

## I. Strategic Policy Interviews

# Interview with Former U.S. Ambassador and China Expert Chas Freeman

## *U.S. Foreign Policy Is Dangerous and Reprehensible*

*The following interview with Ambassador Chas Freeman was conducted by EIR's Mike Billington on Nov. 29, 2021. Ambassador Freeman's extensive career in U.S. foreign policy includes his role as interpreter for President Richard Nixon in his famous 1972 visit to China. He did the legal analysis that inspired the Taiwan Relations Act of 1979 and was Country Director for China, Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for African affairs, and Assistant Secretary of Defense. He served abroad in India and Taiwan, and as Deputy Chief of Mission at the U.S. Embassies in China and Thailand. He was U.S. Ambassador to Saudi Arabia during the 1990-1991 war to liberate Kuwait. He edited the Encyclopedia Britannica article on Diplomacy, and is the author of several books on statecraft as well as on Middle East and Asian policy. A video of the interview is available [here](#).*

**Chas Freeman:** I'm Chas Freeman and it's a pleasure to be with you, Mike.

**EIR:** Do you want to say a bit about your history, your many hats?

**Freeman:** Well, not particularly. I was a public servant for 30 years, emerged penniless from that experience and have since devoted myself to remedying that condition with modest success. I am currently a visiting scholar at Brown University's Watson Institute for International and Public Affairs, and a frequent speaker on a number of subjects which are controversial in U.S. foreign policy, including relations with China, with the Middle East and so forth. So that's about it.

### Will the U.S. Start Nuclear War?

**EIR:** Ok, so I prepared some topics. I'll just go through them and let you expound. I wanted to start with the worst-case scenario, which is, as you noted in



*Ambassador Chas Freeman*

your Watson Institute presentation last week, that China launched its nuclear weapon development after the U.S. had threatened to use nuclear weapons against China during the 1958 crisis, over the islands in the Taiwan Strait. Admiral Charles A. Richard, the current commander of the U.S. Strategic Command, said this summer, that while nuclear war used to be considered unlikely, due to the rise of China it was now likely.

Do you suspect that the U.S. would rather use nuclear weapons than lose a military conflict over Taiwan?

**Freeman:** Well, that has always been the strategic nuclear doctrine espoused by the United States: The assumption that if conventional warfare fails, there is a nuclear option, and indeed that was the case with the use of nuclear weapons by the United States in World War Two. It was only when it was determined that conventional warfare would be problematic, casualties would be enormous, that it was decided to drop nuclear weapons on Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

This is consistent with American reasoning over the years. I find it very unnerving, frankly, in the current context. There are now nine countries known to have nuclear weapons. The United States risks the use of nuclear weapons against our own territory if we threaten or use such weapons against others. We have seen, for example, that a policy of maximum pressure on North Korea has driven the North Koreans to develop an intercontinental ballistic missile and a nuclear warhead for it, precisely to strike the United States and to deter American attack or regime change efforts against Pyongyang.

We now have a different situation than we did in World War Two, when we had a monopoly on nuclear weapons. And it seems to me a very serious misjudgment to imagine that nuclear weapons remain the ace in the hole that Adm. Richard believes them to be. Now, in the case of China, it is not simply the nuclear modernization program that the United States has undertaken, to which we've committed some \$1.4 trillion dollars, much of it aimed at China, in order to achieve battlefield supremacy over the Chinese, but it is also the breakdown of all of the understandings that enable peaceful coexistence in the Taiwan Strait.

In the finessing of the issue of Taiwan in U.S.-China relations, essentially, the United States agreed to three conditions: one, that we would end official relations with Taipei; two, that, we would withdraw all military personnel and installations from the island; and three, we would void our defense commitment to the island. We have now gone back on each of these commitments.

It's very hard to tell the difference between the way we conduct relations with Taipei now, and an official relationship or diplomatic relationship. We know that there are now American troops on Taiwan training Taiwanese forces, and we hear loud calls in Congress and elsewhere for the U.S. defense of Taiwan, on the grounds that it is a democracy resisting an authoritarian government. Somehow lost in all this is the history.

You mentioned the 1958 offshore islands crisis, involving Quemoy and Matsu, as the precipitator of the Chinese nuclear program. But the U.S. threatened the use of nuclear weapons on China during the Korean War, and on three occasions that I know of. The Chinese claim there are six occasions on which they were threatened with nuclear attack, on precisely the grounds that Adm. Richard appears to espouse. And this did indeed lead Mao Zedong to demand help from the Soviet Union, in developing a Chinese nuclear deterrent.

Soviet refusal to oblige played a large role in generating the breakdown of Sino-Soviet relations.

So, this is a history that is very tangled, very long, very complex, and which we appear to approach rather in the mode of people with Alzheimer's—you know, where we remember nothing, and everything is new every time.

