouche and Col. Larry Wilkerson

‘The American Empire Has Gone Badly Astray’

The following is an edited transcript of the Jan. 22, 2025, Schiller Institute dialogue between Schiller Institute founder Helga Zepp-LaRouche and Col. (ret.) Larry Wilkerson. Embedded links and subheads have been added. The video is available [here](#).

Helga Zepp-LaRouche: First of all, let me express my extreme happiness and gratitude that you are joining me on this program. It is a moment when the whole world is looking at the United States and, depending on which political camp you are in, between hopes and fears, the allies are looking at what the Trump administration will be. So, since you were the Chief of Staff to Secretary of State Colin Powell, and you have been very outspoken on many issues, I think it is extremely important to hear your view. And especially for you to tell the European population and, naturally, the American population, but especially the European population, what you think from an inside view of what the world has to expect.

Col. Larry Wilkerson: That’s a fascinating question for anyone in this country right now, especially someone like me who has been teaching national security affairs for about 20 years and has spent a lot of time in government; 50 years arguably. It’s a mystery to me where we’re headed. In a general sense, it’s no mystery, because we’ve been doing what we’ve been doing as an imperial writ for at least 20-plus years. And we’ve been doing it principally by war and sanctions, or both, which is in my view a really losing formulation. So, there was some part of me at least, and

I must admit, I’m still a member, probably amongst four or five, of the Republican Party who considers himself more or less an “Eisenhower Republican.” So, I had some hope that there might be a kernel in my political party that would rise to the occasion, if you will, and do things differently.

I didn’t count on President Donald Trump coming back for a second time; now he’s here. He has ex-



Whitehouse.gov

President Donald Trump speaking at his inauguration.

pressed a philosophy that I could best define as Fortress America, which means probably not isolationism, but certainly a retreat or retrenchment from a lot of the responsibilities, if you will, that we have garnered in our imperial reach over the past two to three decades, and arguably since the beginning of the Cold War. People call it the liberal-economic order, the rules-based order, and so forth. I think that is, as it is formulated in the Empire, at a distinct endpoint. But I think it has been disintegrating ever since George W. Bush, the Presi-

dent who I served in 2002 to 2005.

‘All Over the Map’

All that to say, I have no idea what Trump is going to do, because he’s all over the map. I was hopeful that he would end the war in Ukraine speedily, which needs to happen. I was hopeful that he would do what he has done with his Middle East emissary Steve Witkoff, to bring the hammer down on Israeli Prime Minister Bibi Netanyahu. But I don’t know what the impact of that hammer’s hitting is going to be; it’s looking like we might perhaps get through the first phase of this ceasefire and initial hostage return and prisoner exchange. But, I think the odds are Bibi will end it and go back to his old plan of occupying Gaza fully and thoroughly with Israeli settlers, ultimately. And he’s encroaching further and further into Syria out of the Syrian side of the Golan Heights.

If I were the King of Jordan, I might be concerned myself, because I think Netanyahu and his clan, as it were, his cult of rabid Zionists, actually covets even more territory than they are possessing right now. And I don’t think Trump will stop that. Fifty to a hundred million dollars from Miriam Adelson alone, gives him an incentive to do things that are as draconian as former President Joe Biden did—but maybe with a different imprimatur. By that, I mean Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman is looking as if he’s ready with a sort of prima facie idea that there’ll be a Palestinian state somewhere in the future, to re-engage with Trump and to make something like the Abraham Accords, but even more sweeping and more comprehensive, with Israel as a central partner in those accords.

So, I’m not sure where we’re going. I’m not even sure about Ukraine anymore. Keith Kellogg, the 80-year-old general who is probably well past his sell-by date, the emissary Trump has picked for Ukraine, has made statements that make me think he is more akin to the Biden security team with regard to Ukraine than what



White House

Steve Witkoff, Trump’s Middle East emissary.



CC/Gage Skidmore

Miriam Adelson, billionaire ultra-rightist Zionist contributor to the Trump campaign.

Trump originally said. So, I think we’re going to have to wait and see, and prepare for some hurricane-force winds in any event, that Trump is going to create. He has already created hurricane-force winds here inside the bureaucracy in Washington. He is dismissing people left and right; summarily dismissing them. There are going to be lawsuits galore, I guarantee you. And he’s got position people who likely will be approved to be his principal Cabinet officers, whose views, let us say, of the world are quite different from mine and yours. So, that’s sort of a dismal portrait, but I think we’re up against a lot of problems.

Zepp-LaRouche: Well, I would agree with you that it’s a very complicated and multi-faceted situation. I think it’s not even totally coherent, but nobody really expects President Trump to be completely coherent; everybody expects him to be compulsive and innovative.

Now, on the good side, I think from my standpoint the most important things he has said are that he wants to prevent World War III; he wants to normalize relations with Russia. And in his discussion with President Xi Jinping, he said that if the United States and China work together, they can solve all problems of the world.

Hope for a Post-Geopolitical World

I always like to look at the strategic situation from the top, and if that is even half-true, or 90% true, or whatever, I think then the world has a chance. Because the biggest problem, the nightmare with the Biden administration was that we were getting closer and closer to World War III, and the geopolitical confrontation with Russia and China was on a path which seemed to be unstoppable. If that can be stopped, then I think there is hope. So, what do you think about this?

