

INTERVIEW: GRAHAM E. FULLER

End U.S. Addiction to Never-Ending War

This is an edited transcription of an interview with Graham Fuller, a former U.S. diplomat, CIA official, and Islamic scholar, conducted by Mike Billington, EIR's Asia Intelligence Director, on Dec. 9, 2021. A video of the interview is available [here](#).

EIR: This is Mike Billington with the *EIR*, *Executive Intelligence Review*, and the Schiller Institute. I'm here with Graham Fuller. Perhaps you can give a bit of your various hats in your career.

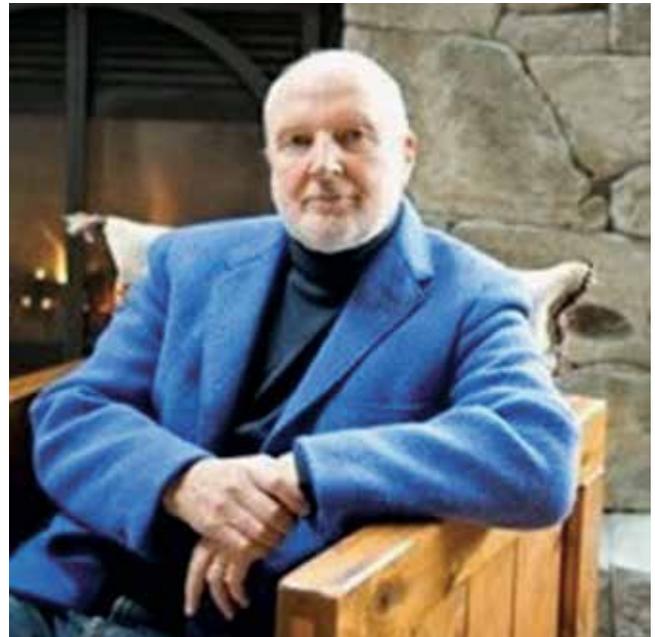
Fuller: In terms of public service, I was 25 years an operations officer in CIA, serving in Germany, Turkey, Lebanon, Yemen, Saudi Arabia, Afghanistan, and Hong Kong. So, a good bit of international background. I graduated from Harvard with a B.A. in Russian language, literature, and history; M.A. in Middle East studies; and had a long interest at the same time in China. After retiring from CIA, I was four years as the vice chairman of the National Intelligence Council, which is the long-range forecasting institution within CIA, and then went to Rand Corporation to do more geopolitical writings and things. And since then, I have been kind of freelancing, written two novels, both somewhat political, and a lot of different books about the Middle East, Islam, political Islam, etc.

Danger of War with China

EIR: We sort of came about having this interview because you watched the interview I did with Ambassador Chas Freeman on Nov. 29. In that [interview](#) he warned that the U.S. has already crossed a "red line" for China essentially by promoting Taiwan independence and breaking all of the U.S.-China agreements from the '70s that led to the One-China policy and the recognition of Beijing.

How do you appraise the potential danger of a war between the U.S. and China, even a potential nuclear war?

Fuller: Of course, it is serious. I'm not sure that the U.S.—and I'm a huge admirer of Charles Freeman—but I'm not sure the U.S. has actually crossed the red line. But I think we are in the vicinity of doing that. And



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Graham E. Fuller

meanwhile, I think the United States is learning a lot about what it means to have a true peer competitor like China, as opposed to, say, the Soviet Union, which was militarily formidable, but in terms of societal and soft power, not at all.

The U.S. has actually avoided specifically saying they will support Taiwanese independence, but certainly American policy wants to make it as difficult as possible for China to entertain any military views of re-conquering, re-joining Taiwan to China. It's going to be a tight game, and I think the main goal really should be for both sides to tamp down the pressure, the level of rhetoric that is underway now which makes it very hard for more rational and thoughtful discourse.

