

Larry Johnson and Helga Zepp-LaRouche

The Normalization of U.S.-Russia Relations Is an Historic Breakthrough

The following is an edited transcript of the March 19, 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: Good day! It is a great pleasure for me that you, Larry Johnson, are joining me on this program. Because these are truly spectacular days we are experiencing, where almost every day some traumatic shift occurs, and it is very difficult for most people to make sense out of these developments which seem to go in all directions.

It is a special pleasure that you are with me today, because I know that you spent some time in Moscow, and even had an interview with Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov. Our viewers and listeners will be very interested to hear what your perspective is coming from that experience.

Just to state the context very briefly, yesterday was an amazing day. You had on the one side the really important, super-important phone discussion between United States President Donald Trump and Russian President Vladimir Putin, which is extremely important for the hope to avoid nuclear war. And everybody who is not completely off the deep end, in my view, should be happy about that discussion. Even so, the process of settling the complicated issues is not an easy one.

Then, on the same day, you had the equally spectacular event, although in the other direction, in the German parliament, the Bundestag, where a two-thirds majority voted for loosening up the debt brake. This is basically to finance an enormous rearmament program which, according to the German economic daily *Handelsblatt*, will amount to €1.7 trillion in the foreseeable future. This money will be spent mainly for military purposes. And then, one day later, European

Commission President Ursula von der Leyen, speaking from Copenhagen, announced a new White Paper on military issues for the EU, also announcing a program for €800 billion for rearmament.

Well, why don't you tell our viewers and listeners what your take is on these developments? And, especially, what can you tell people around the world about how to get out of this, in your view?

Mission to Moscow

Larry Johnson: OK, well, that should be an easy five minutes, right? [laughter]



Judge Napolitano, Judging Freedom

Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov.

Let me start with the trip to Moscow. I arrived in Moscow two weeks ago on Thursday, March 6. I departed two weeks ago today, and I arrived on Thursday, and was there for five days, and had a meeting with Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov on Monday. I was there, along with Judge Andrew Napolitano, from his show "Judging Freedom," as well as a young entrepreneur out of Dubai by the name of Mario Nawfal. And we had a very candid, pleasant, exchange with Foreign Minister Lavrov. It was not scripted. Yes, we had been asked in advance to prepare questions, but the reality is, once we got into the

meeting, those questions went out the window, and we were able to have a discussion.

Lavrov is a gentleman. He's funny. But he's also a serious man. And I asked him in particular about two issues: One, was President Putin's speech to the Security Council of Russia in June of 2024 still the operating policy of Russia with respect to securing ceasefire negotiations with Ukraine? And Lavrov was uncategorical about it: He said, "Absolutely. That has not changed." The positions that Putin laid out in 2024 are that, first, Ukraine has to abandon, and give up, remove itself from all Russian territory, which includes the newly incorporated territories of Kherson, Zaporozhye, Donetsk, and Lugansk.

They've got to withdraw and stop all military action. They've got to renounce joining NATO; they have to hold new elections to have a legitimate leader in place that Russia can negotiate with—because Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky is not viewed as a legitimate leader, in light of him cancelling the last round of presidential elections; and that the United States needs to cut off all military, financial and intelligence support; they need to stop enabling the war. That hasn't changed. So, those are Russia's requirements to start negotiations on bringing an end to the war, as far as talking to Ukraine.

Then I asked him about the relationship with China. Again, the United States, from a policy standpoint, particularly around Trump—and it's not just around Trump, it's bipartisan—they believe that we can somehow split Russia from China, and use Russia as a wedge to attack and undermine China. I mean, it's just—it's madness. But this imperialist sickness that infects the West is like an addiction. It's very difficult to quit. But Lavrov pointed out that Russia and China are now in a relationship that's not superficial; that it's profound, it's deep. It encompasses economic, political, and military relations. Lavrov acknowledged that there are ideological, philosophical differences that can separate the two; each country has its own interests that it's pursuing. But they're also mature enough to recognize that they have more in common, where they can work together.