Wilkerson: I think you’re absolutely right! And

that was my greatest hope with Trump coming in, was that he would live up to his earlier campaign promise, and immediately cut off the funds and cut off the arms, which would essentially stop Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky in his tracks and put a hammer blow to him that would say, “You better get to the negotiating table, young man, or someone’s going to assassinate you, or I’ll assassinate you.” That was kind of the way it looked.

Let me ask you a question, because I’m as concerned, as you are, about Germany. Whither Germany? My perspective right now tells me that Germany, followed by France—which is probably as dysfunctional as any one of the republics have been—is going to exit NATO ultimately. My prediction would be in the next 18 to 24 months, once the politics are settled and Germany understands probably a little bit better what its position is. How do you see it?

Zepp-LaRouche: We have in four weeks a federal election in Germany, on the 23rd of February. If you look at the recent polls, the CDU [Christian Democratic Union] candidate, Friedrich Merz, has as of now 29% of the vote; the second party is the AfD [Alternative for Germany], which has presently 21% of the vote; and then all the other parties are in the range of the teens. So, unless this Trump move into the White House so dramatically changes the strategic parameters, it looks like Merz could become the next Chancellor. And from my point of view, this would be an absolute catastrophe for Germany, because he is the former European head of BlackRock. And if you look at the corporate structure of BlackRock, they are inseparable from the military-industrial complex and the worst speculative interests of Wall Street. Lo and behold, he was just in Davos, and in his speech he said there is no problem, we can make a deal with Trump; he’s a deal-maker. If he wants more exports to Europe, we can take more imports, we can buy more LNG gas and we can buy more American weapons—and then everything could be settled. And he also basically said, give the Taurus missiles to the Ukrainians, even if Trump is changing the policy on Ukraine.

Now, this is really a catastrophe, because, as you can



CC/European People's Party

Friedrich Merz, German Chancellor candidate.

see, the whole establishment in Europe and the Biden administration were completely freaked out about the possibility that Trump may win; so they tried to make everything, including NATO, “Trump-proof.” At the Ramstein meeting, they separated the different areas, giving responsibility to the different NATO countries to replace what the United States would no longer be doing, once Trump comes in. They tried to prescribe all the programs such that they would continue, no matter who is in the White House.

Now, obviously, this is ridiculous, because if the United States gets to an agreement with Russia to end the Ukraine war—which is still an iffy question, because the Russians have made very clear that they will not capitulate in protecting their own security interests—but the Europeans, without the United States, cannot continue this war. For somebody who seriously wants to be the Chancellor to even say this in Davos at the World Economic Forum, proves that these people have a different agenda, which is extremely worrisome.

So, I am trying to tell everybody we should do everything possible to elect only candidates who are against the continuation of this war in Ukraine; who are against the expansion of NATO. I could say more about what I think needs to be done, but the short of it is that unless there is a huge mobilization, we could end up with Merz as the next Chancellor. In the worst case, he would make a coalition with the Greens, Robert Habeck—the same Economics Minister who just ruined the German economy. The German economy is in a free fall as a result of the absolutely incompetent Green economic policy in combination with the sabotage of the Nord Stream pipelines. He wants to have a coalition with such a person, or with the Social Democrats, depending on how the result comes out. Merz declared absolutely emphatically, under no circumstances would he make a coalition with the AfD.

‘Centrifugal Disintegration’ of the EU

So, I think it is not looking good for the short term, but there are tremendous changes. The whole EU is in a process of a centrifugal disintegration. If you look at

Hungary, Slovakia, and now Romania, where they just annulled the election—which is incredible; it’s causing a huge uproar in Romania. Then in Croatia, the anti-European Union candidate just won with a 75% majority. Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni from Italy just went to Mar-a-Lago, and came back and said she will represent Trump’s views in Europe. France is de facto without a government, a very unstable situation. And that makes Germany aligned only with the Baltic countries, Poland, and the Scandinavian countries. But under certain circumstances, I think the EU may even detonate, which in my view would not be a bad thing, because the EU has very much moved away from representing the interests of its members.

So, what will happen is as open a question as you said for the United States, because we are experiencing right now a tectonic change, where 500 years of colonialism is coming to an end. The BRICS countries are trying to create a system which allows for the economic development of the Global South. And that is the other big question, where I would like to give it back to you, because Trump has moved into the White House with a completely changed world situation as compared to four years ago when he left. Now you have the BRICS countries—Indonesia and Nigeria just joined them—and they already have a larger GDP than the G7. Trump, unfortunately, just said that he would impose 100% tariffs on the BRICS countries if they would dare to even consider de-dollarization. So, what is your comment on all of these questions?

The short answer—obviously it’s a long answer—but the short answer is that I think it is very much an open question, and it depends a lot on people of good will and concepts of how to shape this. Because I think we are experiencing an incredible transformation which is unprecedented in history.

