

Helga Zepp-LaRouche and Larry Johnson

Breaking Through the Fog of the Unipolar Narratives

The following is an edited transcript of the Feb. 5, 2025 Schiller Institute dialogue between Helga Zepp-LaRouche, founder of the Schiller Institute, and Larry Johnson. Mr. Johnson is a retired CIA analyst and a co-founder of the Veteran Intelligence Professionals for Sanity (VIPS). Subheads have been added. The video is available [here](#).

Helga Zepp-LaRouche: Hello, good day to all of you, I'm very happy to welcome today Larry Johnson, who is a renowned strategic analyst. He is part of the Veteran Intelligence Professionals for Sanity (VIPS) and has many other functions.

I could not have chosen a more dramatic moment than today, because the whole world is in a state of surprise, shock, and bewilderment about what happened when Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu arrived in Washington and gave a press conference together with President Donald Trump, because the whole world was looking at whether or not Trump would put pressure on Prime Minister Netanyahu to implement the second phase of the ceasefire in Gaza, the continuous agreements on the remaining hostages and the other agreements. But instead, the world was really woken up with a shock: Namely, that President Trump said that the United States is intending to take over Gaza and turn it into a Riviera on the Mediterranean.

Now, I was not completely surprised, because we had already known about this plan, which was issued for the first time by Prime Minister Netanyahu's office last May [2024], which has animations of how the

Gaza Strip is supposed to look, with skyscrapers and luxury buildings and so forth. So, we were waiting, full of impatience: Will it be to carry on with the ceasefire process, or will it be this incredible idea which is based on ethnic cleansing of the Palestinians? And, unfortunately, the shock went in the direction of the latter.

So, can you tell us what your view is on this matter?

Johnson: Trump is a pretty confusing individual.



White House

White House press conference of Donald Trump and Benjamin Netanyahu, February 2.

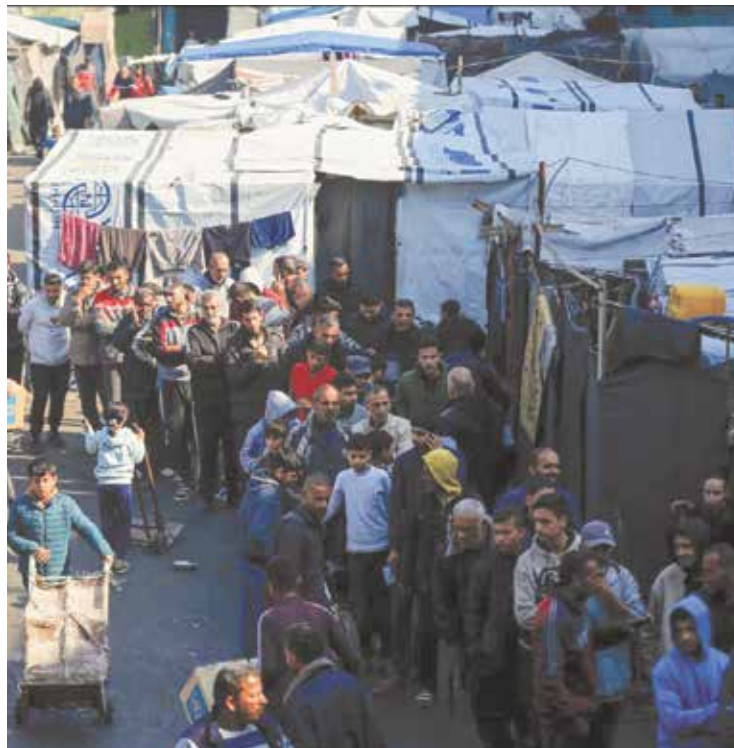
We've seen him send contradictory messages, both on the one hand he's surrounded himself with Christian Zionists, and has taken money from people like Miriam Adelson, widow of Sheldon Adelson, a wealthy Las Vegas figure, and he said, naturally, we're going to do whatever the Israelis want. But, then he put out on his [Truth Social](#) account, economist Jeffrey Sachs saying some really tough, but true things about Bibi Netanyahu. Then he really imposed the ceasefire. And the re-

ality of the ceasefire is that it has allowed the Palestinians in Gaza to return to their shattered homes, or the rubble that's left.

