

Schiller Institute Weekly Dialogue with Helga Zepp-LaRouche

Stop Rearmament, Defuse the Debt Bomb

The following is an edited transcript of the April 2, 2025 weekly Schiller Institute dialogue with Helga Zepp-LaRouche, founder and leader of the Schiller Institute, and Harley Schlanger, moderator. Embedded links and subheads have been added. The video is available [here](#).

Harley Schlanger: Hello and welcome.... As we're speaking today, the question of war and peace remains a central topic for virtually everyone. Despite some progress on improving relations between the U.S. and Russia, the war hawks in Europe are preparing for war against Russia. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is escalating a drive for removing the Palestinians from Palestine, and there's a memo circulating in the U.S. Department of Defense from Secretary of Defense Pete Hegseth, directing preparations be made for war against China.

So, Helga, the first question for you comes from someone who follows Russia very closely. He writes that "Russian President Vladimir Putin last week said the old order is gone, but do not expect a change from Europe." Putin went on to say that Russia has responded to sanctions by changing its economy to survive, but he expects more sanctions from Europe anyway. So, the question for you is: "Why do European leaders not recognize this, that their plans are not working? Are they so blinded by Russophobia?"

Helga Zepp-LaRouche: The short answer to that is, yes. It is a phenomenon that the German elite—"elite"—the German establishment and many others in

Europe as well, seem to have bounced back to an outlook we had more than 80 years ago. I feel in a very difficult position to say that, but there is no other explanation, because how can it be that the vast majority of the world population has a completely different view on Russia? You have the Global South, which completely refuses to believe the narrative that the Ukraine war was caused by an "unprovoked aggression" by Russia in complete violation of international law. And on that point, I just want to tell our audience—that is, you—



NATO

Over 220 U.S. Marines and Ukrainian forces, riding in 15 amphibious vehicles, participated in an amphibious landing operation in Odessa, Ukraine, July 27, 2016.

that that story cannot be maintained, because ... the *New York Times* two or three days ago had a 13,000-word article, which was the result of a year-long investigation, interviewing 300 different individuals from many different countries on the circumstances of the outbreak of the war against Ukraine. And what they clearly established— They start with the immediate prehistory of the actual beginning of the special military operation; that first of all there was the massing of



U.S. Embassy Kyiv Ukraine

Assistant Secretary of State for European and Eurasian Affairs Victoria Nuland in Kyiv, April 27, 2016.

Ukrainian troops at the Donbass border. However, immediately after the war had started, the United States deployed large numbers of troops, officers, and personnel of various kinds into Ukraine, to the Russian border!

Now, as many other experts have clearly demonstrated, the Russians had only planned a limited military operation, because they only had about 100,000 troops on the Ukrainian border, by far not enough for an all-out war against Ukraine. The presence of the Americans—and maybe other NATO troops (*Figaro* was reporting about French troops at one point)—these troops were deployed from Wiesbaden, from the Clay House, the Clay Kaserne in Wiesbaden, and basically were commanding every step, down to the smallest detail—even the direction of the cannons. So, the Americans, and therefore NATO, were in the war from almost the very beginning.

If you take, then, in addition to that, the fact that Victoria Nuland was bragging that the State Department had spent \$5 billion on NGOs and other purposes in Ukraine before the 2014 Maidan coup; then the circumstances of the Maidan; the involvement of the West; the taped discussion between Nuland and U.S.

Ambassador to Ukraine Geoffrey Pyatt; and then you had the Minsk II sabotage, which was admitted by [former German Chancellor] Angela Merkel and [former French President] François Hollande—if you take this whole story together, that NATO was in the war from the very beginning, preparing it, instigating it—that is now all officially out. So, one would think these European establishments would say, “Wait a second here. Our narrative is no longer manageable; we can no longer keep it up.” But no. German Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock, on the same day as the *New York Times* article, goes to Kiev and promises ... continuous support—even beyond this present government.

There is no inkling of recognition that their lies have been caught.... The *New York Times* is, after all, the newspaper of record in the United States. So, there is, I would say, almost a clinical defect in the thinking of these people. It is very terrible, because what happens is that Europe goes bonkers, and Europe falls apart. Look at the totality of what’s happening in Europe right now: The effort, for example, in France to suppress Marine Le Pen, who was far ahead of all other candidates in the



UN Photo/Eskinder Debebe

Annalena Baerbock, Federal Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Federal Republic of Germany.