Wilkerson: I think you’re absolutely right about that, too. I think you know my geopolitical theory, that we are now reversing the shift of some 500 years. The power was in the East for 3,000 years with all the empires, the Mogul, the Mongol, the Ottoman. The British came in and spawned us, and power went to the West. I think it’s shifting back now; inexorably shifting back with China as the magnet pulling that power back. China’s attitude, though, is what I call the “ASEAN attitude.” It is not an attitude of war; it’s not an attitude of sanctions. How many countries is China at war with, and how many countries does China have sanctions on? As far as I know, none. So, it’s not benign, but it’s cer-

tainly not the mirror image of the West trying desperately to hold on to its imperial power and contesting China’s place if it can. I think that’s the tension in the world that’s got the Empire so upset and so willing to do almost anything.

Inside the Empire

But you’ve raised a lot of issues there. Let me try to touch on just a couple of them from my perspective here, looking at the Empire from the inside. First, I think this power-shift that they intuit is, as you intimated, to a certain extent being orchestrated behind the scenes by BlackRock, Vanguard, State Street, and other similar Davos, I call them Davos players; the Davos crowd. They’re always watching what’s happening, like the Rothschilds of old, or the J.P. Morgans of old. They’re watching what’s happening, and they’re prepared to shift flags wherever they need to shift flags, and shift money, too, given the powers that look to them like they’re prevailing. We’ve got some of those people in Trump’s menagerie now. I would put Peter Thiel in that group; I would almost put Elon Musk in that group, although he’s almost as inscrutable at times as Donald Trump himself. So, there’s a lot of money. Always follow the money to see where the Empire is going—up, down or whatever, behind the curtains, as it were, orchestrating some of this. I have no idea what their real ultimate goal is, other than to be on the winning side with the most bucks in their pocket when the power does decidedly shift.

Now, this could take a very long time, so there are going to be a lot of injured parties amongst those who are contesting, as there were before, when power was shifting the other way. Look at what we did after Ferdinand and Isabella dispatched their ships to the so-called New World. We raped an entire hemisphere for its gold and silver and jewels and so forth; and that’s created the empires. Spain was so contaminated that its guild structure fell apart, a very sophisticated guild structure that orchestrated everything from ceramics to painting. And it fell apart because everyone was so polluted with the gold and silver and jewels and other things that came back through rapine and pillage and plunder from the New World.

Is something like that contemplated today? Not in those gross terms, like we’re seeing in Gaza, which is every bit a repetition of Pizarro or any of the conquerors who went in and ripped up the Amerindians in our hemisphere. But it’s going to be more sophisticated, because we have become more sophisticated in the way

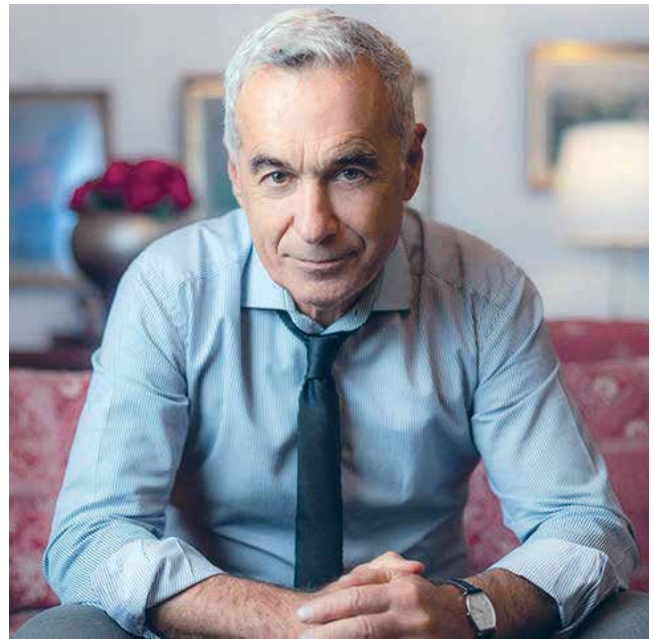
we murder people, in the way we kill people, in the way we disenfranchise people, and so forth.

So, that general tapestry has to be dealt with, I think, as we try to figure out where we go, on a daily, weekly, monthly basis in terms of strategy, geopolitics or whatever, to make this a better situation than it currently is—because I think it’s going to get worse. I told someone yesterday, who asked me what to do, and we were talking about how you should react to some of the things that Speaker Mike Johnson in the House of Representatives here wants to do. Some of those things are very draconian, and very undemocratic, and very unconstitutional, not the least of which is his desire to make Christianity the national religion and have the armed forces of the United States protect that religion. I have no doubt that in order to get the political value out of that, if it were to occur, Trump would go along with it. He is very adroit at using religious forces in this country, which are rampant again; you might call this the fourth or the fifth Great Awakening in America. If you are familiar with the previous Great Awakenings, they were very tumultuous periods. They brought about Prohibition, for example. Wow! That was the beginning, really, of organized crime in the United States: Prohibition.