Yesterday, when Trump had said— He's saying some things, but there's no way for him to actually implement them. For example, "The United States is going to take responsibility for Gaza." Well, what does that mean? We're not going to deploy troops to Gaza, to secure it as the Israeli military tried to, because if we do, U.S. soldiers will be killed. Hamas is not going to go away. Trump continues to insist that he's going to forcibly relocate the Palestinians. Good luck with that, because, I guess he— Even in his press conference, he said he would talk to all the Arab nations, the Muslim nations, like they're on board. No, they're not. Saudi Arabia, specifically, came out last night, reiterating that there's not going to be any progress on relations with Israel, until there is a settled Palestinian state, and the rights of the Palestinian people are protected. And they're not about to accept any kind of new Nakba.

Sometimes it makes me wonder what Trump was doing in laying out this rhetoric. In a way, it disarms Netanyahu, because instead of him saying we're going to back Israel to the fullest, and Israel can do whatever it wants in Gaza, he says, no, the United States is going to be responsible, letting down, I think, a marker to Netanyahu, to say, OK, you stay out, we'll take care of it; but this promise to take care of it, he didn't give any public timeline. Maybe he gave some private assurances; we can't rule that out. But we get back to the fundamental issue, that Trump doesn't have the military forces to send there, to start a new war, because at the very time that he's saying that, the news is coming out that plans are under way to withdraw U.S. troops from Syria. And this wouldn't be a matter of just relocating, taking them out of Syria and putting them in Gaza, because these are special operations forces; these are not conventional military.

Trump, at least with respect to the issue of the Palestinian people, shows that he's not doing anything publicly to reassure the Palestinian people that he has their interest at heart. Basically, the plan that he was proposing and talking about sounded an awful lot like the real estate plan that his son-in-law Jared Kushner was proposing eight months ago. So, I don't take away



UNRWA Facebook page

Deir al Balah refugee camp in the Gaza Strip.

from this that any new action is imminent on the part of the United States. And that, if anything, this kind of rhetoric on Trump's part will make it, I think, more difficult for Israel to restart the killing campaign in Gaza, and it will keep the ceasefire intact.

The Eyes of the World Are Watching

Zepp-LaRouche: I'm hopeful that what you say is true, but the problem is that the world has watched this genocide going on now for 15 months, and I was really astonished that Trump could say: Oh, these poor people, they should not go back to this area which is completely destroyed; they should have a better life. He didn't say one word about why this part of the world is so utterly destroyed, and it was, among other things, not only Israeli action, but it was U.S. weapons supply, and backing up Israel before the International Court of Justice. Basically, without the backing of the United States in the UN Security Council, where the U.S. was vetoing every time there was an effort to remedy the situation, this could not have happened—and the whole world knows that!

I'm really concerned that unless there is really a dramatic change which does do justice to the Palestin-

ians, both in Gaza, but also in the West Bank, that—OK, there is the short-term tragedy, but there is also the long-term effect. I have picked up in the last months, increasingly, from countries in the Global South, that the honor and the reputation of the collective West has suffered tremendously, especially because of that attitude in respect to what happened in Gaza. And I'm afraid that if President Trump thinks he can just build a Riviera in Gaza—taking into account what you are saying, that it's not very likely to happen—that will just add to the disgust of the world. And all the neighbors have already rejected it before it has even come to a point of decision.

Also, what Trump is doing in respect to migrants at the Mexican border, which is rough treatment—people are being rounded up, shipped in handcuffs to their respective countries—not exactly a nice picture, which is also seen by the rest of the world. And then, he assumes that the Egyptians and the Jordanians will just take in the migrants. Doesn't he consider that they have security concerns as well? I would like to hear your views on that.

Johnson: Oh yeah, he's ignoring that. I find it difficult to say that he's ignorant of it, because I think one of the errors that the critics of Trump make is they always try to describe him as stupid, shallow—and if he's stupid and shallow, he sure beat the entire Democratic establishment and got elected. And he held off U.S. law enforcement, in the politicization and weaponization of the Department of Justice. So, I give him credit for not being some sort of shallow, ignorant person. That said, he is a terrible public speaker. He never really speaks about his philosophy, his vision, with any kind of—does not demonstrate intellect on that front. It's very simple: It's MAGA. He's going to "Make America Great Again," regardless of what that entails.

But once in a while, he slips out with the truth, just like about a week ago, when he acknowledged that Russia had a legitimate complaint about NATO creeping up on its borders, and admitting that if this was happening to us in the United States, would we react

the same? OK, that sends a good message to Russia.