### **China's Nuclear Deterrent**

**EIR:** You also noted in your presentation with Lyle Goldstein at the Watson Institute last week, that China had given fair warning of their military interventions before Korea in 1950, India in 1962, and Vietnam, when they crossed the border in 1979. But nonetheless, Washington is ignoring similar warnings that are coming today over Taiwan. Why do you think, and what is your expectation if China does in fact use force?

**Freeman:** A great deal of the denial that one sees in Washington on subjects like this, reflects hubris on the part of the so-called blob—the foreign policy establishment and its military component. But it represents a failure to understand the extent to which the global order and geopolitics have rearranged themselves, as others rise to match American power, at least at the regional level.

When we did the normalization agreement with China and finessed the Taiwan issue, China did not have the military means to mount an invasion or an attack on Taiwan with any credibility. It now does. It has been developing a wide range of options for taking action to resolve the Chinese Civil War, which is how the Taiwan issue came about, and to bring Taiwan into an agreed relationship with the rest of China. It prefers a negotiated means of doing this. But it's become apparent that it is developing alternatives, including a wide range of possibilities for the use of force, and it is in that context that one must see the recent Chinese heavying-up of nuclear forces.

If China is engaged in a calibrated escalation of pressure on Taiwan to bring it to the negotiating table, which is what it is currently doing, that's one thing. But if it is put in the position where it sees no peaceful prospect of resolving the Taiwan question, then it is forced to consider the use of force. And the conquest of Taiwan would have to be conducted with speed and with a knockout blow. It would have to present a *fait accompli* to Americans who wish to intervene in that conflict. And it is in this case that the nuclear deterrent

becomes invaluable, because China will be in a position to say to the United States, “if you intervene, all options are on the table,” to use the phrase that we have so often used with regard to others. In other words, are you really prepared to give up Chicago in order to preserve Taiwan’s democracy and autonomy? Since, if there is a war over Taiwan, the first things to perish will be Taiwan’s democracy and its prosperity. Are you really prepared to make this trade off?

This is a replay of Cold War-style Cuban Missile Crisis confrontation that we should be doing everything possible to avoid. But it is looking more likely every day.

### Resolving the Taiwan Issue Peacefully

**EIR:** Do you think there’s any potential within Taiwan for the Guomindang [Kuomintang, KMT] or any other forces within Taiwan, who would prefer having normal relations leading towards a long-term peaceful reunification, to regain any kind of political influence, or win an election in Taiwan? And on the other hand, what would it take for Washington to convince the DPP [Democratic Progressive Party] and President Tsai Ing-wen to negotiate with Beijing?

**Freeman:** I think the KMT’s electoral prospects are limited, and if it is elected, it will not be on the basis of a vision of cross-Strait relations, but on the basis of local issues. Tip O’Neill was right, all politics is local, and people in Taiwan are much more concerned, for the most part, about issues closer to home, than the prospect of conflict with their Chinese motherland.

The DPP contains quite a variety of opinions. There are those who are firmly committed to the idea of independence and advocate risking it now. There are those who, like Tsai Ing-wen, now say that Taiwan is already independent, and has no need to declare independence. This is an answer to the extremists in her own party who advocate immediate declaration of independence. Unfortunately, it is heard very differently across the Strait. Beijing hears it as meeting the conditions it has set for having to use force, namely that Taiwan

achieves independence, where there is no prospect of a peaceful reintegration of the two sides of the Strait.

So, what could we do to influence the DPP? We would have to back off from our support of our denial of the One-China principle. As you recall, Taiwan and the mainland in 1972, during the negotiation of the Shanghai Communique, both Taipei and Beijing were firmly in agreement that there was only one China, and Taiwan was part of it. Taiwan’s democracy has changed the view of many in Taiwan on that question, and so it is not easy now to have a discussion. In the previous government in Taipei, lip service was paid to the One-China principle, and this permitted very productive dialogue across the Strait; that dialogue has now dried up.

If there is no dialogue, if there are no talks, there is no apparent path to a peaceful resolution of the issues.

So, I think the United States ought to be advocating dialogue. We should be saying firmly that we do not agree with the DPP that Taiwan is an independent state. But this is politically very difficult, given the anti-China hysteria in the United States at present.

### Belt and Road—An Opportunity, Not a Threat

**EIR:** In regard to that general anti-China hysteria, as you know, *EIR* and the Schiller Institute have long promoted the Belt and Road Initiative. To a certain extent, we initiated this idea back in the 1990s with the Chinese. But the idea of bringing major infrastructure development to nations which have been denied major infrastructure and development by the colonial and neocolonial forces—this is not aimed at taking over the West, as many Western leaders like to argue, but rather to liberate these nations from poverty, as they did their own population in relatively record time, 30 to 40 years, eliminating abject poverty for seven or eight hundred million people. So why, in your view, do the U.S. and the EU oppose this process of the Belt and Road?