‘Batten Down the Hatches’

So, these things that are happening, I told this particular woman, “You know, these are hurricane-force winds, so you have to really batten down the hatches, if you’re going to continue what you’re doing, and try to change some of these more injurious impacts that Trump might have and the Congress might have.” I told her: “You’ve got to realize, all three branches of the United States Government—the Supreme Court, the Legislature, and the Executive—are now in the hands, to a certain extent, of Donald Trump. If not Donald Trump, the Republican Party, which is as desperate to do these things as he is; probably more so, on the more draconian measures. Not a good world to be wading into,” I told her. “But if you’re serious, and you want to do things that are positive, here are some things I think you could do.” She’s working primarily on some sort of recognition of the disaster we’ve created in the Levant, and that’s her motivating force right now.

But it’s going to be extremely difficult to deal with Ukraine, to deal with Gaza and the aftermath, to deal with the Levant in general, to deal with Syria. I had a conversation the other day with a Vatican individual, who was telling me about Călin Georgescu’s turmoil in



Călin Georgescu Facebook page

Călin Georgescu, Romanian Presidential candidate.

Romania. When he finished, I said: “Do you know that the United States is in there, trying to make sure that they don’t get another Viktor Orbán? Trying to make sure that they don’t get someone elected in Romania who will take Romania out of NATO possibly? They’re doing the same in Georgia. Do you know that a Congressman sent a letter to Secretary of State Marco Rubio, detailing by name and corporation the people who are associated with the Dream Party in Georgia, tenuously holding onto power there, and trying to maintain a balanced foreign and security policy? Balanced with respect to the EU and Washington and NATO, and Moscow on the other hand? Unelected? Trying to get them undermined and thrown out of office, and get people in there who will be totally on the EU-Washington-NATO side?” It’s happening in Moldova to a lesser extent. This is what the Empire is doing right now to try and foment trouble that will help it to do what it wants to do in regard to, ultimately, of course, China. That means stopping Europe from doing anything meaningful trade-wise, culture-wise, intelligence-wise, whatever, with China. And that’s part of the motivation for all this action that is contemplated here.

Zepp-LaRouche: Since you mentioned Romania, don’t you think this has something to do with the intention to build up the military base in Romania to be the largest NATO base in Europe? There is even a former

EU Commissioner, Thierry Breton, who said if the AfD wins in Germany, we will do to Germany what we just did in Romania, in other words, annul the election.

In a certain sense, it would be funny if it wouldn't be so tragic for the Romanian people. But I think it is with these things like with all the other things: If you look at what happened at the end of the Cold War, according to Jack Matlock and others—but Jack Matlock [last U.S. Ambassador to the USSR] he has definitely confirmed, as an eyewitness, that there were all these promises given to Gorbachev not to expand NATO to the East, and that there was no threat from the Soviet Union, even in the years before the collapse of the Soviet Union actually occurred. There would have been the chance to start a peace order for the 21st Century. But then the neocons came, and they started all these policies: expansion of NATO, regime-change, color revolution, and so forth. If you look at the net result, more than 30 years later, what has it led to?

Has Fukuyama's statement about the "end of history," which was the idea that every country on the planet would become a neoliberal Western democracy, has that succeeded? No, obviously not, because all of these policies had a tremendous blowback. And the result is that the entire Global South, which has become the Global Majority, has turned against the West. And such practices as annulling elections and not respecting the will of the population, these things may be successful in the short term, but this blowback will continue.

And what puzzles me is that these so-called establishments seem to be completely incapable of ever reflecting that it is their policies which cause all these results which they hate. What is your take on that?

Wilkerson: Again, you've described it quite accurately. I was there. I was there, when Powell turned to me and said, "I'm going to be a different Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. I'm going to be a Chairman that a lot of people will find too powerful. Not only am I going to implement the changes that the Goldwater-



Mikhail Gorbachev, former Soviet President.

Nichols Act made in the chairmanship, making me the sole military advisor for the first time in the history of the United States." A head of the military, *the* head of the military, was made the sole military advisor to the national command authorities: the Secretary of Defense, the National Security Council, and the President of the United States. It made him a very powerful individual. And he said, "I'm going to take advantage of that." The very first thing he did, in terms of taking advantage of it, was that he reformed and revolutionized the

Joint Staff. He made the Joint Staff, about 2,400 officers, the most competent military staff in the American military establishment. It had been the worst, because all the services—Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps, and so forth—sent their best officers to their own staffs, and sent the detritus to the Joint Staff. He changed that almost overnight. The best people began to come to Washington, because they otherwise couldn't get promoted.

So, it just revolutionized the Pentagon in terms of genius at work on strategy and such. And the architecture that we designed for the future was an architecture that included Russia, fully, in the European security arrangement, fully included them as a partner. The process would be methodical; it would be slow. There would be checks at every point along the way. But in terms of Secretary of State James Baker and Soviet Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze and President George H.W. Bush and others involved in the conversations, and certainly Colin Powell—People forget, he was National Security Advisor, and before that Deputy National Security Advisor to President Ronald Reagan for the last two years. So, he was *there* in St. Catherine's Palace; he was *there* on Long Island when Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev and H.W., and Reagan in the beginning, were doing what they were doing: bringing an end to the Cold War. And the guy who did that was not Ronald Reagan, it was not Star Wars, it was not the Empire: It was Mikhail Gorbachev that brought it in. And it was a little bit tumultuous, because he was the person who did that, and he had a lot of opponents.



UN Photo/Sophia Paris

Colin Powell, former U.S. Secretary of State.