Danger of War with Russia

EIR: On the same issue really, on the Russian side, President Putin has also indicated that the accepting of Ukraine into NATO or moving advanced weapons systems into Ukraine or on Russia's border would be a red line. Biden, when asked about that, said, "We don't recognize any red lines." On the summit [Dec. 7 between Biden and Putin], [Secretary of State Antony]

Blinken and [National Security Advisor Jake] Sullivan both came out the same day and gave read-outs, which would make it appear that the whole thing was Biden “dressing down” Putin (and Russia) for its aggression and its threats, and so forth. But then Biden himself said that he would be announcing tomorrow, Dec. 10, a meeting with four European countries and Russia to address Putin’s request for guarantees that NATO would not move any further east or deploy weapon systems on their border.

What, in general, do you think about the Summit, and the potential for avoiding the conflict on the Russian side?

Fuller: This is, of course, a long-standing issue. In very broad terms—and this applies to China policy as well as to Russia policy—the United States has been so long in the habit of dominating, not always in a negative sense, but dominating the world since 1945, where other countries would defer to the United States. We, the United States, had the money, the weaponry, the technology, and everything else to be the number one player, really, in the world through that time. So, I think this has been a gradual policy of the rest of the world, much of the rest of the world slowly trying to catch up. Certainly, Europe has, but much of the rest of the world as well.

But in the meantime, during the Cold War period, the United States was in the position of—the rhetoric was—“defender of the Free World.”

So, I think the United States has felt itself really the dominant power, the hegemon of the world, the leader of the free world, whatever terms you choose to use. But the reality in the modern world, and especially since 9/11, has been that the American hegemony, predominance, is a fading quality, and that much of the rest of the world is now rising. The American mentality, strategic mentality, maybe even cultural mentality finds it nearly impossible, intolerable, to accept the idea that any other country could become a peer competitor with the United States.

I remember a couple of years ago, attending some military conferences, wherever, and in Washington, that the term used by the Pentagon in those days was

America’s search for, or maintenance of, “full-spectrum dominance.” That says a lot right there. I think this is a slow, very painful, hopefully learning process, by which the U.S. is going to have to back away ever more carefully, from the overt assumption that it’s going to be able to call all the shots anymore.

We even saw this with the very unfortunate Blinken, and maybe Sullivan as well, in the [March 18] Anchorage meeting [with Yang Jiechi, China’s Director of the Office of the Central Commission for Foreign Affairs, and Foreign Minister Wang Yi], when Sullivan, or Blinken, prior to the meeting, announced that he was very confident the meeting would go well and the United States would be dealing with China “from a



China will no longer tolerate humiliation. In talks with the U.S. in Anchorage, Alaska on March 19, 2021, Yang Jiechi, a top Chinese diplomat, answered the U.S., saying, “Let me be clear ... the United States does not have the qualification to say that it wants to speak to China ‘from a position of strength’.”

position of strength.”

You may recall Blinken was dressed down for that quite sharply by the Chinese, who basically said, how dare you say that? You have no right to say that you are dealing with us from a position of strength. We are going to deal, we want to be treated, we *will* be treated as equals by you on an equal footing. I think that pushed back, maybe shocked even, the foreign policy blob in Washington, which has never quite been addressed in those terms, by a country that is pretty demonstrably becoming a peer competitor in almost all respects.

EIR: It reminds me of the Clean Break doctrine in the Nineties. This was [David] Wurmser, [Douglas J.]

Feith, [Dick] Cheney, and [Donald] Rumsfeld. They basically said, we need a clean break to defend our friends in Israel. And then literally said—I think this was called the Wolfowitz Doctrine—that we must prevent any country or any combination of countries from reaching a position of challenging our dominance, our superiority. That was literally the thinking.

Fuller: Even challenging Israeli dominance, I think, was a good bit part of that. But times are changing, the world is changing, and it's going to be a painful lesson. Even Biden in his late years, may be beginning to realize that the old rhetoric just doesn't work quite as well anymore. And Russia is not quite the old Soviet Union. Russia now working with China certainly represents a very different global force, not just militarily, but strategically, culturally, diplomatically, in all senses.

EIR: It's interesting, several of the Russian readouts on the Summit included saying what you just said—one of them called Biden “an old-fashioned politician” who understands the danger of war, and one of them called on Biden to calm down the people around him.