Marine Le Pen Facebook page

Marine LePen, Deputy of the French National Assembly and President of the National Rally party.

polls, can only backfire. Likewise, the situation in Germany is completely chaotic! These elites are definitely not fulfilling the oath they gave when they took office, to defend the common good of their people—and they’re for sure in a parallel universe. It can only end badly for them, but in the worst case, for everybody.

How Do We Oppose War?

Schlanger: We have another question on war and peace, from Paz in Spain, in which he asks: “Dear Helga, what can the Schiller Institute do to prevent the rearmament of Europe, the war against Iran, and everything that the neocons and the City of London, with U.S. President Donald Trump and Brussels, are planning against world peace? Is it enough to speak out at conferences? What are the people of Europe doing to prevent this madness?”

Zepp-LaRouche: I think things are definitely moving—but not fast enough. We are having conferences: We will have one in the United States, and at some point one in Europe as well. We have been participating in demonstrations. We definitely want to encourage a lot of people to participate in the Easter marches, around Easter; to go to the streets. This is absolutely necessary.

We are experiencing right now a complete collapse of the trust of the people in all governments, or almost all governments, in Europe. In Germany, the situation is unbelievable: You have, after three weeks, or a little bit more, negotiations of the new government—or attempted new government—with the aim of putting Friedrich Merz in as the new Chancellor. But the whole thing is falling apart! The reports are, from several sources, that the tensions between the SPD and the CDU/CSU are worse than at the end-phase of the so-called “streetlight coalition,” and everybody says we are preparing for new elections, because this will not function.

The difference in the polls between this so-called coalition and the AfD is 1%! If you go for one more week, the AfD will be ahead! So, we are seeing right now complete chaos and transformation of all of Europe, and it is extremely important to intervene everywhere—in demonstrations, in conferences, with interventions, in all kinds of events—with one message: The only way we can lift this present situation out of chaos is to establish a higher level; a new paradigm of a dialogue among all countries on the planet; to establish a new security and development architecture, which must take into account the interest of every country. We are moving inch by inch closer to that idea, because the idea that you have to do something completely different, move away from geopolitics, and address the pressing issues of humanity, that is a thought which is becoming more popular as the unworkability of the pres-

ent policies becomes obvious.

So, join us in that effort, and maybe you can put us in touch with relevant people in Spain, because Spain is a very important country right now. Spain has a policy which is not as mad as that of the so-called Coalition of the Willing.

U.S. Sees China as the Main Adversary

Schlanger: We have a report from the *Washington Post* that Secretary of Defense Pete Hegseth is distributing in the Pentagon a memo that is ordering the Pentagon to put its focus on preparing for war with China. Is this an update on what they had in the previous National Defense Authorization Acts, or is this something new?

Zepp-LaRouche: No, I’m afraid it’s just an update; it’s a continuation of the same policy: to declare China the prime adversary of the United States—which is completely ludicrous. Unfortunately, the Trump Administration seems to be running into some real troubles. They’ve only been in office for ten weeks, and already now, because of the broken promises, one can say the Trump base is revolting. We know that from many discussions our colleagues have had inside the United States with MAGA people, with all kinds of groups supporting Trump, and they’re very upset that Trump is not sticking to his promises that he would not only end all wars, but also not start new ones.

This is absolutely terrible, because we’re sitting on a time-bomb with Iran. If you add the conflict with Ukraine, which is not yet settled, and if you add the crisis with China, this could blow up bigtime. The minimum it will do, in the short term, is to absolutely increase an arms race, in terms of conventional weapons, nuclear weapons, space weapons—which can only lead to a catastrophe.

All the more important is that the countries of the Global South must be brought to the forefront, because they have no interest in such a new division of the world, where the United States is clearly militarily still trying to maintain its dominance of the world.

Recently there were hearings in the U.S. Senate, where several space commanders were saying that the United States must gain dominance in space, with all kinds of new weapons systems. That’s very, very bad, and if there would be a war with China, I’m absolutely sure that the United States would lose badly. Because, if you look at the geographical position, let’s say, of

Taiwan in the South China Sea, the United States would be at a vast disadvantage, simply because of the geographical conditions. And there is, naturally, always the possibility of going nuclear, which was a big concern of Daniel Ellsberg. There were plans by the Pentagon already in 1958 considering the use of nuclear weapons if it ever came to a conflict with China over Taiwan. That would trigger Armageddon, and I cannot imagine that President Trump would go that way.