‘The Contamination of Our Dream’

All of our people walked in: Larry Summers, Goldman Sachs, you name it, and ripped and pillaged and had fire sales in Moscow, selling all the old Communist assets to oligarchs, and making *huge fees* for themselves. That began the contamination of our dream; that began it. And Vladimir Putin was watching all of that. A smart man was watching all of that, and began, I think, to make a commitment to himself, that when he got into real power, he would change that.

So, we started this dynamic that was antagonistic very early. And then along came President Bill Clinton; got his committee together of military defense contractors to ask them if NATO should be expanded, and if the Partnership for Peace should be adulterated and changed, and should be mainly the progress for new countries to make it into NATO. And they came back and said, “Wonderful idea, Mr. President, we can make a fortune selling F-16s to Poland and Finland and everybody else we can do it with.”

That contaminated the whole process. So, you’re right. The neoconservatives were behind that, lusting for this policy. They wanted this policy. And that contaminated everything we wanted to do.

Zepp-LaRouche: What you’re saying is extremely important, but it’s especially important for Germany, because I am still not getting over what happened. You would think that with the guilt of the Germans in the

Second World War—and I’m not saying the Germans are the only ones who were guilty for the Second World War, but they had a good share [of the guilt]—that they would feel a certain thankfulness about the peaceful circumstances of the German unification. Russia agreed to the unification of Germany and that Germany could be part of NATO. However, according to the Two Plus Four Treaty, no foreign troops could be stationed on the territory of the former German Democratic Republic [GDR, or East Germany], which is being violated right now with a new NATO headquarters in Rostock for the Baltic Sea. But, basically, you would think that the German people would have some thankfulness to Russia about the circumstances of the peaceful unification. And I know the people in East Germany are thinking completely differently from the people in West Germany.

But the point is, right now, because of the manipulation, of the “nudging” of the public opinion, of the control of the “narrative,” right now you cannot even say in Germany any more that there is a prehistory to what happened on the 24th of February 2022. You’re not allowed to say that this was not Russia which invaded unprovoked. As a matter of fact, every politician has to preface his sentences by saying “the unprovoked war of aggression against international law by Putin,” rather—

Wilkerson: Incidentally, it’s the same here, for every politician having to lead off with “On Oct. 7, a heinous terrorist attack took place against Israel.”

Zepp-LaRouche: Yeah, but in the case of this German situation, I think it’s really crucial that we somehow— I think all the eyewitnesses, like you and Jack Matlock and others, they should really sit down and write down their memories fast, because there is a gigantic effort to rewrite history to make it fit the present NATO geopolitical narrative.

Historical Truth

But I believe, if you don’t start with historical truth—and there is such a thing as historical truth, which can be unearthed. But now “truth” is a word which immediately puts you in the category of being a dictator or some autocratic person. That’s beside the

point, but I really think, for the German people it would be so important to revive and be conscious again of what happened in this entire period since 1945, with the German unification. Because if this narrative is there, I think we are in danger of going again in the totally wrong direction.

Wilkerson: Well, you could imagine how I feel, and how, I must say, Powell felt, to the moment he passed. We were enmeshed with German Chancellor Helmut Kohl and French President François Mitterrand and British Prime Ministers John Major and Maggie Thatcher, originally, in an argument in which Helmut Kohl was worried, I could say, worried sick, about not only the projected \$80 billion U.S. price tag for reunification, but for what reunification would mean, and staying in NATO, for Russia. And he was very fearful of that! He was very fearful of the signal he was going to send to Moscow, even with Gorbachev.

And so, one of the people that François Mitterrand and Powell, and a number of other people, including the President, had to convince, was Helmut Kohl, not only because of the cost, as I said, but because of the political ramifications. And I remember looking somewhere that the cost had actually doubled in terms of the actual cost for Germany, for reunification. But at that time, they were saying \$80 billion was the minimum, including moving the capital from Bonn to Berlin, and so forth. But it came off!

And I have to say, in 1992 and 1993, all the way up to the “accession to the throne” if you will, of William Clinton in Washington, there was euphoria in Washington. There was absolute euphoria! The Cold War was not only over, but we were going to be partners in ensuring the security of not only North America, but Europe. And Russia was going to be, for the first time since Russian Empress Catherine [the Great]—trying a number of times in between Catherine and the present—coming into Europe in a meaningful, positive way. You know, her court spoke French! You couldn’t operate in Catherine’s court unless you spoke French. It was actually going to happen; we thought it was actually going to happen. And then, as you said, it was contaminated. It was contaminated by the Europeans, but at our beck and call most of the time.



Bundesbildstelle

Chancellor Helmut Kohl (left) and President Bill Clinton.

Now, we see countries that had vouchsafed, and found endearing, their neutrality, having joined NATO!—countries I never thought would come into NATO. And I think to their ultimate detriment, overall, and they’re going to find that out in the next decade.