But, when it comes to the issue of the Palestinian people, I think Trump is intellectually predisposed to embrace the Zionist vision, and yet, he brings to it—There's sort of an element of pragmatism from his standpoint of, well, let's just get these people someplace where they'll have a nice place to live, and then they'll be happy, which shows he understands nothing about the Palestinian people; that they're not a mass, a lump of clay, to be molded as he sees fit. Palestine has a very rich and diverse culture, and there are still Christians among the Palestinians; it's not just a Muslim movement, as is oft portrayed here in the West, in the United States.

Trump and the 'Big Deal'

So, Trump, what ultimately drives him is he wants to be liked, and he wants to do the "big deal." To that extent, we also need to look at what he said about Iran, in the context of discussing Israel. He was strong about "Iran will not have a nuclear weapon." Well, the reality is, the Ayatollah Ali Khamenei has not given permission; has not lifted the fatwa to allow the construction of a nuclear weapon in Iran. He has withstood that, and then withstood the internal pressure to do so.

And then, the agreement that was signed on the 17th of January, the security agreement between Russia and Iran, has made the likelihood of

Iran constructing a nuclear weapon even more remote, because Russia was pledging support on nuclear energy projects. But at the same time, Russia is not about to lend its hand in allowing Iran to build a nuclear weapon. So, Trump saying that, I think is actually a way—it defuses the likelihood that Israel is going to take unilateral action to attack Iran, which they have been threatening to do, and been pressuring to do. So, I take Trump's rhetoric on that as a sign that he's getting it out in public, yeah, OK, we'll do something if something happens, but there's no evidence.

Now, the opposition group in Iran, which I guarantee you is funded in part by USAID—they certainly receive some money from them, and from the CIA—is circulating false intelligence claiming that Iran is al-



Khamenei.ir

Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei: No nuclear weapons.



UN/Loey Felipe

Francesca Albanese, UN Special Rapporteur on the occupied Palestinian territories.

ready rapidly building a very crude nuclear bomb, one that can't fit on a missile; that it's a bomb that can be dropped by a plane. This is part of, if you will, the CIA working against Trump, to try to create a pretext that will force Trump's hand to attack Iran. So, there is a little bit of four-D chess going on here; that it's not just a one-sided push by Trump, because the intelligence community has not backed off in its desire to try to start a war with Iran.

Zepp-LaRouche: There is another thing to consider, and that is that every time a country thinks it is the only relevant one, the superior one, things go in an awfully wrong direction. And given the fact that I'm talking as a German, I think— It doesn't matter which country it is. If its people think they're better than others, it creates the seed of a potential catastrophe.

I think the only way the world will eventually get into a peaceful development is if the rightful demand of every single country on the planet to have its security interests protected and its right to development is fulfilled. If there is no security, maybe the present leadership of Hamas is weakened, the present leadership of Hezbollah is weakened, and you can decapitate many individuals, but what it breeds is a continuous hatred; a continuous wish for revenge.

If I were an adviser to President Trump (which I'm obviously not)— But there was today a very powerful

press conference, given by [Francesca Albanese](#). She is a UN representative for human rights, the UN Special Rapporteur on the Occupied Palestinian Territories. She gave an account of the history of the Nakba of 1948, the Arab-Israeli War of 1967, and the various incredible torments the Palestinians have gone through. I think President Trump would be well-advised to not only listen to the Israeli side—because obviously, he has a lot of powerful Israeli friends—but I personally think if he doesn't equally open his mind and his ear to the other side, how can he make America be a force for good in the world again, which is the only way America could be great again? What do you think?

The Unipolar World Is No More

Johnson: I fully agree with you. Now, again, this gets back to Trump and the Trump administration sending mixed signals. Last Monday, in an interview with Megyn Kelly, newly-installed Secretary of State Marco Rubio said that the United States could no longer pretend to be the unipolar leader of the world; it had to recognize that there were different—he used the phrase “multipolar.” The fact that he's acknowledging that is a good sign. Now, that doesn't translate yet into action. However, let's also recognize that Trump himself came out and threatened BRICS. That's important, because the previous administration under President Joe Biden, they didn't say a word at all about BRICS. They wouldn't even recognize it. It sort of reminded me of—I guess the Biden administration was acting like a character in the Harry Potter movies, where they wouldn't say the name “Lord Voldemort”: You can't say that; you can't say “BRICS.” Well, Trump came out and said “BRICS.” And then he got it wrong, claiming that Spain was a member of BRICS: No, the “S” stands for South Africa.