Frankly ... we make the mistake of personalizing this, that is, as if Putin's the dictator and running everything, which is absolutely not the case. But the Russians, I think, by and large, have finally come to recognize that the United States is the equivalent of an abusive spouse; one who engages—has been harming them for years. And we've always gone back to them with a promise to behave; we promise never to do it again. And then we go back, and we beat them up, rape them, you know, abuse them—and that's been sort of the relationship of Russia with the West. And Russia's now, I think, in particular, as [voiced by Putin just yesterday](#) at a conference of the industrialists—Russia understands that there is no prospect for a normal



New German Chancellor Friedrich Merz addressing the Bundestag.

relationship with the United States.

That doesn't mean they can't have normal diplomatic relations, but with the understanding that the United States is never going to do anything to act in the interest of Russia, and is certainly not going to be keen to identify or accept any of Russia's national interests. It's very much a utilitarian relationship: It's what we want out of it in the West, and what we can take from Russia, what we can exploit from Russia, and how we can manipulate and use Russia to achieve other goals.

And the Russians now are savvy to that. And so, they say, OK, we're not going to do that any more. You want to have a relationship? We'll have a friendly, adult relationship—but there's no romance involved. It's going to be fair, it's going to be equitable, and if you don't want that, then, fine! You know, we're

happy to go about our lives without worrying about you. They don't need the West. They recognize they're better off, if they're not having to arm themselves. But frankly, as you pointed out, the actions by the Germans, coupled with the rhetoric coming out of France, and French President Emmanuel Macron's offering of a nuclear umbrella, and then, British Prime Minister Keir Starmer trying to cobble together a "coalition of the willing," Russia recognizes that the West is still keen on invading it and trying to destroy it. And so, it will continue to take steps to defend itself, and it's not going to drop its guard and give in to a ceasefire, just for the sake of trying to satisfy the West.

Two Universes

Zepp-LaRouche: Given the fact that there seems to be two universes, where people living in the one universe have one conviction and set of axioms and ways of understanding how the world works, and then you have this amazing, disconnect on the side of those people who are now calling themselves the "coalition of the willing"—but if you look at it, despite all of this bluster, the German economy is in a free-fall; the European economies in general are no match any more to Asia; and in a certain sense, even if they go into this military buildup, this view is not shared by all of the EU. Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni just said she doesn't want to be part of this. Naturally, Hungary, Slovakia, but also countries in the Balkans, and actually Spain also, are not enthusiastic. So, we are really only looking at a very small portion of the EU!

Now, first of all, what is your understanding of why they are doing what they are doing? And secondly, I got a report today from several of our members who had many discussions from yesterday, after these two events took place practically at the same time, the Putin-Trump phone call and then this incredible vote in the Bundestag—and the population in Germany is absolutely horrified! They're extremely upset. They feel like, "My God, where is this taking us? What can we do?"

So, what is your advice for what to do? What should the Germans realize, in your view?

Johnson: I think part of what's driving these deci-



Bundestag

Chancellor Merz has reversed his chief campaign promise in order to finance a massive rearmament, despite Germany's economic free-fall.

sions by the likes of Starmer, Macron, and now, CDU leader Friedrich Merz, is money. And that there has been literally millions of dollars being kicked back to politicians in the West. I'm aware, here in the United States—because a friend of mine is involved in this investigation—they've identified 26 members of the U.S. Congress, in the House of Representatives and in the Senate, who have received—I know of one particular individual who's been a very prominent advocate of funding the war in Iraq, has received in his own, personal bank account, \$17.2 million!

I strongly suspect that people like Starmer, Macron and Merz, they've been getting paid by elements connected with organized crime. Can I prove that right now? No. But that's my opinion, that there is a financial incentive in this, because, from a rational policy standpoint, what they're advocating makes absolutely no sense. It actually contradicts what the public would expect within a genuine democracy, if a democracy means trying to follow the will of the people, or express what the majority think.

And so, to that end, I think another element is, in particular in the UK, they are financially exposed in Ukraine to a great extent; of counting on access to

resources in Ukraine—and want to protect that access at any cost.

Then we've got the history: Because it's only, what, 170 years ago, roughly, that the Brits and the French were invading Crimea and fighting Russia. So, this long standing animus of these colonialist powers in Europe, trying to keep Russia from actually becoming a part of Europe, and at the same time, trying to conquer and destroy it—that hasn't abated.

You're correct in noting this tremendous disconnect between what the public necessarily wants, and what the leadership is doing. But part of the problem is, whether it's the UK, whether it's France, whether it's Germany, the politics are very scrambled. There is not a clear majority movement, yet, that's risen up and said, "we've got to stop this." Because a lot of people have celebrated Alternative for Germany's success in the last election, where they garnered something like 20% of the vote. Well, let's be realistic: They got one-fifth of the vote, OK? That's not a majority, not anywhere near.