A New Security Architecture for Europe

We need a new security architecture for Europe, and it needs to be European-centered, and it needs to probably shed NATO. I would have said that in ’92 and ’93, because we were actually talking about, as we talked about these other euphoric things, and we were talking with the Germans and the French, the British, and others about this, too: How about a European security identity? And initially the portion that we were going to be responsible for in the Pentagon was a brigade of about 3,000 Europeans, made up of Germans, French, and whoever else the Europeans wanted to put into it, that would be independent of NATO. It would operate on European security matters, like, for example, oh yes, the Balkans!—which came up as a real problem. And it would be independent of the structure of NATO, independent of the monies of NATO, independent of the arms of NATO—totally independent. And it would operate under European command, on European security issues.

And guess who chickened out of that? The Europeans!

But, you might guess this, too, there was an element,

a neoconservative element working on them throughout this—and we didn't discover this until about late '94—on convincing the Europeans, and working on influencing their elections to get people elected (Norwegian Prime Minister Jens Stoltenberg was one of their first successes) that would believe the same way they believed. That is to say, this is a bad idea. We need to keep NATO and we need to expand NATO. So it all got contaminated. But there were many strains, many threads of that contamination, on both sides of the Atlantic.

Zepp-LaRouche: We produced “The Lost Chance of 1989” [documentary](#) because my late husband, Lyndon LaRouche, in 1984, had forecast that the Soviet Union would collapse. He said then, if the Soviet Union would stay with their then-policies, the policies they had at that time, which were a sort of primitive accumulation against the physical economy, that they would collapse in five years. Now, we expected this to happen, and we saw in 1988, when the economic difficulties of the Comecon became really very strong, we went to Berlin, and he made a [statement](#) at the Kempinski Bristol Hotel, predicting the soon-to-happen unification of Germany, and proposing that the capital of the unified Germany be Berlin, and that the United States and Western Europe should work to modernize Poland as an example of how to modernize the other Comecon countries with Western technologies.

The ‘Productive Triangle’

Now, this was one year before the Wall came down, and nobody thought it would happen, but he was absolutely on the mark. And when the Wall actually came down, we proposed a European “Productive Triangle,” outlined by Lyndon LaRouche in December 1990 in a [memorandum](#). The idea was to take the economic zone from Paris-Berlin-Vienna, which was the highest concentration of middle-level industrial power in the world at that time, and then modernize it with injections of nuclear energy, of fast train systems, and then bring development corridors to Eastern Europe, to Warsaw, to Kiev, to Moscow, to the Balkans, and that way, in a peaceful way, modernize the economies of the Comecon.

And when the Wall came [down](#), we were the only ones who had the conception of what to do. Even the German government admitted in the papers they published several years later, that they actually did not have a plan for what to do in the case of German unification,

despite the fact that that was the policy issue number one of the entire German foreign policy in the entire postwar period! And then we approached all of the governments, and we went to the Leipzig Trade Fair, and we talked to the CEOs of the large corporations, and they said, “This is an excellent plan. This is exactly what should be done, but it’s so big that it does require governments to do it.” And then, naturally, the Bush administration didn’t want to do it, because they just thought that Germany should not tie up with Russia. Thatcher started the “Fourth Reich” campaign against poor Kohl, saying he was everything but a Hitler. Mitterrand didn’t want Germany to be strong, and insisted that the deutschmark currency had to be given up for the French to agree to the unification.

So, in this booklet about the “The Lost Chance of 1989,” in [German](#) language or [English](#), this is all written down. I will try to send you a copy, if you like, because I would like your comment on some of the points. Because I think it would be *extremely* important to reconstruct this period of history, and I know that there are many people, especially in East Germany, who now have a completely different view. They had been for the peaceful ending of the GDR at the time, but they are now looking back, and they say, “Oh, what actually happened was a colonialist takeover of East Germany,” and now they feel deprived of their entire life’s work, of their history, and they’re extremely bitter. And I think to rework this part of history, and actually reconstruct what actually did happen, I know that they would like to enter a dialogue with you and other people. What do you think?

Wilkerson: I think your recitation of history there is pretty darn accurate! Let me tell you, in the bowels of the Central Intelligence Agency, down where the Sovietologists worked, in '81 and '82, they were saying the same thing you just said: '88 was their target year for the collapse of the Soviet Union, but they said a range of '88 to '92.

Where did that go? It went straight to Bill Casey, Director of the CIA. One of the Sovietologists that Bill Casey listened to in the bowels of the CIA, was Bob Gates, later to be Secretary of Defense, and a Director of the CIA. But the first time his name was submitted to the Congress for approval, they wouldn’t approve it! So, his name was withdrawn. The reason they wouldn’t approve it, is a bunch of these Sovietologists went over to the Congress and talked about

Bob Gates and what he'd done. And what he did was, he went to Casey, the Director, and he said: "I'll give you an appraisal of the Soviet Union that makes them look 10 feet tall." That way it'll support Ronald Reagan's first-term arms buildup, which was the largest since World War II. Casey said, "Good deal, let's go over." And they went over and talked to President Reagan, and they convinced him that he was right and the arms deal could be supported by this massive intelligence estimate, which would go over to the Congress in classified version, and they could see it, and understand just how tall the Soviet Union was, when down in the bottom of the CIA, they were saying, it's collapsing! It's falling apart!