But, in mentioning it, he was acknowledging that BRICS actually is an alternative to the U.S. economic hegemony, and is acknowledging that it is a threat. And the United States has quite a bit of leverage to create some real mayhem in this. Brazil, for example, is probably the weakest link in that chain. So, I fully anticipate that the CIA, if it's not already doing so, will step up covert actions to disrupt Brazil's ability—because this year Brazil is in charge; it's got the presidency of BRICS—the United States is going to do everything, I think, in its power to sabotage. India is another one that's likely to face a lot of heat, because it does have fairly strong economic relations with the United States,



State Department/Freddie Everett

U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio.

and as such has some vulnerability there. China is a major trading partner of the United States, but it has been shifting away, trying to move more of its activity into the Global South. It has cut off trade in rare earth minerals that they use that are critical for production in the U.S. defense industry. And China, frankly, is sick and tired of being bullied. They're not going to be bullied by the United States.

So, what Trump is facing is that his actions and the actions of the United States are at least strengthening the resolve of other BRICS nations, and the newly installed BRICS members, like Indonesia. Trump recognizes that the multipolar world exists. I don't think he's yet figured out a strategy for what to do, other than to threaten it. And he said he's going to impose 100% tariffs on any country [that seeks to replace the U.S. dollar as the world's reserve currency]. Well, number one, I forgot to mention this in some of the analytical pieces I've written, but Trump doesn't have power as President to unilaterally impose tariffs; tariff is a function of the U.S. Congress. He can propose legislation, and once that gets into the legislative process, you've got a lot of opportunities for that to get derailed, because there are companies here in the United States that have business interests in several of the BRICS nations, that would see their economic benefits being derailed.

The other aspect of it is that most of the BRICS nations—the only ones that are active, big traders with the United States—are China and India. Everybody else is not that critical to the U.S.

Zepp-LaRouche: I think Trump's understanding of the use of tariffs needs to be more educated, because tariffs, according to the American System of economy, of Alexander Hamilton, of Friedrich List, of Henry C. Carey, whenever there was a discussion of tariffs, they were meant to protect the nascent, young economies against the influence of free trade, which would basically run these economies over and not allow them to grow. But tariffs are not a wise policy in a complicated, international relationship among states, and you already see that Trump had to pull back on the tariffs with Mexico, with Canada, because, as I found out, that some of the production of cars' spare parts goes back and forth across the border six, seven, eight times. So, it would increase the cost of the product; in cars it would make it \$3,000 on average more expensive; SUVs even \$6-7,000 more expensive—and other goods. So, it would increase the inflation. And, naturally, the alternative— We have promoted in the Schiller Institute, a completely different approach to this question.

A Real Solution to the Migrant Crisis

The migrant question is obviously one of the major topics of the world today. Where do these migrants come from? They come from—in the Middle East—from interventionist wars, basically after 9/11: Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria, Libya; that's why we have millions of migrants from the Middle East. In Africa and Latin America, the migrants are fleeing mainly from poverty, a poverty which has been imposed by the present post-war system—which was OK for the collective West, but it was not OK for the countries of the Global South. And, therefore, now you have millions of people who are trying to evade hunger, lack of freshwater, a lack of health systems. So, if you want to address the migrant question, even if you build a wall where no human being and not a fly can get through, or you use Frontex in the Mediterranean to push back refugees who are then drowning in the Mediterranean—this is not a solution!

Why not take [another approach](#)? China and the BRICS countries are now turning to the Global South, because they're being cut out by the United States and by the EU—they impose sanctions, they do all kinds of things—so China is turning to the Global South and building up productive trade relations with the countries of Africa, Asia, and Latin America. Why is the United States not so smart? Trump could really go in that direction, to basically say, why don't we develop these countries together, with China?



CC/David Stanley

The Miraflores locks on the Panama Canal.

The previous administration was trying so hard to prevent China from having any influence in Latin America. Nevertheless, the Chancay deep-water port in Peru has been built. If the United States would just stop thinking geopolitically and say, if we, together with China, work on all of these projects, the refugees would stay home, and they would help to build up their countries!— I think that that’s the only way we will get out of this crisis.

Do you think there’s any potential that this could happen with the Trump administration, or not?

Johnson: No. I think you’re generous in your optimism, Helga, but I think there’s zero chance of that happening. Look at what Trump has already done with respect to Panama: He comes into office making this, “Panama, my God! The Chinese are everywhere!” Well, I’ve done a lot of work in Panama, investigating product counterfeiting, some money-laundering issues. I worked with one of the big banks down there helping to do due diligence on e-commerce clients. I know the area. The Chinese have been there for 30 years! The Chinese have had the contract, managing the ports that are in the city of Colón, the Colón free trade zone; there are at least three major container ports on the north end of the Canal. There’s at least one major container port on the south end. Well, the Chinese have been running that for well over 30 years. And Trump didn’t make an issue of that, at all, when he was for the first time in office. So, all of a sudden, now, we’ve got to stop the Chinese.