**Freeman:** Well, I think unfortunately, the natural American response to any international development at present is to view it through military eyes. There-



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*“The U.S. should be saying firmly that we do not agree with the Democratic Progressive Party that Taiwan is an independent state.” In the local elections in Taiwan on Nov. 28, the KMT achieved a landslide victory, delivering a major setback to the DPP.*

fore, there is a suspicion that the Belt and Road has a geopolitical military purpose. I don't think it does. I think it is a geo-economic outreach, which takes advantage of the fact that China now has the best infrastructure construction technology and equipment on the planet. That it has surpluses of materials for construction, like concrete, aluminum, steel and so forth. And it has experience in solving very difficult engineering problems, and it is applying this to create a potential economic community that will span the entire Eurasian landmass from Lisbon to Vladivostok, and North, from Arkhangelsk to Colombo, as well as parts of East Africa.

This will be an open economic architecture based on connectivity, whether it's roads, railroads, fiber optic cable, ports, airports, industrial estates or whatever. And I think the Chinese bet, is that in such an open environment, China's size and dynamism would give it a natural leadership role. But this is very different from imagining the sort of military positioning that we characteristically try to impose on such developments.

I think the proper response by the United States to the Belt and Road Initiative would be to take advantage of it. Somebody builds a road, let's drive an American car down it. Someone connects Tokyo and London with fiber optic cable, let's use that to improve the speed of trading on the stock market. If someone builds an airport, there's no reason that only Chinese aircraft can use that, and so forth and so on. I'm very impressed actually, by the extent to which the Belt and Road Initiative is not just physical connectivity, but a series of agreements on the management of the transit of goods, openness to services, improvement of customs and immigration procedures, bonded transit between China and Europe and a third country or region. I think this is a great opportunity, if it's approached in that way, for American business, for the American economy.

We need to leverage the prosperity of China and the increasing prosperity of Central Asian and European countries, as well as these African countries, and South Asian countries, to the benefit of our economy, not regard it as a threat.

## There Is No Debt Trap from China

**EIR:** You say that the opposition to this is primarily because it's viewed militarily, but on the other hand, the western financial institutions have made very clear over the last few years, and emphatically at the Glasgow COP26 conference, that their primary interest, the financial interests, people like Mark Carney and the Bank of England, and Wall Street interests, is to stop investments into fossil fuels, into any industry or agriculture they deem to have too much carbon, because of their argument that carbon is going to burn up the world and so forth.

This would appear to be an economic policy not so different from the colonial policy of intentionally wanting to keep these countries in a state of dependence and backwardness. What would you think?



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*"The proper response by the U.S. to the Belt and Road Initiative would be to take advantage of it. Somebody builds a road, let's drive an American car down it."*  
*Shown: the just-completed 1,035 km China-Laos Railway.*

**Freeman:** Well, I don't agree with the theory that climate change and carbon emissions should not be tackled, but I think that's really almost irrelevant here.

It's almost laughable that the very institutions which pioneered debt trap diplomacy—a phrase invented by an Indian polemicist to describe a mythical reality involving Chinese lending—the very countries and institutions that pioneered this, for example, in loans to Latin America and so forth, now object to the Chinese competing with them for lending. I don't see anything very profound in all this. It is just a case of banks trying to screw other banks.

If JPMorgan and Goldman Sachs and Citibank, or Wells Fargo or whoever, whichever criminal enterprise you wish to refer to, if they cannot beat the terms that



the Chinese offer for various reasons, including political factors, and Western insistence on human rights and other norms that the Chinese leave to the decision of local people, then it's natural that they would try to prevent China from making loans.

As a general proposition, competition with China is mainly economic and technological. It doesn't fit easily into a military prism, and it doesn't fit easily into a financial prism. So, the odd thing is, if you want to compete, the best way to do it is to improve your own performance and offer better terms. It's not to try to hamstring or tear down your competitor. If you are a rival of China, that could potentially be very beneficial to both you and to the Chinese, because that is a competition to improve performance on both sides.

If you are engaged in adversarial antagonism, which is clearly what is happening here, then your means of competition is trying to trip up your competitor. And that does nothing for yourself, your own people, your own country, or your ultimate competitiveness. There are many issues involved in this, but at root, it is just a tradition of underhanded, rather amoral competition by Western banks.

### **The U.S. Needs Trust Busting**

**EIR:** I agree with you. I'll just mention as a side note here, when we first published in 2014, the 370 page [report](#) called *The New Silk Road Becomes the World Land-Bridge*, promoting this, it was our hope—I guess you would say, even an expectation—that we would take this report to American entrepreneurs and investors, and they would say, “Yes, wonderful, a great opportunity for profitable investment and development.” But as we now know, nothing like that happened.

