

III. In Memoriam

Dr. George Koo, 1938-2024

A Chinese-American Patriot and World Citizen

‘Win-Win’ Cooperation with China, Not ‘Lose-Lose’ War!

by Gerald Belsky

April 17—Dr. George Koo, one of the most important longtime leaders in the Chinese-American community, passed away on September 24, 2024. Koo was an engineer, business advisor, international relations expert, prolific columnist and commentator, and a tireless and courageous fighter both for better relations between the United States and China, and against the illegal witch hunt against Chinese-Americans by the permanent bureaucracy inside the U.S. intelligence community. His strong and unwavering voice of reason for the necessity of good relations with China, as an existential issue for the U.S. and the rest of the world, will be sorely missed—yet must be heard now!

Koo’s clear call for “win-win” cooperation between China and the U.S., so as to raise the living standards of the Global South, especially needs to be heard by the new President Donald Trump Administration. This approach, as opposed to playing the “zero-sum game” of tragically seeing China’s rise as a threat to America, is the best way to rebuild America’s own collapsing industrial base and infrastructure. Geopolitics is a game, Koo believed, which will harm both nations, but America even more so since China is so much more advanced in science and industrial technology. The Trump Administration



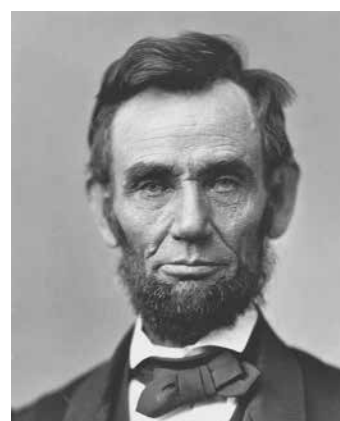
Courtesy of George Koo

Dr. George P. Koo

needs his clear insights on this matter to build on its very positive resetting of its relationship with Russia in the name of ending the threat of global war, rather than potentially trying to play Russia against China in some new geopolitical game, in the name of replacing “unipolarity” with “multipolar great power competition.”

George Koo and Anson Burlingame

In the last few years of his life, it was natural that Koo became a friend of the Schiller Institute. He was both a “world citizen,” to use Schiller’s term, who had visited 80 nations and studied their cultures, as well as a true American patriot in the image of President Lincoln’s great ambassador to China, Anson Burlingame (1820-1870), in whose name



President Lincoln’s great ambassador to China, Anson Burlingame.

Koo founded the Burlingame Foundation to foster better relations between the two countries.

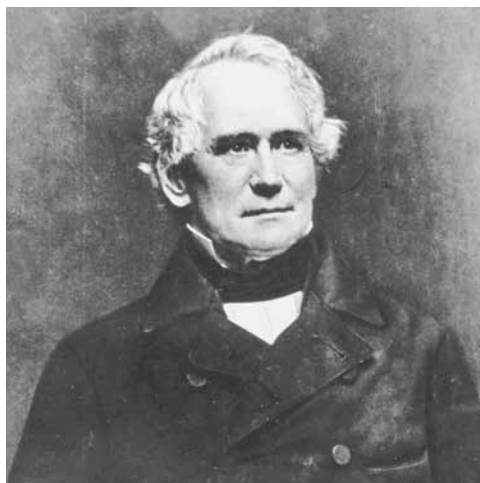
His own discovery of Burlingame's life reflects his constant desire to learn and discover, and then act on his discoveries. He had first heard of Burlingame in 2009, when he had read in a local Burlingame, California newspaper about a presentation by the Burlingame Historical Society on the city's namesake. Koo was so inspired by the commitment of Burlingame—an abolitionist, U.S. Congressman, a founder of the Republican Party, and supporter of Abraham Lincoln—to treat China with all the respect due a sovereign nation, that he organized along with a few others the Burlingame Foundation to revive these same relations between the U.S. and China. Here is how he expressed this commitment in a recorded [video interview](#) with *Executive Intelligence Review* (EIR) in 2022:

The reason for me and some of the others to start the Burlingame Foundation was really to remind the people of the world, especially in the U.S. and China, that there was a point in time, in history, when the relationship between the two countries was really exemplary, and we would like to see it go back to that basis again.