If Panama goes through to reportedly agree that OK, it’s going to suspend this contract with the Hong Kong companies that will take away their management responsibility, it would not surprise me that the Chinese would say, OK, we’re taking all of our cranes, and we’re going home. And they will pull out the infrastructure that they’ve built in those ports. Well, if that happens, it will be a disaster! Not only for the Panamanian economy, but for the economies of Central and South America, because the volume of products, we’re talking— I would estimate it’s well over \$1 trillion worth of products that flow through the Panama Canal, and are deposited in the Colón free trade zone, that are sold— We have wholesalers, people that are selling everything from televisions to

Nike sneakers, to Under Armor shirts, and those are resold to merchants that come in from Central America, from the Caribbean, from South America. They’ll buy it and then it’s shipped out to those countries, and then it’s resold in the local stores. So, there’s an enormous amount of commerce there.

The United States has decided that it’s going to try to confront the Chinese, but doing it by threat and bullying is simply reinforcing the bad old image of the United States as this aggressive imperialist. And the Chinese, one thing I’ve noticed in observing their actions with other countries, as well as the Russians, when they’re dealing with people from Africa, or other parts of Asia, or Central and South America, they don’t treat ’em like they’re the “little brown people.” They’re not condescending toward them. They treat them as equals, they treat them with respect, and these people, they recognize that. It goes back to something you said earlier, with reference to the Middle East about what has happened to the U.S. reputation, and to Israel’s reputation, that neither country has earned more respect. They are derided, condemned internationally—really becoming more isolated diplomatically.

So, Trump’s efforts to take on China, first in Panama— But the Chinese have been expanding their economic power; they’ve been using the diplomacy of economics, not the diplomacy of guns and cannons.

What Is Friendship?

Zepp-LaRouche: If one looks objectively at this dynamic, the Chinese for a long time, and the Russians

before that—you know, the Russians were supporting the countries of the Global South in their struggles for independence, and many countries hold the memory of that Russian support very highly; they're grateful that Russia supported their independence. Now, in the recent period, Russia has offered nuclear energy, many other science projects; the Chinese have, since they put the Belt and Road Initiative on the agenda 12 years ago, they have gained an enormous amount, not only of influence, but also of friendship. Many leaders in Africa, or in Asia, they say that Churchill's word that countries have only interests and no friends is not true, because they have experienced true friendship. Because, what is friendship? When you do something for the other, which helps this other person or country to prosper or benefit—that is the root of friendship.

Unfortunately, the effort by the United States to create the unipolar world, or as Rear Adm. Thomas Buchanan said recently in a meeting with the CSIS [Center for Strategic and International Studies], that the United States has the right to make a preemptive tactical nuclear war in order to keep that hegemony—That goes along with building almost 1,000 military bases around the world, and the countries that have been on the receiving side of these bases, well, they've had certain benefits, but to be a security asset for the United States does not mean these economies are being built up. It's like tourism: it's something which profits the one who has the franchise, but not the country.

So, wouldn't it be time for the United States to review its model? That obviously, the idea to try to control the world on the basis of hegemony with military means, pressure, the CIA, the USAID (which now, fortunately, has been wiped out), wouldn't it be better to look at the Chinese model and say, maybe they're doing something right, which is gaining them influence, getting friends among these countries? And maybe the United States could go back to its own tradition of John Quincy Adams, for example, who famously said it's not the purpose of the United States to go abroad to chase monsters, but to build alliances with partners. What do you think? Is there a potential to get the United States back on such a track?

Johnson: I don't think so. And what you're talking about is a very sane, rational, intelligent approach. I witnessed a conversation yesterday between a young guy, who is a brilliant analyst, and he was talking about the problems with Nvidia, this computer chip maker. Its stock is so overpriced, that it's a bubble waiting to burst.

He was being attacked by a guy who had been—and this individual is probably worth several million dollars, I'm not sure exactly how much—but what he said to the younger guy was to me emblematic of the problem with the United States: Basically, he rejected the younger guy's argument, by simply saying, "I've been listening to all these people who are fabulously wealthy. And so, because they're so wealthy, they must know more than you. And they do know more than you, because they've got so much money, they're smarter than you." That attitude, that it didn't matter how they made the money—if it was through theft or whatever—that they interpret the fact that they've got big, fat bank accounts, that this means they're also really, really smart, and that they're absolutely right—this corruption that's here in America, I think, is going to be very difficult to root out.