**Freeman:** Well, I think part of the problem is, there is a sense of malaise in the United States at present, for good reason. And part of the reason for poor performance and slipping competitiveness is the emergence of an economy dominated by corporate oligopolies, rather than engaged in open market competition. This is true, people have noticed it, particularly in the area of media and social media, communications, telecommunications. But it's true more generally. Any mall in the United States that you visit is likely to have the same outlets, the same franchises. The role of small business, whether it's booksellers or independent restaurants or whatever it is, has been largely superseded by national level monopolies and oligopolies.

So, I think part of the problem, if we wish to compete with China, which despite its label as communist or socialist, has a fiercely competitive domestic market with a very fractured structure that generates cutthroat competition between enterprises, whether they're owned by the state or by the province or city, or by individuals, or by the shareholders, doesn't really matter.

If we wish to compete with China, one of the things we've got to do is rediscover antitrust policy. Interestingly, the Chinese are currently applying antitrust policy to the very media oligopolies, the analogs of the ones here—the Facebooks and Instagrams and Twitters and whatever—on their own soil. And in many ways, China seems to me to be recapitulating the American response to the Gilded Age. It has had its Gilded Age, like Teddy Roosevelt and company; it is now discovering the merits of antitrust policy. And I suspect that John D. Rockefeller was not very pleased when Standard Oil was broken up, and that there are moans and groans on Wall Street about this being the end of capitalism. Actually, it saved capitalism from itself.

We are looking at the Chinese through glasses that are either military, or that ignore our own history, our own past, our own experience with financial capitalism, which the Chinese appear to be determined not to develop. I wish them luck. It may be an inevitability.

### **The Foolishness of the ‘Leaders’ Summit for Democracy’**

**EIR:** On the historical side of all this, you were engaged in the opening up to China. You were with Nixon on his first visit, as his interpreter. You mentioned in your presentation last week that the opening up was largely based on the idea of the “China card” against the Soviet Union. Now China and Russia are increasingly coordinating both their strategic and economic relations. The NATO provocations against Russia over Ukraine are as intense as those over Taiwan.

In your view, is this administration, or the previous one, or Congress, or the media, or Wall Street—are any of them taking into consideration that a military operation in Taiwan, or in Ukraine, could easily become a war with both Russia and China?

**Freeman:** I suppose there are people at the Pentagon who understand that. It's pretty clear the American political elite does not make that connection.

Just a minor correction on the opening to China: it



DoS/Freddie Everett

*“By excluding countries that don’t meet or aspire to sycophancy in the democratic sphere ... we are trying to replicate the Cold War. I don’t think we’ll succeed.” Here, Secretary of State Antony Blinken speaks remotely with young leaders at the Summit for Democracy, Dec. 8, 2021.*

was Richard Nixon’s idea to open to China after he contemplated the consequences of a possible Soviet attack on China, removing China as a factor in global geopolitics. And that caused him to see China as the useful counter to Soviet expansionism that it was, and it led to the United States, essentially in the 1970s, treating China as a protected state. We had no real expectations that the Chinese would do anything, but we really wanted them to survive, and to remain a part of the global chessboard. So that was the origin of it. It then turned out that this set up a healthy competition in Moscow for our favor. So, the famous strategic triangle worked to our advantage.

Generally speaking, in diplomacy, or military strategy for that matter, it is considered wise to divide your enemies, not unite them. But we have been doing everything possible to push Moscow and Beijing into an entente, meaning a limited partnership for limited purposes. It’s not an alliance. There is no broad mutual commitment to aid. But there are clearly understandings emerging about precisely the sort of issue that you just mentioned. If the Russians feel sufficiently provoked to take the Donbass, which is Russian-speaking, from Ukraine, it will probably time that to coincide with Chinese military operations against Taiwan, and perhaps vice

versa. So, we have done ourselves no favor by simultaneously designating China and Russia as adversaries.

I make one further point. We’re about to have a Summit on Democracy, which is ironic, because our own democracy is clearly in bad shape, and we are evaluated internationally as having a partially failed democracy. So, this is an odd moment to be attempting to trumpet the virtues of the system we ourselves are abandoning. But by trying to reorganize the world along ideological lines—democracies versus authoritarian regimes or non-democracies—the whole conceit was ridiculous! Because authoritarians—I know lots of autocrats, I’ve dealt with many of them over the years, I’ve never met one who was the least concerned about others—don’t think they have anything in common. They’re concerned to stay in power, not to keep other autocrats in power.