Press Information Bureau of India

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Schlanger: I have a question from a friend of ours in Pakistan, who says that he's raising this question of the use of normalization with Russia as an opportunity to focus on China. But he writes: "Indian Foreign Minister S. Jaishankar is discussing rapprochement with China, and seems very serious about it. What would be the implications of a normalization of relations between India and China? It seems that this would blow apart the whole idea of Global NATO, if India and China would work together."

Zepp-LaRouche: There are very promising signs, not only what you reported about Jaishankar, but also Prime Minister Narendra Modi has made similar statements. There will soon be the 75th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between China and India. And I think they are planning to solidify that, because India is definitely a non-aligned country, and they have withstood all efforts during the Administration of U.S. President Joe Biden to pull them into the camp of the so-called "democracies" versus the "autocracies."

That is definitely a promising sign, and that is why I'm saying, we have to encourage all the countries of the Global South—and that emphatically includes Brazil, it includes Indonesia, it includes naturally India, many African nations—to take a stronger role. If they all put their weight in, the countries of the so-called West have to reconsider [their thinking]. Because it's not just Russia and China, but it is the fact that the BRICS—which now has 19 members and partners, and

many, many more have applied for membership—represents the entire Global South. Therefore, the stronger the voice of the Global South is heard, the more the people in the United States and Europe have to consider that the future of the world belongs to the Global South, simply by the mere size of its population. That is a very important element in the picture.

Escalation against Iran

Schlanger: I have a question here from a retired journalist, who's an American who now lives in Israel, and he asks, with very bold, large capital letters: "Are you paying attention to Qatargate?" referring to the legal problems Netanyahu is having, tied to a bribery scandal involving money coming from Qatar. He writes: "As the legal noose is tightening around Bibi's neck, and demonstrations are growing against him in Israel, he is escalating in Gaza,



Benjamin Netanyahu Facebook page

Israel Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

in Lebanon, and making more threats against Iran. Is there a chance that Trump or any other leader will act to prevent a horrible tragedy from being unleashed by a desperate Netanyahu?"

Zepp-LaRouche: I think that is the most worri-

some question at this point, because you have a new threat by President Trump, with some ominous remarks that very bad things will happen. There is an ultimatum to Iran to completely get rid of its nuclear program, which includes, apparently, its missile systems, to which Iran has already answered very clearly that it will not do that under any circumstances. Therefore, we are looking right now at a complete escalation against Iran, which clearly is in the interest of Netanyahu.



Sare for Senate Zoom call

Former Congressman Dennis Kucinich.

And if you then take into consideration the fact that there are all kinds of weapons systems being sent into the region—the THAAD missiles are being sent there; there are several aircraft carriers on the way, either to the Persian Gulf, the Pacific Ocean, or the Mediterranean, but in any case, to the region; and there are several B-2 stealth bombers that have been sent to Diego Garcia, the U.S.-British base in the Indian Ocean—all the signs are that there is a major preparation for a sustained military action against Iran.

Whether that will happen or not remains to be seen. But I can only say that if the plan is to destroy Iran's nuclear weapons, or its nuclear program, there is still a *fatwa* by Iranian Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei that Iran does not intend to acquire nuclear weapons, because it is against the spirit of Islam. The crazy thing is that even the U.S. intelligence services, in their recent report about Iran, stated very clearly that there is absolutely no evidence that Iran is preparing a nuclear weapons program at this point. Nevertheless, this drumbeat is occurring.

And if for some reason the British instigation—[former MI6 director] Richard Dearlove basically is demanding action against Iran, which he has been demanding for a long time—if that has success, it would be a catastrophe. The only way you can eliminate the nuclear program of Iran is by the use of nuclear weapons, because the facilities are buried deep down in many mountains. Therefore, even with [non-nuclear] bunker-buster bombs, you cannot eliminate it....

Dennis Kucinich, the former U.S. Congressman, has just put out a warning, saying that if there would be any attack on the nuclear facilities—even without nuclear weapons—the ... fallout would kill tens of mil-

lions of people inside Iran, hundreds of millions in the neighboring countries—Pakistan, Afghanistan, as far as India, many other countries in the region—and it would lead to cancer, babies being born with deficiencies, all kinds of horrors; and he's warning in the strongest terms against it.

I think that the danger is very acute, and it has to do exactly with what you are saying: that Netanyahu is desperate, the opposition to him is growing, the Qatar scandal, as you call it, could blow up—and the big

question is, what will the Israeli military do in this situation? So, we are sitting on a complete powder keg.