And no other party did either. Every party was in the 20s and 30s percentile. So, that means you've got a completely fragmented society. That's the problem. Until the public comes together around one particular issue or a group of issues and says, "OK, we're not going to be a country going to war," then, at that point, you'll get a change in policy. But until then, these politicians are just going to exploit that lack of consensus for their own benefit.

A Coup d'État

Zepp-LaRouche: There are many legal experts who, very cautiously, but nevertheless say that what has happened is looking like a coup d'état in Germany, because Merz was running for election on the promise that the CDU/CSU would stand for not loosening the debt brake. Just in parenthesis, the debt brake is a wrong policy, because it's borne out of the Maastricht austerity delusion, so I'm not defending the debt brake.

To loosen the debt brake, you have to change the constitution, because they voted it into the constitution, foolishly. If you now want to change it, it would be very reasonable to do so for the purpose of unleashing the real economy: infrastructure, modernization, investment in innovation, and all of these things. But even the infrastructure part of this program has many components which really are serving the logistics of a future armament drive and move toward the East: You

have bridges, and highways, and trains running from the West to the East for the case of a military event.

But this is used entirely for military orientation, and I think the big question will be, where will this money go? Because the military-industrial complex, it's definitely increasing tremendously right now in Europe; but I don't think that they have, in the short term, the ability to produce all the things they want to put into this. So, probably, a lot of it would go to the military-industrial complex, elsewhere, among other places, the United States—which would not surprise me, because Merz was the CEO of the German division of BlackRock, before he started his political career.

So, in a certain sense, he promised not to do that in the election. Then, he won, and the next day he says, "Oh, sorry! I'm now going to loosen the debt brake, and unleash this bazooka." It may not be technically a coup d'état but de facto it makes no difference. It could have been as well a completely different person marching in and seizing power.

So, I find this one of the worst, most tragic moments in German history—at least in this century, for sure—and I agree with you that the only remedy would be to end this superficial division. Die Linke, for example, they could have, together with the AfD, insisted that the President of the parliament, instead of taking a vote on changing the constitution, that same morning she could have called in the new parliament. Given that the argument used was the urgency of the matter, she would have had all the justification needed to seat the new parliament—and Merz would not have had a two-thirds majority.

So, therefore, I think what you are saying, in terms of the absolute, urgent need that people really start to—And here, Die Linke did not do that, because they said, "We will never go together with an extreme right-wing party, like that which is watched by the Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz, by the internal secret service." And if you ask yourself, what is worse? To work with somebody that admittedly has some bad elements in it—you know, the AfD has some very problematic people in it; but, at large, there are also very decent people in it. So, rather than preventing Germany from going on a warpath, they have this ridiculous idea that you cannot work with such people. Why don't you say what you think about this?

Johnson: It's sort of ironic, what Germany's now going through. It's reminiscent of what happened in the

1920s and going into the 1930s in the rise of National Socialism. What I mean by that is the economic chaos that was underway, and the lack of a coherent political force. And right now, we're not seeing any other group, even though the AfD is being portrayed as the rebirth of the Nazis—which it is not—but we don't see anybody with that sort of personality charisma that was evinced back then by Hitler, who ultimately became a popular figure; and a popular figure, in part, because he did restore the economy in Germany. He overcame the economic problems and gave people great pride in being German at the time.

Follow the Money

Do we see any kind of political player anywhere in the various German political parties with that kind of charisma and capability? No. Merz, in particular, is almost like a bad stereotype of a Hollywood movie trying to create a villain, with his connections to BlackRock. And this is where we come to, I think, the heart of the matter: it's still "follow the money." This is all about money and wealth. And BlackRock's exposure in Ukraine is significant. If Russia continues on the path that it is on and defeats Ukraine, that is going to be a significant financial loss, for BlackRock, but also for the UK.

And so, here is Merz, even though ostensibly trying to lead Germany, he is serving the interests of his former financial master. And this is where we get to the heart of the matter, that the ultimate objective for all of the spending on military equipment and such, is to try to destroy Russia, and take all of Russia's natural resources, and use those for the benefit of the West. The West is like a horde of locusts right now, trying to descend upon a corn crop and strip it bare.