So, there’s no international league of autocrats, but we are creating one. Because by excluding countries that don’t meet or aspire to sycophancy in the democratic sphere, by assembling them as a sort of broad coalition aimed at Russia and China, we have stimulated Russia



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*“In assembling a broad coalition aimed at Russia and China, the U.S. has stimulated Russia and China ... to organize their own coalition. We are creating the very phenomenon we invented and imagined. And it’s not to our advantage.”*

and China to issue a joint declaration against this, and then try to organize their own coalition. We are trying to replicate the Cold War. I don’t think we’ll succeed, because basically the underlying proposition that somehow the United States is currently in a condition to appeal on a democratic basis to the world is problematic. And I don’t think countries want to choose between the United States and its designated adversaries, whether

they are China or Russia or Iran. We are in effect, creating the very phenomenon we invented and imagined. And it's not to our advantage.

**EIR:** And not only did they exclude Russia and China from invitations for this Summit of Democracy, but they left out Hungary, Singapore, all of Central Asia. But they did invite Taiwan as if it were....

**Freeman:** They also invited the Democratic Republic of the Congo, which is not a famous democracy in any one's eyes, and Angola was invited, I believe. This smacks of geopolitics rather than ideology. And it will be interesting to see how it goes. Here we are in a country where it's very uncertain that we will make it through our next general election without violence, or that there will be a peaceful transition in 2024 or 2025 when we have our next Presidential election. This is an odd moment to be insisting that others democratize. Perhaps we should focus on practicing democracy at home. I'm all in favor of democracy. I'd like to see more of it here.

### The U.S. Is Already Over China's Red Line

**EIR:** We had [Secretary of State] Tony Blinken not only inviting Taiwan to the Summit, but also going to the U.N. and calling on the U.N. to welcome Taiwan in a robust way into all the institutions of the U.N. How close would you call that to the red line?

**Freeman:** I think it's over the red line. This is a resurrection of something I did as a very young diplomat—namely, manipulate Chinese representation in the UN. Taipei sat in the Security Council representing China, and all of us in the U.S. Foreign Service were engaged in keeping it that way, while keeping Beijing out, and we were pretty good at it. It lasted for, I think, 21 years or so. And then finally, reality caught up with us in 1971, when the rest of the world repudiated our approach.

But now we're going back to it. We just had an election yesterday, in Honduras, in which a candidate committed to switch relations from Taipei to Beijing, has apparently been elected. It'll be interesting to see how that develops. The last time this happened, in El Salvador, we undertook punitive action—this was



*The Libre Party's Iris Xiomara Castro Sarmiento, President-elect of Honduras, has ended the National Party's 12-year reign. "She will have to make some hard choices."*

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under the Trump administration—to punish San Salvador for switching its allegiances.

Mrs. Castro, the president-elect apparently, in Honduras, will have to make some hard choices. Among other things, one of the reasons for Taiwan's strong foothold in the Central American region, is that it supplies the surveillance equipment and technology to keep dictatorships in power. I don't know whether Mrs. Castro, as president-elect Castro, has aspirations to do away with dictatorship sincerely, or whether she will be tempted, as Mr. Ortega was, in Nicaragua. She will also face a backlash from Americans of a certain political persuasion, so it's not going to be easy for her to keep her campaign promise. You spoke of crossing red lines. That is an effort on our part to delegitimize the government in China and legitimize that in Taipei. This is not a way to exist, coexist peacefully with Beijing, whatever it may or may not do for Taipei.

### U.S. on Afghanistan: Reprehensible

**EIR:** One approach which Helga Zepp-LaRouche has initiated, in order to try to bring these so-called adversaries together, is the situation in Afghanistan, where one would think that it's in the self-interest of all parties, to not allow that country to descend back into a terrorist conclave and opium producer. Helga has promoted what she calls Operation Ibn Sina, to try to bring all the nations together, both in the region and internationally, including the U.S. and Russia and China, to develop Afghanistan with a modern health system and other urgently needed infrastructure, to make it again a great crossroad, as it was when Bactria





WFP

*“To modernize Afghanistan, to promote the rights of women, to improve education and health care, can only be effectively carried out on a multilateral basis.” Here, Afghan women receiving food supplies at a camp organized by the World Food Program.*

was the “land of a thousand cities.”

There is a functioning so-called extended troika on Afghanistan, which is the U.S., Russia, and China, together with Pakistan, focused on the development of Afghanistan, hopefully. And just recently, Pakistan has agreed to allow India to transport wheat across its territory, which it had forbidden before, to meet the huge humanitarian disaster that’s taking place in Afghanistan.

Do you think, as Mrs. Zepp-LaRouche does, that if you can bring these nations together around the Afghan situation, this would have implications for other hotspots, including Taiwan?