Also, Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergey Ryabkov just warned, very strongly in Moscow, that any such military motion against Iran would have catastrophic consequences. China's Foreign Minister Wang Yi is presently in Moscow discussing with Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov and with President Putin—and obviously this is very high on the agenda—what to do to stop it.

The aim of [an Iran war] would clearly be to end the Presidency of Trump. We have been talking about this with many experts in Europe, military experts in different countries, and there is a joint assessment that the aim is to decapitate the Trump Administration; to cause such havoc that it would be finished, that Trump would basically be out. Because the domestic opposition against him would rise; you could have an explosion of oil prices, which would trigger a financial crash. The aim is basically to stop Trump; that's the real aim of it.

Optimism and Population Growth

Schlanger: Here's an interesting question from Harrison. He doesn't pose it as a question, but he says: "I feel an often overlooked metric in economics is the importance of population growth. The Global South has a very important advantage in that way. In much of the rest of the world, including the West and East Asia, there's a low birth rate." How do you address something like this?

Zepp-LaRouche: It is a phenomenon right now that the African continent is the only one that has sig-

nificant population growth, which means it has the brightest perspective for its economic future—because ... in Europe, in the United States, even in China, in Russia, you have demographic curves which mean that the percentage of the aging population is going to get larger and larger, as compared to the population in the working age. That can be compensated for ... by extremely high economic growth rates; if you have a lot of injection of science and technology into the economy, you can manage that—at least for a certain period.

But, I think it has to do with—In China for example, I had many discussions with scientific colleagues and scholars and friends, and they basically report that despite the enormous economic growth in China, the raising of children is still relatively too expensive for many couples to entertain such a perspective. That is a factor there. In Western Europe and in the United States, it has more to do with the meaninglessness of life. Nowadays, if you ask younger people, younger couples, “What is the purpose of your life,” you don’t get a sufficient answer. They normally say they expect that the [standard of living] of their children and grandchildren will be much worse than theirs or that of their parents. They’re looking at [economic] developments as a downhill spiral, and therefore they don’t want to have children!

I think it is absolutely necessary to redefine what the meaning of life is. Why are we here? Why does life exist? What are we doing on this planet? What is the role of the human species beyond our planet, in nearby space, in the universe at large? These questions are not being discussed, or at least not in any meaningful way. And I think it has to do with the fact that people have become so shallow, and so downtrodden in their outlook—enjoying the moment of life, having fun—but not being intellectual. The problem we have in the West, in particular, is that our so-called establishments have become so void of intellect; so void of any kind of intellectual excitement or progress. And, unfortunately, that reflects the dumbing-down of the population, over a long period of time, so that the small percentage of people who are still intellectually vibrant feel that they are in a minority; that their voice is not being heard. We have a real crisis in the West, and the birth rate is a result of it.

Le Pen, Attacks on Democracy in Europe

Schlanger: I have two questions on something you brought up earlier: the Le Pen verdict in France. There’s a note from an aide to a Member of the European Parliament, who wrote to me and said that what Le Pen is ac-

cused of is done by almost every office in the European Parliament: that is so-called mixing of funds, political-party funds, with running-the-office funds.

But the other question that came in is: What are the implications of this? Is this a possible civil war in France? Why would somebody choose this time of chaos to add to the chaos in France?

Zepp-LaRouche: On the first question, the comments of Antonio Di Pietro, who was the main judge in the “Clean Hands” scandal in Italy, are very significant. If you remember, [the Clean Hands scandal] was many years ago, when the corruption cases in Italy became the dominant issue. And in Italy, everybody knew that during the entire postwar period, you had the principle of “*amici di amici*”: that you would give contracts to your friends, and you would help each other and so forth, and that was the system. This was obviously known to the intelligence services and not spoken about for decades. But then at a certain point, they decided to take down the entire party structure as it had evolved in the postwar period, and they launched the Clean Hands scandal.

The main accuser in this was Di Pietro. And he came out today criticizing what happened to Marine Le Pen, by saying that he worked, himself, as a Member of the European Parliament at one point, and he can say from his own experience, that you absolutely cannot differentiate when you deploy your staff for tasks which have to do with the EU in Brussels, and when you deploy the same staff for work from your party at home, in your home country; that it’s the nature of these things that they’re mixed, because it’s the same people who are doing both things.