As Koo explained in the interview, Burlingame, after serving as Lincoln's ambassador to China, so impressed the Chinese in the wake of their experience with the British Empire and other European powers, that the Emperor of China chose him to lead a Chinese delegation to the U.S.—something unprecedented then and unique to this day—to negotiate a treaty which respected the equal sovereignty of China's interests (later abrogated by the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882). Following this successful mission, Burlingame then led a Chinese delegation to Europe to at-



Alexander Hamilton in a drawing by John Trumbull.



Library of Congress

Lincoln's economic advisor, Henry C. Carey.

tempt to negotiate a similar treaty. Unfortunately, he died of pneumonia in Russia on the way.¹

Burlingame's fight for the recognition by the U.S. and other nations of China's equal sovereignty, while reflecting the principles of the American Revolution and the Declaration of Independence, is also reflected in Helga Zepp-LaRouche's "[Ten Principles of a New International Security of Development Architecture](#)," which Koo recognized when he was introduced to the Schiller Institute.

Indeed, this author was first introduced to Dr. Koo in early November 2021, when I happened to see a webinar, "Peace, Not Hate," one of a nine-part series on Chinese history and U.S.-China relations, sponsored by the Coalition for Peace of 11 organizations, including Pivot to Peace and Code Pink.

The subject was the unequal treaties dealing with China in the 19th Century, in which Koo spoke about the legacy of Anson Burlingame. I submitted a question asking whether he knew about the American System of Alexander Hamilton and Henry C. Carey, of which Lincoln was a proponent. I later spoke to him by phone and introduced him to the LaRouche movement. Shortly after, on Nov. 13, Koo addressed a Schiller Institute conference, on the theme, "[The Survival of the World Depends on Whether the U.S. and China Can Get Along](#)."

George Koo's Background: From China to America

Dr. Koo recounted his history in an [EIR interview](#). He was born in 1938 in one of the most tumultuous periods in Chinese history, in the small hamlet of Changting in Fujian Province, just after Japan had

1. For more on the role of Anson Burlingame within the history of U.S.-China relations, see William Jones, "[America-China Relations: The Longer View](#)," *EIR*, April 24, 2018.

launched a full-scale invasion of China in 1937. His parents were graduates of, and affiliated with, Xiamen University, whose leaders had foreseen the Japanese invasion of the province's strategically located Port of Xiamen, across from the Taiwan Strait, and had relocated the university 200 miles across the mountains, which the Japanese never saw the need to cross. As a result, he grew up in relatively peaceful surroundings in the midst of the war, during which approximately 15 million Chinese were killed. As he observed, "I was fortunate. I never saw a single Japanese soldier, and I never lived under the Japanese occupation with all its brutality and inhumanity."

After the war, Koo's family moved back to Xiamen, and his father received a fellowship from the Nationalist government, paid from Japanese reparations, to study marine biology in the U.S. at the University of Washington.

In 1949, as the Nationalist government fell in the Chinese Civil War, Koo and the rest of his family joined his father in Seattle. He told *EIR* that when he had come to the United States at age 11 he knew no English, but his Chinese education had given him "a great foundation, not only in the Chinese language, but also an appreciation of Chinese culture and Chinese history." He also had a great ability and desire to learn, undoubtedly inherited from his scientist parents. Plus, he said, the Seattle public schools at the time were excellent. Seven years later, he won a work-study partial scholarship to MIT, where he gained both bachelor and master of science degrees in chemical engineering. He married his wife of 62 years, May, when both were graduate students at MIT.

During his graduate studies, Koo got a job at Boeing, working on the Saturn rocket engine which took our astronauts to the Moon, and later at Allied Chemical. He earned a doctorate degree in chemical engineering from the Stevens Institute of Technology in 1969. With this background in engineering and industry, he went into economic research and studying industrial processes, and soon began providing economic advice to companies that wanted to do business in China in light of the new relationship with the U.S. following President Richard Nixon's Administration opening relations in 1972. Becoming the "bridge" between U.S. businesses and China, and, more importantly, helping Americans and Chinese to understand each other, became Koo's lifelong mission.