**Freeman:** I think there’s a very strong case to be made that the effort that the Russians made, and then we made, to modernize Afghanistan, to promote the rights of women, to improve education and health care, can only be effectively carried out on a multilateral basis. It cannot be carried out, as Moscow and Washington attempted to do, with an occupation force engaged in pacification over resistance.

The idea of a multilateral approach to Afghan development is an excellent one, and probably the vehicle for this, given, what I’m sorry to say, is a degree of petulance and vindictiveness in Washington that is, in my view, unconscionable, by which we are withholding the Afghan national reserves from the de facto government in Kabul, and thereby pushing Afghanistan into a state of famine and anarchy, which I think is intended to punish the Taliban, but which will probably provide fertile ground for the growth of

Daesh, the ISIS, Islamic State elements, who regard the Taliban as milquetoast.

The most likely vehicle, unfortunately, does not involve the United States, but it’s probably the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, which includes most of the countries which would be needed for such an approach. We are creating a terrible humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan as we speak. Europeans may be more willing than Americans seem to be, to step forward to cooperate with others in the region to address this. So far, the Biden administration has shown a degree of cold-hearted disdain for the

suffering of Afghans, that I find really reprehensible.

Now you ask, does this have implications for Taiwan? I don’t think so. I think Afghanistan has to be approached in its own right, and the Taiwan issue is one that involves factors that are quite different from those in Afghanistan.

### **China Does Not Want To Occupy Taiwan**

**EIR:** I found something you said in your Watson Institute presentation very interesting—and you said you’d written a book about this—that nations which occupy countries tend to cause total demoralization in general, and deterioration, of the military forces themselves. I think your argument there was aimed at saying that the Chinese really do not want to have to occupy Taiwan. Do you want to say anything about that? I assumed you were looking at the deterioration of the U.S. forces and their occupation of Vietnam, and now Afghanistan, and so forth.

**Freeman:** Well, I thought my model was actually before the U.S. misadventures in either Afghanistan or Iraq. My model was the Israeli occupation of Palestine, which I think has led to a degree of cynicism and callous disregard for human life that is quite contrary to the universal values of Judaism, which inspired the original creation of Israel. I think this is actually something that is documented in many contexts.

It was interesting to me that the PLA [Peoples Liberation Army] General Staff Department, when they read the book in English, seized on this particular small section of it as a justification for producing a translation



into Chinese. This is the [book](#) [holding it up], *Arts of Power*.

It's very clear that the Chinese have absolutely no desire to replicate the Japanese occupation of Taiwan. I think I mentioned, the first 25 years of that were characterized by violent resistance and really brutal repression. I don't think in the modern world, this sort of thing would be without major effects on China's foreign relations in general. I don't doubt that they have the capability to occupy Taiwan. I think the last thing on Earth they want to do *is* to occupy Taiwan. They would much prefer, as I said, a negotiated solution which leaves Taiwan essentially self-governing, but within the context of One China.

That's something Taipei and Beijing have to work out; the United States and other countries can't speak for either one of them, and can't resolve the Chinese Civil War. It has to be resolved among Chinese. But I think it's reassuring that the PLA understands it would be a mess if it were forced to occupy Taiwan.

### **Biden Administration Failure of Foreign Policy**

**EIR:** You said at the Watson address, "Don't get me going on this crew in Washington today." I'm not sure I want to "get you going" on that, but if you look back, Biden has had long talks—a three-and-a-half hour talk with Xi Jinping. He's had a couple of meetings with [President Vladimir] Putin; he plans on another meeting before the end of the year with Putin.

But if you look back at [former President Donald] Trump, he was elected, I think to a great extent, because he said we should be friends with Russia, we should be friends with China, although he wanted to solve the trade thing. He said we should end the endless wars. And of course, none of that happened, but quite the opposite. In the current circumstance, Biden appears to want to maintain a personal friendly relationship with Xi Jinping and Putin. But the question is, is that the way policy is made in Washington? And what's your sense in that?

**Freeman:** Well, the Trump administration essen-

tially destroyed the organized policy process in Washington. Biden has tried to resurrect it, but the National Security Council staff, which is charged with coordinating policy, has now grown to such a bloated size, that it replicates the expertise of different government departments, and therefore it's incapable of synthesizing a strategy. What I mean by that is best exemplified by the Chinese expression describing a frog in a well. There's a frog at the bottom of the well, the frog looks up, and he or she sees a circle of sky, and imagines that's the universe. Well, now there are 100 frogs or more at the NSC, each imagining that the little patch of sky that they see is the universe, and there's nobody



The White House

*President Joe Biden and Vice-President Kamala Harris are briefed on the evolving situation in Afghanistan by a national security team, Aug. 18, 2021.*

ting those multiple views into a coherent whole.