So, that's what Russia is fighting against. And maybe, unfortunately, what's going on in the West is the lack of any coherent policy. It's more like people on a sinking ship, trying to figure out who can get into the lifeboat first, and trying to get control of that lifeboat. That inevitably breeds chaos.

Zepp-LaRouche: Yeah. Ruining Russia didn't work so well. You know, Annalena Baerbock, still our Foreign Minister, had put this out many times. And now, somebody in the German government proposed that she become the President of the UN General Assembly for a year as of September—which is such an absurd idea. She ruined the image of Germany for her

entire period as Foreign Minister, and now they propose that! Even the former chief of the Munich Security Conference, Christoph Heusgen, said this is absurd, because she's just an outdated model. And in a certain sense, it's totally crazy!

But, coming back to this British question: The only interesting development is that if you look at the Russian analysis, of who is doing all the sabotage, and disruption of any attempt to solve things, they point very strongly to the role of the British. And it seems also that President Trump is, based on his experience with Russiagate and who was behind that, that he has an acute awareness of the role of the British. However, the British sent Starmer over to Washington, trying to manipulate the situation. So, where do you think this could end up?

Perfidious Albion

Johnson: The good news is that the Brits are ultimately going to be incapable of following through on their plan, of what they want to do. And it's simply because they talk big, they talk as if they are Great Danes, but in reality, they're an elderly Toy Poodle with no teeth. They can still create a mess on the carpet, they're very unpleasant to be around, but militarily, they're hollowed out. And you can take the entire British Army and put it into Manchester United's football stadium, and there'd still be another 20,000 seats available, for additional troops! [laughter] They have no military force, either from the standpoint of naval forces, air force, or ground force.

Nonetheless, they maintain this pretense that they're somehow going to make a difference on the ground in places like Ukraine. And you're correct in noting the role that the Brits played in Russiagate. They've really been a pernicious influence! That's why Trump sort of played with Starmer, and didn't give Starmer what he wanted. What Starmer's looking for is a guarantee that if they pick a fight with Russia, that the United States will come in to finish it. And so far, Donald Trump has said, "Uh, no. We're not going to do that." So, it still leaves Starmer hanging.

I really don't see how he can continue to focus on foreign affairs, while ignoring the domestic turmoil at home! Britain's economy is not much better than Germany's, and Britain's is in stagnation, at best. So, you're looking at economic recession, across Europe, and it's not just a matter of being able to raise funds, but they don't have the personnel. There are not what I'd

call German patriots and British patriots saying, “We want to join the military! We want to fight for our country!” Fortunately, we don’t have a lot of that sentiment; that’s the good news.

Zepp-LaRouche: Well, I’m flabbergasted, because if you look at the changes going on in the world right now, they’re so gigantic, and so big, that it is very hard to understand how some people cannot see that. I’ll give you an example: Yesterday, or two days ago, Tulsi Gabbard, the U.S. Director of National Intelligence, attended the Raisina Dialogue in India, which is a very prestigious forum by the Indian Ministry of External Affairs and the Observer Research Foundation. And she gave a very passionate speech, because she is a Hindu as her religion, and she feels that India is her second home. And, obviously, this means a good link between India and the United States.

Now, at the same time, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who also has a good connection to Trump, made a very important speech, saying that now the relationship between India and China is much improved, and they are like a family where you may have slight differences, but you’re not letting it get to a real serious dispute. That ties into Russia, which has a very strong partnership with China.

So, you have the BRICS countries emerging as a new future power bloc, or they are already a power bloc. And if the United States, via such connections has a pragmatic relationship to Russia, a positive relationship to India, I can see the potential that the United States would no longer be antagonistic to that. And Putin, before he got on the phone with Trump, had a meeting with Russian industrialists, and he laid out a perspective saying, look, the future is really with the Global Majority, the BRICS, and he advised them to invest in this area, and so forth.

So, what you see emerging is a complete strategic realignment with the rise of Asia; it’s not just China, but it’s all of Asia. Then, you have the BRICS countries in addition to that, and you have a tremendous desire by the Africans, for example, to stop being raw materials producing countries, and they want to take the step to become middle-income countries in the short



Press Information Bureau of India

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi (right) meets U.S. Director of National Intelligence Tulsi Gabbard in New Delhi, March 17.

term—which they can now do, because they have the partnership with China; many of them are already in the BRICS, or want to be part of the BRICS.