"I joined SRI [formerly the Stanford Research Institute] in conducting what is called industrial economic

research," he said in the *EIR* interview. "From there, I joined Chase Bank and subsequently Bear Stearns to work on China trade advisory business. For an appreciable period of time, I was helping American businesses doing business in China, establishing business relationships and also negotiating joint venture contracts, cooperation, and so on. From that basis, I developed a very basic understanding of China, how China works, where they're coming from. As we got later into the relationship, I could see that there was a tremendous gap in understanding between China and the U.S., and I sort of took upon myself the role to help bridge the understanding between the two countries. That's when I began to write about U.S.-China relations."

U.S.-China Cooperation on The Belt and Road Is 'Win-Win'

In his speech at the Nov. 13 Schiller Institute conference, Dr. Koo remarked that:

China is accused of human rights abuses. Well, how can you practice rampant human rights abuses when you take 850 million out of poverty? China has repeatedly shown that they care about the livelihood of every citizen inside China, and based on their Belt and Road Initiative around the world, they show they care about the livelihood of everybody around the world.

He continued:

In terms of the Belt and Road, China has qualified itself because of all the infrastructure investment that made sense. They built bridges, they built highways, they built high-speed rail; now they're taking their expertise to the rest of the world, and offering it to help the other countries. ...

So, I have to ask: Is China qualified to benefit the rest of the world? Can the U.S., with the recent Belt and Road Initiative providing as it is now, can they provide a competitive type of offer? Maybe so, maybe not. In any case, a Belt and Road type of initiative should not be win-lose. It should be a win-win for everybody.

Koo concluded his speech by calling for cooperation with China as a "win-win" proposition:

We seem to be spending our energy trying to

push China's head under water, rather than trying to compete on our own. In the meantime, China is focusing on the development of their technology, and developing their economy. There's no question that China's economy, if not already surpassing the U.S.—[it] certainly is on a purchasing-power parity [basis]—and it's inevitable with their number of people, that they will surpass the size of the U.S. economy. I think it's quite obvious that we need the two largest economies to collaborate and work together. There are so many global problems that need co-operation, not competition; it needs the countries thinking about [a] win-win outcome.

‘Win-Win,’ Instead of ‘Lose-Lose’

In the interview, *EIR*'s Mike Billington asked him about his prior presentation at the Schiller Institute conference on why the U.S. relationship with China had degenerated into “trying to push China's head underwater” when the U.S. realized that China had surpassed it in economic growth in many ways. Here is a section of the interview which captures the way Koo insightfully thought and spoke, in a straightforward manner, designed to wake Americans out of their self-destructive “zero-sum approach.” This kind of thinking can only lead to “lose-lose,” he insisted, instead of the Chinese offer of “win-win”—with America probably losing more! This is the advice the new Trump Administration needs:

EIR: You spoke at the Schiller Institute conference on November 13. Your presentation was called “The Survival of Our World Depends on Whether the U.S. and China Can Get Along.” You noted there that the Chinese economy, by certain kinds of accounting, is now larger than that of the U.S., and that ... the U.S. response has been, as you said, to “push China's head underwater rather than trying to compete on its own.” I concur with you on that. What would you say is the economic and technological impact of that policy, both on China, and also on the U.S.?

Dr. Koo: It's unfortunately a zero-sum approach that the U.S. is taking. First, it assumes that by taking this approach the U.S. will win at the expense of China, and that China will lose. But what will actually happen, of course, in a zero-sum approach, is that each side will endeavor to win at the expense of the other. The eventual outcome is lose-lose—both sides lose. It's arguable

whether China will lose more than the U.S., and the reason I say that is because China has a much more vibrant, healthy trading relationship with virtually all parts of the world compared to the U.S. So, economically, China has a lot more reach and flexibility.