Well, he got his arms buildup, and that got him, he thought, I think—and as I said, Powell was his Deputy and then his National Security Advisor for the last two years, and sort of corroborated this for me—that got Reagan to thinking that his arms buildup and his Star Wars idea, and all that, had brought the Soviet Union down, at least in part, when in fact, what had brought the Soviet Union down was Mikhail Gorbachev recognizing the dire economic straits that the Soviet Union was in! And other things, too, as you iterated.

So, this is a contaminated process from the very beginning, in terms of the Empire's dealings with the Soviet Union. That only became uncontaminated, if you will, when they actually did collapse, and Mikhail Gorbachev became a partner, with Eduard Shevardnadze helping him, to negotiate with us in a meaningful, and non-deceitful way, straightforwardly, the end of the Cold War.

How the Future Was Ruined

And then we ruined it, as we said before. We jumped in and ruined it. I'm not saying there weren't some parties on the other side that might have helped. But I think, predominantly, the Empire and the neo-conservative philosophy within that Empire, ruined this entire possible future. And that's the real shame,



White House Photographic Collection
President Ronald Reagan

because the world could have been a very different place: a place of comity, collaboration, and cooperation, starting with Europe, moving out to confront climate change in a decisive way, and dealing with the fact that we are— It wouldn't have happened; we wouldn't have had this new nuclear arms race, if that had happened.

The Pentagon presented to H.W. Bush an assessment of the necessary nuclear weapons for the United States that was less than 2,000. We had 60,000, between us, Moscow and Washington; 60,000. We were going down rapidly to about 5,000 each, which is roughly what we have now. We stopped, but ultimately, we were going down

to 2,000. And here's the real kicker: We had a study that showed that we could live with—if we could show the other nuclear weapons states to live with the same deal—we could live with 200 to 300. Think what a safer world that would be, had we been able to achieve that!

Zepp-LaRouche: What do you think Trump will do with the previous commitment that U.S. medium-range missiles would be put into Germany, starting in 2026?

Wilkerson: That's going to be something that I think he may challenge. I'm not sure, but I think he may challenge that, and he may change that. He may change the whole relationship that the trans-Atlantic relationship, if you will, in terms of national security and European security represents right now. But I don't know how. And I've heard some of the things that Secretary of Defense nominee Pete Hegseth has said in the past, for example. They don't give me a lot of hope, because it looks more like Hegseth will be an "Aye-aye, three bags full" man for Trump. In other words, Trump'll say, "Do it," and he'll do it.

But there are people in the Pentagon who understand that the situation for the Empire in a military sense is not a good one. There are people, for example, who understand that if we suddenly got into a war with Iran, we'd probably lose, and we'd have to go,

and lose, in terms of the objective, which would be to destroy Iran's nuclear program. We wouldn't do it. It would be impossible to do it by air. And so, we have to make a choice: Do we invade and root out their nuclear program and end it? In that case, it'd be ten years, trillions of dollars, and we probably would have a bigger "Iraq" at the end of it—a disaster, in other words. And we would set the Levant aflame, again. No telling what Türkiye would do in that regard. But these are questions that are being asked right now, amongst my colleagues and compatriots, who understand the U.S. military, understand how Donald Trump might not know these things. And is anybody going to tell him these things?

Trump's Plans for the Levant

I think he has an inclination, for example, not to start a war with Iran. Does that mean he's going to negotiate, as I think he's already doing, secretly through Oman, a new nuclear agreement with Iran? Then what's that going to do with his relationship with Bibi? Well, Bibi, he thinks, I believe, will be gone by that time; a new government will be in Jerusalem. What does it mean with Mohammad bin Salman, who now wants to effect a Saudi Arabian impact all across the Levant?—which is what he's wanted to do all along, ever since he took power, really, and put all kinds of money behind it. His relationship with Lebanese President Joseph Aoun, right now, is developing sharply, because he sees Lebanon as a resurrected, Eastern Mediterranean Mecca, that is, the northern part of this new Levant, that he's going to create. And he probably sees Ankara as his only antagonist in this, and is going to deal with them delicately and carefully, because they would be a real antagonist, and Turkish President Erdoğan has always wanted to be the leader of the Muslim world—Sunni, Shi'a—the whole Muslim world. I think MBS [Mohammad bin Salman] believes that's *his* right, not Erdoğan's; so that could be a point of tension.

Trump is going to deal with this on a transactional basis, and we're going to wind up seeing, probably, a new Abraham Accord, although it won't be an Abraham Accord; it will be a Trump Accord. And it won't have—here's my fear—it won't have a viable Palestinian state. It'll say it does, but it won't have a viable Palestinian state as a part of it. And my concern is that underneath all of this, Israel will have consolidated its greater writ on the West Bank, in the Golan completely, probably in all of Gaza, and present it as a *fait accompli* to whatever agreement is achieved.

Zepp-LaRouche: Well, let me approach this strategic question from a slightly different angle. A few years ago, the five nuclear weapons states in the UN Security Council agreed that [nuclear war cannot be won](#) and therefore must never be fought, and, if one starts with that, and also the consideration of how close we came, and maybe still are, to the potential of the Ukraine war going completely out of whack, with the ATACMS reaching deep into the territory of Russia; with the potential of a war in the Middle East between Israel and Iran—I don't want to elaborate on the details of it. But I have been advocating the view that one should start from the top, and basically say that we absolutely must prevent nuclear war, because nobody would survive it. The likelihood that it would lead to a nuclear winter is more certain than the opposite.