It’s a completely ludicrous accusation, and obviously reflects Macron’s desperation, because he is down in the polls—somewhere around 20%, or very low—and Marine Le Pen has polled around 40%. So, it is very clear that she would be the winning candidate in the next election. Obviously, the court system in France is not-so-independent. This is not the first time that it has acted in this political way, because we had this done to our candidate Jacques Cheminade several times, where they tried to orchestrate and manipulate the situation—which is typical for the so-called “democracy.”

The more you experience these kinds of things—And I must say, with what happened to my late husband and our organization, it is impossible to still believe in democracy. When you see that any time a candidate who is not with the so-called NATO narrative, gets the “Ro-

manian treatment” or the “LaRouche treatment,” you lose any trust in the system! And that is exactly what is happening. That is happening in France, and I can only guess that they will have very large demonstrations. Her party, Rassemblement National (RN), has already called for large demonstrations in many French cities, and as the whole financial-economic crisis gets worse, who knows where this will end up?

And likewise in Germany! In Germany, if they cannot pull together a government— And how can they? They’re now trying to put together a government of parties that were absolutely opposed to each other in the election campaign, and now they’re supposed to find a compromise. Naturally, it doesn’t function. It shows the weakness of the parliamentary system. They accuse China of being an “autocracy,” but the so-called “all inclusive democracy” which they practice in China is a model of democracy, which functions much better than the so-called Western system.

But we are heading toward a huge crisis in both countries, in France and in Germany, and there are now leaks that the new coalition, while they’re having this infighting and difficulty to even form a government, there is already a leak that they are preparing a new paper to punish those EU members that are not following all the rules. They don’t name Hungary, but it’s clear that they mean Hungary, and that they may want to expel Hungary from the European Union. If they do that, I think that’s the death knell of the European Union, because this will have a signal effect, and many other countries will leave the EU as well.

So, while right now the threat posture coming from NATO and the European Union looks very big, they’re very fragile and very brittle, if you look at the foundation on which they stand.

We Need a ‘Movement of State Citizens’

Schlanger: You just anticipated the last question, which is related to Germany, and the difficulty in forming a coalition government when the two leading parties are increasingly unpopular. But the person asks: “Is this a problem with the parliamentary governments as they exist in Europe? In particular in Germany and in the United Kingdom, where you have minority coalitions, where you have governments that have very little response to the issues of the constituents and the population. Would there be a possibility of reform, to move from a parliamentary system to a strong presidential system, or would people declare that that’s too authoritarian?”

Zepp-LaRouche: The presidential system does not fully solve the problem either, as you can see in the United States, where you have more of a plutocracy than a democracy. Given the fact that Wall Street spends several billion dollars on a Senate seat on average, and many millions on a Congressional seat, and then these Congressmen and Senators show an incredible loyalty to the military-industrial complex and other aspects of Wall Street, I don’t think that that is a real answer.

What is needed is something much more fundamental. We need a large movement of state citizens, because any system does not function if the citizens are corrupted. You need individual people who step forward, coming from their professions as scientists, as teachers, as all kinds of craftsmen, doctors, all kinds of different walks of life, who then decide to devote a certain time of their lives to the common good. And they have to try to qualify themselves so that they could be the president, or the chancellor, or the minister, because they have mastered economics, culture, history, science.

We are right now in a situation where the typical, professional politician—many of them in the Bundestag, for example—they’ve never had a profession, they have not learned anything to earn their living, they have never paid taxes. They came from universities, which in many cases they did not graduate from, and then they went into politics—and they’re not competent! That’s the problem. We have a Foreign Minister in Germany who does not know what the word “diplomacy” means! Because she has not ever, in the three years she has been in office, she has not ever demonstrated that she knows the art of diplomacy!

Nevertheless, we have—as I said before—a much deeper intellectual crisis of the West, because, where are the people who are independent thinkers, who have acquired vast areas of knowledge on their own merit? It’s becoming a minority! And it’s not these people who are running the parties.

There are some parties where you have more intellectuals than others, but we need, really, a cultural renaissance, because the entire “post-Christian culture,” as Foreign Minister Lavrov called it, that has led to a complete elimination of the entire body of knowledge of ... 2,500 years of European history and everything that goes with it, which was part of the Humboldt education system. That has to be reinstalled. The problem now is we don’t have teachers who are competent in that.

We need, really, an above-party movement of citizens, because the party structure is a model which has proven that it doesn’t function.