We're right now having an experience in Florida, where Gov. Ron DeSantis brought the legislature back into emergency session in order to pass laws that would bolster the ability of the Governor to support Donald Trump's collection of illegal immigrants and forcing them out of the country, and with the emphasis of going after those who are here illegally, and are breaking the law. The legislature that is controlled by Republicans, both the House and the Senate, gutted the bill that DeSantis proposed, and in fact, took the power that was supposed to be with the Governor, and gave it to the Commissioner for Agriculture.

Well, why would they do that? Well, guess what? The Commissioner for Agriculture oversees all the agricultural activity in Florida, and all those businessmen that are growing whether it's oranges or vegetables or what have you, they are exploiting these foreign workers. It's a new form of slavery: They're paying them sub-minimum wage, they don't have health care, they don't have benefits, and they use the threat that because they're here illegally, that they do what these businessmen demand, or else. And that's where even the *Republicans* would have a law— You think that the Democrats would have stood up against it; No, no, no! They wouldn't. So, both parties, unfortunately, are so corrupted, and so, in my view, evil, that they will do anything; they will sacrifice any human being for a dollar, because that's exactly what they're doing: they're exploiting a large number. They set up a system to bring in this flood of illegal migrants, and then once they're here, they're exploited. And once they're being exploited, they don't have an alternative.

So, it's an ugly, ugly picture. But that's how the Unit-

ed States, basically, I think, views the rest of the world: what can we get out of them. For example, Trump, yesterday, said OK, yeah, Ukraine, we'll give you military aid; you give us all your rare earth minerals. Well! The Russians control those rare earth minerals now, not the Ukrainians—but that's a whole other issue.

Make America Beautiful Again

Zepp-LaRouche: There are two things to consider: One is that Trump himself got elected in 2016 and again obviously now, as a result of a revolt mainly among the people whom Hillary Clinton had called the “deplorables.”

Johnson: Right!

Zepp-LaRouche: These were people who were not rich, they don't have yachts, they don't have all these benefits, but they somehow felt that Trump is the guy who would take their interests into account and defend them. And that is not a U.S. phenomenon alone, because you had the Brexit, which was driven by a similar thing; you have right now French President Emmanuel Macron at his completely lowest popularity because he doesn't get the budget through; he cannot form a stable government. People hate this! They hate the policies coming from this oligarchy, which in Europe is the EU Commission.

You have the EU dissolving. Basically, it's a centrifugal development, with more states moving away from this control by the EU and Brussels—and a similar process you can see worldwide. I think we are only in, maybe, the first phase. But, the more people look at that and the more they understand it— That is one element.

The other thing is that, if the U.S.-dominated dollar system were so strong, then all of these other things wouldn't happen. But the reality is that the financial system is totally over-indebted; it could detonate due to a variety of reasons. Look at the United States: The United States is no longer admirable. It might have been in the 1960s and '70s, but now the infrastructure, if you go on the highway in New Jersey—I keep telling people never drive an Italian Fiat 500, because you may disappear in a pothole. And the United States has not one mile of high-speed train tracks! China has, in the meantime, a 45,000 km, about 28,000 mile network of fast trains, and they go 250 kph; they're smooth. Now they're upgrading them to go at 450 kph. They're already rehearsing trains at 600 kph, and even in an evacuated tube, trains at 1,000 kph. That is modern in-

frastructure.

And why is the United States not retooling its military-industrial complex, which is filling the pockets of those who have invested in the stocks of those firms, but at the disadvantage of the American people? You have no more beautiful cities; they're falling apart. So, why is there not somebody in the United States who looks at the picture objectively and says: Wait a second, maybe this neoliberal model which we exaggerated to the hilt is not the best thing? Why don't we revamp the whole thing and make America beautiful again?

Johnson: Well, I applaud your vision. I was just talking with Pepe Escobar earlier this week, and we were talking about what Paris was like in 1996, the City of Lights. But today, it's sort of dingy and dark. The new City of Lights is Moscow. If anybody's been to Moscow in December or January, in the midst of the darkness of Winter, boy! It just is ablaze with light! It's beautiful, it's incredible! And, as you correctly note, the technological advances by the Chinese and by the Russians, the United States is completely ignoring! We're not even in the same ballpark.