The Power of Reason

Therefore, why don't we do what the negotiators of the Peace of Westphalia did? After 150 years of religious war in Europe, they recognized that if the war would continue, there would be absolutely nobody left alive. One-third of everything had been destroyed already, and if the fighting were to continue, there would be no victory for anybody, because they all would be dead.

In light of the danger of nuclear extinction, why don't we aim to create a new security and development architecture, which takes into account the security interest of every single country on the planet? Because I do not believe that a partial order will solve the problem. And I believe that such a new global security *and* development architecture, were there an agreement among the major powers to do that, would require negotiations, as they did in the Peace of Westphalia, where, for four years, the details were hammered out on how to solve the regional and territorial conflicts. The end result was the Peace of Westphalia, which produced principles that were the foundation of international law. Why can we not do something like that now, given the fact that we are the intelligent species? We are the only species that can think and change things when they are not right, and we are gifted with the power of reason; and if we cannot bring our affairs on the planet into order, we cannot expect any other species to do it for us.

So, what do you think about such an approach?

Wilkerson: I more or less agree with it. I would counter, though, that Trump has given off vibes, at least,

that what he's going to do, is stop, as Reagan did for a while, our donations to the United Nations, which are dominant, and eventually pull us out of the United Nations. He does not think much of that venue.

Were I king for a day, I would have started out with a demand, and it would have been a demand, that the world's nuclear weapons states meet in Geneva, or some other suitable location, within six months, every one of them, all nine of them—I might even ask some of the aspirants to come, like Iran—and we would sit down, and I would tell them, we must forge a new nuclear weapons treaty regime; it must include all of you, including you, Israel. We know you have nuclear weapons—we gave them to you. It must include every single nuclear-weapons-owning state, and we're going to have some goals!

And those goals are to cut the stockpiles, to stop any kind of research and development on our stockpiles that would make them even more dangerous than they are now (they're dangerous enough right now, thank you very much), and we're going to forge treaties to this effect. And if you want to use sanctions and you want to use pressure, then, go in the back room and threaten these countries, unless they do conform to your wishes with regard to a new multilateral nuclear-weapons-treaty regime. That'd been the first thing I would have done, the very first thing I would have done.

Because, *you're right!* This is the greatest threat to humanity, beyond climate change, and it's in our face! I mean, nuclear weapons are *here!* The button is ready to be pushed! It's the greatest challenge we have, and we need to do something about it.

Zepp-LaRouche: Larry, I would absolutely like to continue that part of the discussion, because I think it is the most important. But given the fact that we are running out of time, I cannot let you off the hook without, naturally, asking you one last question. And that is, what did people know before the Iraq War in 2003, about the existence or nonexistence of the weapons of mass destruction?

Wilkerson: Most of the people in the government that I had contact with, at the Defense Department, at the State Department, believed, however erroneously it turned out to be, that Iraqi President Saddam Hussein did have some residue of weapons left from his previous experiments. They could not believe, especially the military professionals, that he had discarded them all.

Because they knew he knew, he lived in a very dangerous region; he had been in a very bloody war with Iran; he had people in his own country who would overthrow him in a heartbeat, if they thought he was not possessed of the kinds of capabilities he wanted; and that he would, in no way, fashion, or form, get rid of them all—even though there were intelligence people telling us, underneath the covers, so to speak, that they thought, if he had any at all, they were probably being held in safe custody, in Syria and in Sudan. Because, if you recall, the government in Khartoum at the time was very antagonistic to the Empire. And we had evidence to believe that probably chemical and biological weapons software was in Khartoum or somewhere in Sudan. We also had evidence that Syrian President Bashar al-Assad was keeping stocks of chemical weapons that were in fact labeled, “Saddam Hussein's property.”

So, we thought that there was at least a *prima facie* case, a circumstantial case for going to war, but we were opposed to the war. We were opposed to the war, because of the same reason we were opposed to the war in 1991 going any further. And H.W. Bush understood that. We wanted a balance of power in the Gulf, between Iran and Saddam Hussein and Iraq. And if you took out Iraq's capability to be a fulcrum in that balance of power, then you would have to deal with Iran, with no balance of power!—which is exactly what happened!

So, we were against the war.

Zepp-LaRouche: OK. You know, Nancy Pelosi said in a discussion with students that all the people in the intelligence community knew that there were no weapons of mass destruction. Anyway, unfortunately, I have to stop now. One last question to you: What is your advice to the German people, given the specific role, very important role Germany plays for the fate of Europe?

Wilkerson: My advice is, don't follow the Empire like a poodle dog. It's a time for people to stand up on their own. I'm not talking about rampant nationalism, as much as I am talking about your interests, economic and otherwise. And right now, I think that Germany's position has really damaged its otherwise, previously superior economic position, certainly in Europe, and even in the world. And that isn't good for the German people! So, take over responsibility for your own economy and the direction of that economy, and if you want to deal with China, which is *inevitable, inexorable*, deal with China, and Russia, too, for that matter.