It has not helped that Biden's staff, meaning his National Security Advisor, who is essentially a campaign operative, and his Secretary of State, who is a congressional staffer, are both people who built careers focused on the manipulation of domestic American opinion rather than on diplomacy, or foreign policy in general. I don't see any new ideas or vision coming out of this administration. Part of the reason for that—and I'm sure Mr. Biden, in fact, I know, he's a very decent, warm individual, and I'm sure he does wish to retain good personal relationships with other foreign leaders, including Mr. Putin and Mr. Xi. But the fact is, that he's in a box. He has no convincing majority in the House, and he has a 50-50 split in the Senate, which is not even that, because on major issues, there

are differences with some members of his own party.

So, Biden is trying to get through legislation on a variety of issues and is having a hard time doing it. In these circumstances, there's nothing in it for him, to raise new approaches to either China or Russia. Essentially, to do so would be to open himself up to additional fractious denigration by politicians within the Beltway. So, he's essentially immobilized. I used to think that perhaps if the political constellations were changed in 2022 in the midterm election, that Mr. Biden would have some flexibility, some ability to abandon the Trump policies and those of the so-called deep state. But it's now not looking very good for him in that election, which means it just adds to the paralysis.

We've had a series of meetings with both the Chinese and Russians, with the Iranians indirectly. We approached these meetings—the first two meetings in Anchorage, then in Tianjin—with an opening blast of insults directed at the Chinese. We sent Victoria Nuland, of all people, to Moscow to talk about securing the Ukraine. These are not the actions of a mature diplomatic establishment. These are the actions of an administration that comes out of a demagogic environment in Congress, and has not transcended that. So, I don't think it's a case of the individuals involved being stupid or ill-intentioned, but their experience does not suit them for dealing with these issues.

And finally, there's nobody in this administration who really knows China, other than one or two hard-liners. I think a Rush Doshi [Director for China at the National Security Council], is the epitome of that—a very serious scholar, wrote a good book, but it's infected with the Washington playbook on military matters. Kurt Campbell [Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs], is a re-engineered Soviet specialist.

Anybody who has dealt with the Chinese directly, as opposed to from an academic perch, or through occasional visits on the diplomatic level, knows that “face” is all important. If you want to drive a Chinese berserk, deprive him or her of the self-esteem that comes from the respect of those he or she respects. That is what “face” is. You get an irrational reaction, you get a sharp reaction—that is exactly what happened at Anchorage, and again, at Tianjin.

And it's not that the Chinese are not pragmatic, or that you can't talk to them, but you can't open the

discussion with anyone, as I said in the Watson meeting, by saying, “You're a moral reprobate, I despise you. Your values stink. And I'm going to do everything possible to keep you down, and maybe push you down. But by the way, I have a problem or two, I'd like you to help me on.” What do you think you're going to get when you try that approach? And that is essentially the approach that the Trump administration pioneered, and which the Biden administration has perpetuated.

### **U.S. Diplomacy Must Restore Diplomacy Over Military**

**EIR:** Another thing that I found very interesting when you were speaking at the Watson Institute, was that you said that deterrence is simply bottling up the problem, which will certainly fester and become worse. I think you know that Lyndon LaRouche had actively promoted in the late 70s and early 80s, an end to deterrence, an end to the Mutual Assured Destruction [MAD] idea, promoting the idea of the U.S. and the Russian scientific and military communities actually collaborating on building a space-based anti-missile system, which he introduced to President Reagan. Reagan adopted it, and it became the SDI [Strategic Defense Initiative]. In Reagan's words, the intent was to “render nuclear weapons obsolete.”

This never took off. The Soviets initially rejected the proposal that Lyndon LaRouche had made to them, and eventually in the U.S., the military-industrial people were more interested in building a lot of anti-missile missiles for their industries' production, than any new technology based on the frontiers of knowledge, new physical principles. So that did not work. What are your thoughts on how to end deterrence?

**Freeman:** Well, I'm not sure that I would advocate ending deterrence, I think I would advocate using it. Deterrence makes sense under one obvious circumstance—and I'm not speaking here of Mutually Assured Destruction, which is simply a form of deterrence—but deterrence in general. If circumstances are likely to evolve in a way that resolves the underlying problem that leads to potential conflict, maybe deter that conflict, then time works on your side and the problem is likely to be ameliorated or mitigated, and maybe even go away.

But that is not the case with many, many situations. A case in point, is the standoff in Korea. When the armistice



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*“To fail to deal with China and Russia on the basis of equality, and in accordance with the Westphalian order, because we rely on military deterrence, is to create a ticking bomb that may go off in the future.” Here, China’s first aircraft carrier, Liaoning, escorted by the frigate Xuchang in the Taiwan Strait, July 20, 2017.*

was signed in Korea, the United States, wearing a U.N. uniform, agreed to pursue a peace treaty. Well, we never did. Instead, we focused purely on military deterrence, and threats of regime change. And the result, as I said earlier, is that North Korea now has the ability to strike the United States with a nuclear weapon.