You and I are old enough to remember two companies: Kodak and Polaroid. And anybody that's watching that's 45 years of age or younger, probably has no memory of that. But there was a time in the world economy, when Kodak and Polaroid were really big players, because they made film, and they went into cameras. People had to load the film—this was before smart phones, before digital photography took off. What happened to them? They disappeared. They did not adapt to the technological changes in the environment, and they disappeared. They died. I think that's frankly where the United States is headed.

Notice that with respect to China, U.S. automobile manufacturers used to have a significant business presence in China. They were making fairly low-cost automobiles and selling them to all these new Chinese drivers—and when you've got a billion new drivers, that's a lot. Well, what's happened in the last four or five years? The Chinese auto industry has taken off! Not only has the Chinese industry built cheaper, more inexpensive cars, but they're building better cars; they're building technologically advanced cars. They've done things with electric vehicles that Elon Musk hasn't done. And, the United States is not even competing, or recognizing this.

The same is true with artificial intelligence. We just saw the Chinese unveiling of DeepSeek, which they



CC/Rutger van der Maar

A Chinese BYD electric vehicle.

claim was developed with very, very little cash infusion, in comparison with what Nvidia and Meta have been doing trying to generate artificial intelligence products. And the attitude in the United States is, if the Chinese did it, it's crap, it's no good, it's not as good as ours. The arrogance factor there is another inhibitor: that when you have convinced yourself that you're so good, that you cannot objectively step back and appreciate the talents and skills of others, you're on the road for destruction.

The Moral Challenge of Our Times

Zepp-LaRouche: There's an Australian think tank, I think it's called the Australian Strategic Policy Institute (ASPI). They have a website where they [report](#) continuously on technological advances, and how countries compare with each other. They just published that of, I think 64 high-tech areas, China is leading in 57 of them. And then, if you take in addition, the number of patents, the number of scientists and skilled students they're turning out every year, their emphasis on the continuous injection of innovation in the economy—I find the Chinese economic model extremely fascinating, because they obviously have no boom and bust cycles! And that is, in my view, due to the fact that they have a way of innovating the technological level of all areas of their production continuously. So, therefore, the idea that you can curb Chinese development is completely ludicrous. You can destroy it in World War III, but then you are a loser as well—so that's not a good option.

I personally think that the big challenge of our time

is to convince the people in Europe and in the United States that these countries are not their enemies, that the geopolitical approach to try to contain them is not working; it's not morally wise, and it's not feasible. So, why not change, and really think about a New Paradigm in which all countries on the planet can live together in a mutually beneficial way? Each of us has strengths and advantages, and if you put all of them together, you could really create a world where— I always say that the age of teenager, or of childhood is over, and we should become adults, and relate to each other as adults, cherishing the creative potential of each other, and vice versa, and build a society which is truly human. If we as a creative species cannot do that, who else will? Not the mice, and not the donkeys, for sure.

Johnson: Well, in fact, that's why I say, as dire as the situation looks right now for Europe and for the United States, what's our path forward, how do we turn this around? I say, follow the example of Russia. If you go back and you look at Russia in 1999, when Russian President Vladimir Putin came to power, it was charitably described as a "garbage pit." I've heard much cruder expressions used, but it was filthy, unproductive, infrastructure was breaking down, people were dying, the life-expectancy had decreased. Life was terrible! What Putin did over the next 26 years was to make sure that the money that was being generated wasn't just going into the pockets of the oligarchs, but the oligarchs—you know, the capitalists, because that's what they were; we call them "oligarchs" in the West to insult them—but that they had to invest in Russia, which they did. And he didn't get caught up in a variety of foreign wars of conquest. Yes, he faced the ten-year war in Chechnya that was sparked in large measure by Western intelligence agencies' funding and support for these radical Islamic groups. But once that was done, Russia's focus was on building up the lives of its people, investing in its people, investing in infrastructure and education. I've just been to Moscow and St. Petersburg in the last year, twice to Moscow, once to St. Petersburg. Magnificent! The subways, the underground trains are like art museums! They compare with the Louvre, anything you've seen in Paris. The system works! And because it works, the people are experiencing the benefits. So, that's why I say, follow the path that Russia has followed, to stop spending money on foreign wars!