Second, it goes without saying that China has a very complete, robust manufacturing base, which we do not. We have already emptied out our manufacturing base, and for Trump to impose a tariff barrier and presume that that will bring the manufacturing base back is very wrongheaded. It shows his, I guess, ignorance on the basic principles of economics. I don't find—and I don't expect that very many manufacturing firms will come back unless the economics is basically favorable. And as you know, the justification for the tariff barriers was that it was going to be “free money” coming to the U.S. Treasury, and the Chinese exporters were going to pay for it.

And of course, that was far from reality. The reality is the increased prices the American consumers will end up paying, so it's not free money; it's coming out of one pocket and going to the other. That just raises the cost of living. There's no question that by separating or attempting to separate the two economic spheres of influence, if you will, that both will lose. I'm not at all sure that the U.S. will come out ahead in a lose-lose outcome.

Later in the interview, in response to a question about founder of the Chinese Republic Sun Yat-sen's promotion of Hamilton's American System economics, Dr. Koo pointed out, “One of Hamilton's principles was the protection of homegrown industries through tariff barriers, and we saw China do that. They did protect their homegrown industries—they called them the pillar industries. They would protect them from competition, up to a certain point. But they also understand that there is an end-point to when protective barriers, tariff barriers, cease to be working in their own interests.”

Koo Attacks Hypocritical ‘Rules-Based Order’

In the interview, as in his regular columns in *Asia Times* and his frequent webcast appearances, Koo always spoke polemically and ironically to counter the vast propaganda campaign designed to brainwash Americans that China, and also Russia, were enemies which had to be countered in order to protect the so-called “rules-based order” and “democratic values.”

On the question of Taiwan being the spark for a war with China, despite the U.S. formally accepting the One-China policy, he had this to say in his *EIR* interview:

I think Taiwan could be a spark for a war and conflagration if that's what the United States wants. If the U.S. pushes to the point where Beijing feels that they have to respond, then we will have a disaster on our hands. But as you know, the way the situations are being portrayed by our mainstream media and by our politicians is totally distorted—whether it's about Taiwan, about Xinjiang, about Afghanistan, about any part of the world where we have troops and we have bases. Somehow, we're there to save the world, and the Chinese and the Russians are there to destroy the world, whereas in actual fact, it's just the opposite.

On the question of the supposed “human rights” violations being perpetrated against the Uyghurs, Koo had this to say about the difference between China-bashers Mike Pompeo and Tony Blinken, who at the time was in the Biden Administration:

There is a purpose to [U.S. Secretary of State] Mike Pompeo and his successor, [Antony] Blinken, and the media coverage to emphasize “human rights violations in Xinjiang,” to the point that now [President Joe] Biden is actually forbidding Americans from buying cotton from Xinjiang. What is the purpose? Well, the purpose is to keep the Uyghurs in Xinjiang poor and underemployed. And why do we do that? Because wherever there's instability, that's what we want. That's how we, the United States, maintain control. We thrive on instability anywhere else in the world. ...

There's so much fabrication and distortion going on. Mike Pompeo was actually very open compared to Blinken. Mike Pompeo said: “We lie, we cheat, we steal”—came right out in the open. Blinken does the same thing, but he's a little smoother, so he doesn't say, “We lie, we cheat, we steal.” But that's what he does. He talks about, “China needs to follow the rules-based international order.” What is the rules-based international order? Well, if you listen to Blinken, it turns out the rules-based international

order is whatever he says it is, not by the United Nations or by a multipolar type of definition. And of course, he has continued to parrot the Xinjiang human rights violations [line].

On the question of “democracy,” he had this to say:

I think, in the U.S., we are very flexible as to what democracy really is. If you're a country on our side, you have democracy. If you're against us, you have no democracy. Now, what is the example of our democracy? Let me count the ways: Our democracy is where the two parties bicker, nitpick, and get nothing done. We don't look at the global issues, the bigger issues of what's good for our country. We don't move on infrastructure. We don't invest in health care. We don't really care much about the education that we talk about.