In the Taiwan case, we had 70 years to promote a resolution of the differences between Taipei and Beijing, we did nothing. Instead, with a brief exception in the 1980s, we focused purely on military deterrence. The situation festered and it got worse. So, we now have, in the cases of a divided Korea and a divided China, we have situations that appear to be unfolding in the direction of a conflict which could be nuclear.

What we should have done, is use deterrence to enable diplomacy, to resolve the underlying issues. We did not do that. Now, in the case of the U.S. and the Soviet Union, Mutually Assured Destruction—in effect, arms control talks, efforts to provide a basis for strategic stability—mitigated the problem. That was a diplomatic effort undertaken within the framework of deterrence. That’s an imperfect solution.

There have been no similar efforts with the Chinese. And it may now be that with the Chinese heavying-up their nuclear forces, there will be a basis for some kind of effort to produce a stable situation.

But here, I want to register again, a severe doubt about the concept of so-called “guardrails.” When proposed to the Chinese, what these appear to mean is, “We’ll keep doing what we’re doing, but you don’t challenge us. We’ll keep running patrols along your

shores. We’ll keep modernizing our nuclear forces. We’ll keep salami-slicing on Taiwan, and the guardrails that you’ve agreed to will prevent you from responding.” I don’t think it’s any surprise that that argument gets us nowhere.

We have to deal with countries like China and Russia, on the basis of equality, and in accordance with the Westphalian order. We should do the same with North Korea. To deal with them in a condescending and insulting manner is directly counterproductive. To fail to deal with them because we rely on military deterrence, is to create a ticking bomb that may go off in the future.

### Stop Condescension Toward Africa

**EIR:** I’d like you to comment on the Africa situation. The FOCAC, the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation, began this morning in Beijing. Xi Jinping gave an introductory speech, in which he agreed to send a billion doses of vaccine, some of which would be produced jointly in Africa. He also has offered expanded Belt and Road and related kinds of development programs. I know you were at one point the Africa coordinator, I think, in the State Department, earlier on in your career.

And now, of course, we have this competition, where Blinken actually toured Africa right before this FOCAC meeting was to take place, where he seemed to complain about “democracy” rather than actually proposing any kind of alternative to the Belt and Road.

In any case, how do you see this very crucial issue of Africa being faced with both the pandemic, the starvation, the breakdown, the imposition of these restraints on their fossil fuels, and so forth? And how do you see that in regard to China’s role?

**Freeman:** I think the West and the United States in particular need to stop treating Africa and Africans with condescension. The continent is not a humanitarian theme park. It has plenty of disasters and challenges. Africans are serious people, and they have, in many cases, risen to the challenges before them. I think they must be dealt with as equals. The question is, what help do they need, not how do they stand in





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“The West and the U.S. in particular need to stop treating Africa and Africans with condescension.” Shown, a view of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) ministerial meeting in Dakar, Senegal, Nov. 29-30, 2021.

some mythical contest between Beijing and Washington, which they want nothing to do with. It’s nice if African countries, like Botswana, are democracies. One hopes that democracy in South Africa, which is in difficulty, will reverse course and grow. But this is the business of Botswanans and South Africans, and the

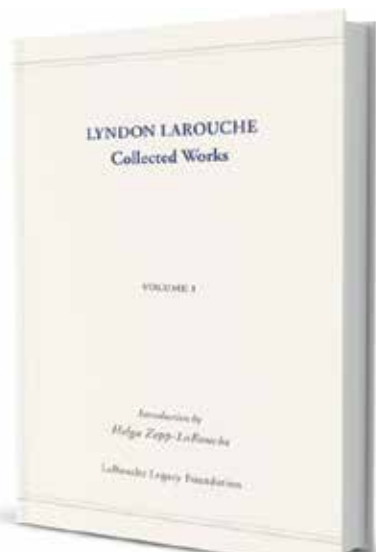
role of outside powers should be to be helpful.

Africa is the continent which is going to have the largest labor supply in the future. Countries like Nigeria are huge already; they are going to become even larger. Nigerians are very clever people. Africa in many respects is the continent of the future, and it needs to be treated as such. The most constructive thing any country outside Africa can do, is help it build the institutions it needs to cope with its challenges.

If the African Union creates a CDC [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention] of its own, or an FDA [Food and Drug Administration] analogue, that deserves the strong support, not just of the Chinese who are supporting them, but of the United States. So, I think there’s every reason for the United States and China to cooperate in support of African development, and no reason to see it as a zero-sum game.

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