The power center of the whole world has clearly shifted, and from that standpoint, it really looks to me that these few Europeans are really the “always yesterday” people, the ones who just don’t understand that the world has shifted, and they’re sticking to their old, neoliberal, neocolonialist, world outlook. And I think, in a certain sense, this cannot last long, because the dynamic of this new power bloc is going to be so evident, and especially if the United States would take at least a neutral, or even positive attitude towards that, I think we are before gigantic changes for the better. So, I have an underlying, tremendous sense of optimism.

Emergence of a New World

Johnson: I agree with you, particularly with respect to, let’s call it the end of the colonialist era. We can mark the start of the colonialist era with the voyages of Vasco da Gama, Christopher Columbus, and the seizing of territory around the world. And it has evolved and continued until the United States became sort of the sole, remaining hegemon, with these vassal states of Europe now following along with the U.S. efforts to control the world, via the dollar.

I think when history is written years from now, they

will look back at the start of the special military operation in Ukraine as that watershed moment, when the one world ended, and the new world emerged into the light. Because it was the start of that war, and then the sanctions that the West, the United States in particular, tried to impose on Russia, where it became clear that the United States was hoping it had Russia in a dependent relationship, and, in fact, had China in a dependent relationship as well; a very paternalistic model.

I remember, I encountered some of this with my own father, where we had a dispute, when I turned 18, and he was telling me to do one thing, that frankly, I thought was my right to make that decision. And so, he said, “Well, you either do it, or you get out!” So, I left! I got out! Got out, got a job, became independent. And, you know, in fact, we still had a friendly relationship after that. But I was now independent; I was no longer dependent.

And so, that’s what’s taking place with Russia, with China, with Iran, with India, with South Africa, with countries around the world. And I’m not trying to pretend that some of these countries don’t have their own internal problems to wrestle with—but, you know what? That’s their problem to wrestle with. It’s not my job to go interfere and be part of trying to tell them what to do to fix themselves. And that’s where Russia comes in, in a leadership role, because the Russians have been very astute in dealing with other countries, not from the standpoint of self-importance, not treating them in a condescending manner, but treating them as equals! You see this especially with different African representatives that I’ve seen, for example, at the St. Petersburg International Economic Forum: The Russians don’t treat them like they’re a bunch of former slaves from Africa; they treat them like equals. And people know when they’re being talked down to, and they know when they’re being treated with respect.



Russian President Vladimir Putin addresses the Security Council by video.

kremlin.ru

That’s one of the things that’s genuine about Russians: that they’re not going to talk down to you and treat you like you’re an inferior creature or an insect. And that’s why I think we’re entering this new era.

The U.S. and Europe are *desperate—desperate—* trying to hold onto power. But as we’ve seen over the course of time, especially the last two years, France, Belgium, they’re getting booted out of Africa, and rightly so!—as is the United States. Whereas Russia and China are making headway, and they’re making headway because Russia and China don’t need to go into those countries to rape them of their resources! Because Russia and China have their own resources. Instead, they really are, I think, sincere about promoting the genuine economic development of those countries.

Zepp-LaRouche: Well, I think that the present situation is very hopeful. I don’t know if you are aware of the fact that, when the special military operation started, I made immediately the proposal that we have to absolutely stop geopolitics and move to [an international security and development architecture](#), which takes into account the interest of every single country on the planet, this being in the tradition of the Peace of Westphalia. And that, naturally, would include, today, Russia, China, North Korea, Iran.

When I made that proposal, almost exactly three years ago, there were many people who said, “Oh no, this is premature. This cannot be done. Now we are into



such a thing?

Johnson: If you had asked me that three weeks ago, I would have said, yes. If you ask me that today, I would say, no. I think Trump is going to do everything in his power to sabotage BRICS; he's going to do everything in his power to maintain the supremacy of the U.S. dollar; and I think that's partly what's behind his calls to take over Greenland and incorporate Canada into the United States, and take the Panama Canal. You know, this is a level of aggressive imperialism that, maybe, to give Trump credit, he's not being subtle about it. He's not pretending to be "Mr. Peace," and then coming out with this aggression. He's being upfront that that's what he wants to do.