Koo Takes on FBI and DOJ Witch Hunt Against Chinese-Americans

Dr. Koo was fearless, never showing any defensiveness or fear for his own personal safety when he attacked the witch-hunt by the FBI and other agencies against Chinese nationals, and especially Chinese scientists. He was a leading spokesman for the prestigious Chinese-American organization Committee of 100 in defending the rights of Chinese Americans.

At the cited Schiller Institute conference, he characterized the FBI attacks on Chinese-Americans in this way:

China is ... accused of being a threat to U.S. national security, and as a result, ethnic Chinese-Americans working in the science and technology field in the United States are harassed by the FBI, arrested without due process, their careers and livelihoods destroyed, and then—without any apology or offer of compensation—the Department of Justice frequently then drops all the charges, and leaves these people to dangle on their own.

Koo's sense of incisive ironic humor is demonstrated in his attacks on the FBI in going after all Chinese as “spies” or “potential spies.” From the *EIR* interview:

We had a “Chinese expert,” Paul Moore, not long retired now from the FBI, who basically

said, “if you see three Chinese at a cocktail party, they’re probably talking about the espionage and the intelligence that they’ve gathered. Just any three Chinese, or maybe Asians, could be guilty of spying.” This guy used to be the carpool buddy of [FBI agent] Robert Hanssen. They used to go to work together. Robert Hanssen, if you don’t remember, or don’t know, was indeed the biggest double agent for the Soviet Union before he was finally caught and sent to jail [in 2001]. He [Moore] never smelled a rat sitting next to Robert Hanssen, but he could see three Chinese standing on the corner as spying for China.



Public domain

Sun Yat-sen, founder of the Chinese Republic.

the role of the founder of the Chinese Republic, Sun Yat-sen, who is revered by Communists and Nationalists alike, in promoting the American System of Lincoln. As he said in his interview with *EIR*:

Yes, I think it’s fair to say that the influence of Sun Yat-sen, or in Chinese, Sun Zhongshan, continues to be a legacy that is still admired and studied, even in today’s China, even though he was not a leader of the Communist Party movement. ... No question that his Three Principles is taken directly from Abraham Lincoln; he was an unabashed admirer of the American System and democracy as defined by the U.S. To a large extent, I think, as you said, the Com-

munist Party, since the founding of the PRC [People’s Republic of China] very much did follow Sun Yat-sen’s doctrine along the way.

Besides speaking at two Schiller Institute conferences, he participated in several meetings of the weekly International Peace Coalition, initiated by Mrs. LaRouche in 2022.

Koo definitely believed in a dialogue of cultures. His obituary stated:

George greatly enjoyed experiencing and learning from other cultures; he and May traveled extensively to over 80 countries spanning all continents except Antarctica. He organized most of their travel, frequently joined by family and friends who commented that George “enlarged their vision of the world.”

Lyndon LaRouche often commented on a *New Yorker* cartoon about a man at his own funeral, asking, as he went to the grave, “What was that all about?” Dr. George Koo, however, knew the answer. His [obituary](#) noted, “He wanted his epitaph to read, ‘He wanted to make a difference.’”

George Koo and the LaRouche Movement

As a self-identified “bridge” between China and America, focused on bringing people in both cultures to understand and work with one another for the betterment of all humanity, Koo would have seen the coherence between his life’s work and the LaRouche movement’s promotion of cooperation with the Belt and Road Initiative as a key part in realizing a new security and development architecture. He also would have seen in the LaRouche movement’s ideas the reflection of both the Confucian principles he inherited from his Chinese culture, and the best principles of the American Revolution from his adopted nation.

This is why he made it very clear that he appreciated the work of the LaRouche movement, when he said in his *EIR* interview, “I applaud the Schiller Institute and Helga LaRouche and all the effort that you guys are doing, trying to get the message out. You probably have a better listenership in China and Russia and elsewhere. And somehow, we need to get your voice louder here in the United States.”

When he first came into contact with the LaRouche movement, Koo was unaware of the role of Abraham Lincoln as a follower of the American System of Hamiltonian economics. However, he was certainly aware of