Maybe that's the good news of what Trump is doing, with cutting off all the USAID money, because



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A subway station in St. Petersburg, Russia, reflects a different vision of public benefit, of “investment in the lives of people” as opposed to pouring money into foreign wars.

significant portions of that were being used to promote wars overseas, and to fund destabilizing coups, or color revolutions. Let’s put that money here in the United States, so we no longer have homeless people littering the streets of New York, and Los Angeles, and San Francisco, Chicago, all the major cities. I mean, it’s a nightmare! You don’t see that in Moscow and St. Petersburg. It’s here in the United States that we look like nomads from the desert.

So, there’s an example to follow, and the start of it is to *stop funding wars*. Put away our swords, let’s make some plowshares, let’s work on producing, not killing.

Zepp-LaRouche: That’s where we should try everything to hopefully get new ideas on the plate—also of the Presidency of President Trump. It would be so easy for the United States to change its profile from being probably the most hated country right now in the world. I think the average American is not even approximately aware of how bad the image of the United States is, because they seem to somehow walk on a cloud in this respect. But it would be very easy for the United States to change that. It would really just require some true leadership, and maybe the meeting between President Trump and President Putin of Russia, and President Xi Jinping of China. Do you think that there could be a motion

toward a New Paradigm coming from these summits?

Johnson: Well, yeah. I think it’s actually going to be a wakeup call to Trump. Trump, I think he’s frozen in time—seven years ago. He thinks that Russia and China are what they were seven years ago, and they’re not. And he thinks he can still split them apart, playing one off against the other. He can’t. Once he comes to that realization, he is smart enough a dealmaker to recognize that if he thought he was holding a bunch of trump cards, and those cards are not longer in fact worth anything, that he’s going to have to change the game. And changing the game means, yeah, he now has to deal with Russia and China, as com-

combined, as equals, not as inferiors to be ordered around.

Oasis Plan: A Sensible Proposal for Peace

Zepp-LaRouche: I think the potential to inject new ideas is absolutely there, because, as you say, a lot of the policies will crash against the wall, because they can’t be realized—and then there is an option for something new. We, from the Schiller Institute, keep pushing the [Oasis Plan](#), which is right now being considered by very important forces, from the Middle East, who, basically, see the joint economic development of the entire region—from India to the Mediterranean, from the Caucasus to the Persian Gulf—as one region; that this is the only way to go. So, this potential to have a High-Level International Conference on the Peaceful Settlement of the Question of Palestine taking up a two-state solution, which will take place in June at the UN in New York—I think if a lot of discussion can occur on the Oasis Plan between now and then, I don’t want to bet, but I would strongly hope, backed up by action, that we will be able to get this Oasis Plan on the table, because it is what makes sense. What is your take on that?

Johnson: Right! Well, sad to report, I’ve not read the plan. I would like to read it so I could comment more fully on it. But what I do know from the kind of work that you associate yourself with, and that you

invest your time in, they are activities designed to promote a better world, and to promote peace, not to promote death and destruction. And on that point, I'm all in, all in favor.

It's almost like the West has become a death cult; that we can just step on people, and end their lives without any thought. It's sort of built into our pop culture: We celebrate what we did in World War II, even though this massive bombing of cities in Germany and Japan—that didn't bring an end to the war. All that did was to kill civilians. And we sort of, in essence, normalized the killing of civilians in that war; that's become something that we tolerate and accept. So, we need to move away from that. We need to— You know, I'm a firearms instructor, and I teach people self-defense. And the only time you can ever draw your gun is when your life is in imminent threat, and you kill the threat that you face. You don't just get to shoot the threat and then shoot everybody else.

But, unfortunately, the West, in its approach, tends to kill everybody—and then we'll sort out who was good and bad after the fact. That's got to stop. In fact, that's one of the puzzling things that drives the West crazy about Russia, because Putin's army has been

very, very careful about avoiding civilian casualties, not killing civilians. When you compare that to what Israel, the Zionists have done to the Palestinians, the slaughter—right now the official number stands at 61,000, and there are other estimates, that once we uncover all the bodies under the rubble, it's well over 120,000. But it says something about, do you value human life? And I know what the Schiller Institute stands for is valuing human life.

Zepp-LaRouche: Well, I'm very happy about what you're saying, and I will make sure that a lot of people in Germany find out about it, because I wish we had people in the former intelligence community in Germany who would be as wise and human as you have expressed it now. So much damage was done in Afghanistan, in Iraq, in all of these places, that we need people like you to speak out. I thank you so much for giving me the time. This was a very useful view from a patriotic American, also for people in Europe to find out that they exist. So, I hope to have the occasion again, in the future.

Johnson: I'm always at your beck and call. Thank you, Helga, for such generosity in interviewing me.

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