Despite some of his campaign rhetoric about wanting to promote peace and bring an end to conflicts, he seems to be stoking the fire, and pouring more and more fuel on the fire to expand the conflicts, not diminish them. But he has, as I laid down, a clear marker for BRICS; that he will punish any country that tries to move away from using the dollar as the reserve currency. He's making that threat, but I think he's got definite limitations on what he can do in that regard.

Implications of the Kennedy Files

Zepp-LaRouche: With Mark Carney as the new Prime Minister of Canada, that may be actually an



National Archives

Alleged "lone assassin" of President Kennedy, Lee Harvey Oswald, at about the time of his defection to the Soviet Union.

U.S. President Donald Trump.

war, and therefore, people will not listen to this." But if you look at it now, we are moving in this direction, because Chinese President Xi Jinping is proposing his three initiatives: the Global Security, Development, and Civilizational Initiatives; and [Putin on June 14, 2024](#) made a very important speech, where he said that he now, because of the special military operation, sees the possibility for a European security system and even a global security system. This means that both China and Russia have stated that they are thinking in terms of a new, global security system.

So, that is really the goal for the future, because I believe that, for many reasons, the emergence of nuclear weapons, the internet, the pandemics, and artificial intelligence and digitalization, we are really in an historic moment where we have to think about humanity as one; you cannot solve problems any more in a partial way. The Roman Empire collapsed, and people in India had no idea that this was taking place. They had a Gupta period with flourishing literature and so forth—and only years later did they find out that in another part of the world there was a tremendous collapse. Now, times are different, you know? We are sitting in one boat, and I personally think that the best we can do is move toward such an international system as quickly as possible, because only then, in my opinion, can you solve problems like the Middle East and other crisis points, which are still in disarray.

So, do you think Trump would be willing to consider

interesting problem. But, I think that the trend in the world is not in the direction of condoning such actions.

But, let me ask you another question: The fact that now the files of President John F. Kennedy have been released—obviously we didn't yet have time to look at them—and the fact that Tulsi Gabbard took away the security clearances from a whole bunch of people, including Antony Blinken and Jake Sullivan—how do you judge that part of the Trump policy?

Johnson: I think putting Tulsi Gabbard in as the Director of National Intelligence, I'm generally supportive of that. She doesn't have a lot of experience with intelligence, but she's capable of learning. She normally has the right instincts, but she has come around and basically had to bow the knee to the Zionist Lobby, the American Israel Public Affairs Committee and others. She's a captive of them; she can't go against, for example, she could not come out and tell the President: Hey, attacking Yemen as you did over the weekend was an ignorant thing to do. It was stupid. It was counterproductive. And to continue to threaten Iran is counterproductive. And so, to that extent, unfortunately, she's going to go along with that.

Let me just quickly address the Kennedy files. I believe that one of the things that's been hidden was the role that the CIA had in sending Lee Harvey Oswald overseas and then also controlling him when he came back. I do not believe that he was the lone shooter, but one of the things the CIA has been trying to cover up for years is their direct relationship.

You think back, here's this kid, he's barely 17; he joins the U.S. Marine Corps, he becomes a radar operator. And then, the next thing you know, he's asking for a hardship resignation out of the military. And so, they allow him to resign, and he gave the excuse that he had to go and take care of his sick mother. Then, within days of getting out of the Marine Corps, he's on a ship headed for Russia.

Now, I believe he was selected at some point during his training in the Marine Corps to become a person—you know, he started creating a legend for himself as a pro-Soviet person—so that when he got out, he would at least have a plausible story line to sell the Soviets, which he did. And he went there and got married, and then after a while, things weren't working out, so he came back to the United States, but continued in his relationship with the CIA—which led him into activities, again, trying to present himself as

pro-Castro. And meanwhile, continuing to go back to Mexico to try to worm his way, or figure out how to get back to the Soviet Union. So, he was a patsy, a tool. And that's one of the big things that's been covered up over the years.

Now, as far as who actually fired the shot that killed Kennedy? You know, it's not clear to me. It does not appear, just from a practical standpoint about Kennedy, with the fatal head-shot, which appears that if it did come from the rear, it doesn't explain why the brain matter was blown to the rear of the car. It should have been blown out the front. But I'm not sure you're going to get many answers out of the release of these documents. I think people will be singing the Peggy Lee song, "Is That All There Is?"

Zepp-LaRouche: Well, I'm obviously less of an expert on these matters than you are. But nevertheless, I would assume there are many people who have been looking at that, including Oliver Stone. There was the John F. Kennedy movie, and in that movie, *JFK*, there is actually a very interesting figure, Colonel Prouty. We were in contact with him, when he was still alive, and he gave us a very interesting interview, where he said that the [assassination of Alfred Herrhausen](#), the chairman of Deutsche Bank, on Nov. 30, 1989, was as significant in terms of a paradigm shift—at the moment of the German reunification—as the assassination of John F. Kennedy for the United States—because it started a whole new paradigm.

And the coverup by the Warren Commission is a very important point. There are many Americans whom I know of who are convinced—or, let me put it this way—who are looking at this whole period from the standpoint that this ended a period of optimism in the United States. Because Kennedy was extremely optimistic in terms of the role of science and technology, in terms of the relationship of the United States to the developing countries—and that all ended, and became the opposite, with the assassination, and then the coverup by the Warren Commission.

Now, the reason why I'm making this longer statement is because I attended, a few years ago, a dialogue of Asian civilizations in China, and there were all the Asian nations. And what impressed me, really incredibly deeply, was that all of these countries—not just China, but India, Iran, Vietnam, Thailand—all of them looked at their own rich tradition of sometimes 5,000 years, highlighting whatever was the most

powerful contribution they made, and out of that, defining then, the strength for their own future.

Given the fact that in the United States, you will soon have the 250th anniversary of the American Revolution, I think that looking at the paradigm shift which was caused by the Kennedy assassination, in the context of the relatively young history of the United States, I can very well see that this will lead to a renewed looking at American history from the standpoint of periods when America played a positive role—like John Quincy Adams famously saying, the role of the United States is not to go abroad “in search of monsters,” but to live in an alliance of peaceful republics.

Going back to this Kennedy paradigm, and then thinking about the 250th anniversary of the American Republic, it could really lead to a renewed intellectual engagement of Americans with their own history; to reject what was negative—which was, in my view, the period when there was the special relationship between the United States and Great Britain, using that as the foundation to run the world as an empire, based on the model of the British Empire—rejecting that, and going back to its tradition as a republic. After all, the War of Independence was the first anti-colonialist war in history, against the British Empire.

So, while this is stretching the topic a little bit beyond the Kennedy files, to look back at American history, to try to bring back the soul of the country, I think this is a tremendous possibility—don’t you think?

Birth of the Military-Industrial Complex

Johnson: Well, in the mythology that dominates right now, the historic explanation of the reason for our being centers on World War II. And that myth is that the United States was minding its own business, when this tyrant Adolf Hitler rose, and the Japanese war machine went on a rampage, and therefore, we were hauled into this war unwillingly, and we saved the day, we won the war—ignoring what Russia did to defeat the Nazi empire. But that’s a whole other story!

So, coming out of that, Americans still have this model, this notion, “Hey, we’re the good guys. We’re the ones trying to rebuild. We’re not killing all the Japanese now, we’re letting Japan rebuild”—and we did. We’re not subjecting Europe to our rule, we’re letting them choose their rule. When the Soviets blockaded Berlin, we did the airlift to keep people fed. So, this engendered this notion of America as “the

good guy.” *But*, what happened as a consequence of World War II was the creation of the military-industrial complex, because the amount of money that was spent on those weapons systems, and the industries which grew up around them, became something that created for the United States an uncomfortable dilemma: If we dismantled that, then we would destroy our economy, because it played a significant role in the economic growth and subsequent wealth that Americans enjoyed in the aftermath of World War II.

So, with the creation of the CIA, which started in 1948, the CIA became an agent for foreign interference; for creating, if you will, wars or threats overseas that would then justify expanded military expenditures. And the U.S. fought not just the war in Korea, but the overthrow of Jacobo Arbenz in Guatemala, the overthrow of Mohammad Mossadegh in Iran—those were in 1953-54—the support of the French in Vietnam which started the U.S. involvement in Vietnam to preserve, again, a colonialist empire, and the failure of the French at Dien Bien Phu, but out of that failure the United States steps in.

All of a sudden, you’ve got these tremendous financial interests invested in war! And candidly, since 1960, for the last 65 years, the United States has been finding an excuse to go to war with someone, instead of finding an alternative. And that’s the situation that we find ourselves in today, with Donald Trump on Saturday launching the unjustified bombing of the Houthis in Yemen, and claiming it was for freedom of navigation. But the fact of the matter is, the Houthis had been abiding by the ceasefire that Trump had negotiated through his envoy Steve Witkoff, and the Houthis were no longer attacking ships trying to transit the Red Sea.

Now, Trump has attacked them, and he’s attacked them for one purpose, I believe, which is to start a war with Iran. So, we’re back at a very dangerous time. And again, the ultimate reason behind all of this, is to keep the Raytheons, the General Dynamics, the Lockheed Martins, all of this vast array of industrial powers that service the military community, keep them afloat; keep them with sufficient cash in their pockets.

Zepp-LaRouche: Well, that is true, but on the other side, the Russians have made some military advances despite the fact they spend a tenth of the military budget of the United States. But nevertheless, they’ve made

breakthroughs like the Oreshnik missile, and other systems—

Johnson: Right!

Zepp-LaRouche: and if you look at China, for example, the modernity of hundreds of Chinese cities—not one, but hundreds!—it is so absolutely stunning, in terms of the difference; the collapse of the infrastructure in Europe, and in the United States, and how China now has 45,000 km of fast train systems, they have landed on the far side of the Moon. In other words, military production may be a means for a certain period of time, but if it's not underpinned by a real economy, it's a temporary thing.

And Trump must recognize that if he wants to “Make America Great Again,” he has to rebuild the infrastructure, he has to build new cities, he has to do something to actually invest in the real economy in the United States, and not just the profit of those people who have invested in the military-industrial complex. So, how do you think this is going to be resolved?

Johnson: I suspect, if the United States follows through with its plan to go to war with Iran, that war will end in a disaster for the United States. And I think that will then be accompanied by significant economic chaos. The silver lining is that out of that the United States may be in a position to recognize that we need to move away from our reliance upon a military-financialized economy. What do I mean by that? It's a militarized economy, because a significant portion of economic activity is devoted to creating weapons systems that have no practical use on the battlefield, like the F-35. It's a jet that now reportedly costs a total of, when you consider both the purchase and operating costs, \$200 million apiece! Planes get shot down! You can't afford to have something that expensive flying about!

But the financialized activity, when you look at the top companies on the stock market in terms of the market capitalization, they're basically social media: Yahoo, Google. You look at them and they don't make anything! They don't actually produce products. They don't build anything. And the United States has lived with this illusion that because we're dependent both on the military expenditures and then, by virtue of having dollars, the primary reserve currency, we've been able to finance, lend money around the world, buy up U.S.

Treasuries—and we can continue to spend what we want without having to take into account that those are debts that we need to repay at some point.

So, I think the battle or a war with Iran could really end up hurting us, but bring out of it a realization that we need to change our course of action.

Zepp-LaRouche: Unfortunately, we are running out of time. So, coming back to the question of what should be done in Germany: If you look at history, empires always overstretch and then collapse; so I have the impression that we are not very far away from that. What can we do to wake up these Germans, so that they don't go this way? Because now, at this late hour of the strategic realignment, to go in this direction is almost tragic. Do you have some final, good advice for us German people?

Johnson: I wish the German people would simply be who they are! You know, I spent a lot of time during my 23 years of working with the U.S. military, I spent a lot of time in Germany. And I was also privileged to do a speaking tour on terrorism, in Braunschweig, Berlin, Bonn, Cologne, Frankfurt, Stuttgart, Baden-Baden, and München. So I've been around. And I've always found the German people to be extraordinarily competent, and very meticulous in what they do. And so, maybe if the German people would simply rediscover who they are, rediscover their national roots, and live up to that, they will have the basis for saying, “We need to fix this. We need to get back to not going down the road to war, but we need to be people who can facilitate peace.” So, I remain optimistic in that regard that there is that capability resident within the German populace.

Zepp-LaRouche: Well, thank you! I share your hope, and conviction, because I think it would be a shame if Germany would collapse and be completely destroyed on the sidelines of history, because we did have, once, a beautiful culture, which is still there for the world to see.

Thank you very much! This was an extremely interesting *tour d'horizon*. Let's hope that our best wishes come true, and not the worst expectations! So, thank you very much, Larry.

Johnson: Thank you, Helga, for your kindness and the opportunity to chat with you for this amount of time. I appreciate it.