Fuller: Yeah, well put.

U.S.: Revenge on the Afghan and Syrian People

EIR: You were the CIA station chief in Kabul in the 1970s, and I know you've remained very active in Afghan policy debates right up until today. Clearly, that country is now in an economic and humanitarian catastrophe. Both the World Food Program and the World Health Organization are screaming as loudly as they can, that many millions of Afghan citizens face death by starvation and lack of medical care as the winter sets in. And yet, the U.S. is maintaining sanctions, and freezing billions of dollars that belong to the Afghan people. How do you explain this, what I consider “depraved indifference,” and how can we resolve that in your view?

Fuller: As you know, Mike, the Afghan people have been victim of great power rivalry for many, many decades, going back to the initial Soviet invasion of Afghanistan to protect the new communist regime that came into power there in 1978. Americans, and many Muslim states and others, have been participating in war within Afghanistan that has killed hundreds of thousands, probably millions of Afghans over the

many years, leading to civil war, after the Soviet departure, the civil war among the mujahideen, and then utter anarchy within Afghanistan for a number of years. And then the Taliban came in to restore order, a rough sort of frontier justice, peace order, within the country. And then the whole bin Laden business, and then the American invasion. So, this has been a nonstop, brutal thing.

What I fear, is how gracefully the United States is capable of accepting the fact, that this is yet one more war, which we did not win, and that it is not going to have blood in its eye for the victors of the country, the Taliban. I'm no great admirer of the Taliban, but they are the *de facto* winners, and I think nearly everybody in the region acknowledges it, for better or for worse. It is the reality.

So I think if this is some kind of vengeful policy towards the Taliban, to make them suffer, and who knows, maybe even there are those who hope that civil war might break out, or whatever, and give the U.S. a chance to win a new foothold, I don't know, but it is a very ugly policy if it goes beyond mere tactical, temporary pressure points to try to get the Taliban to make a few political domestic changes in outlook.

If it goes much beyond that, into a broader vengeance, or a desire to restore the status quo, it will be tragic. And it's part of such a long tragedy.

We see this elsewhere as well, in the case of Syria. The United States has been unhappy with Syria as far back as I can remember. When I first went into government in the '70s, '60s even, the Assad regime, father and son, have long been hostile to America, and what they perceive as American hegemony in the Middle East, and Israel's ability to absolutely dominate, militarily, the entire region, without giving any particular justice to the Palestinians.

I think the United States has had it in for Syria for 40, 50, 60 years of trying to overthrow, not with major force, but with constant undermining of Syria in one way or another. Again, I'm no great admirer of the Syrian regime. It's never been a democracy, it's a minority government, but it's been the reality of the Middle East for a very long time. But even down to today, we can see U.S. involvement in civil wars in Syria, in which much of the goal, still, is to punish Syria, bring down the regime, change it all. And it again has failed. Again, the victims, sadly, are the Syrian people. We just cannot seem to accept the reality that we have been bested again in that kind of a struggle.

Islamist Political Movements Must Be Acknowledged

EIR: You argued at one point that there will be no resolution to the Middle East crisis, unless the Hezbollah and Hamas, and Iran, are recognized, that they have to be a part of this. And yet, the Israelis and many people here in the U.S. consider all three of those terrorist institutions, evil people, and so forth. How is that going to be achieved? What can be done, especially with the Hezbollah and Hamas issues? And in Syria, how can you resolve that today?

Fuller: As you know, the United States in particular has been ready to slap the label of “terrorist” on any Muslim group that it does not like. I find it frankly almost grotesque, that we have now come to persuade our American countrymen that Iran is the number one terrorist threat in the world. This is alongside Saudi Arabia, which has been pumping out extraordinarily damaging interpretations of Islam, which really leaves little room for generous accommodation, even among Muslims.

So, I think the term “terrorist”—you’re familiar with many countries that are slapped with this label, on groups that are seeking better rights, or even seeking separation. And that applies as well today. Hezbollah is the spokesman, basically, for most Shi’ites in Lebanon. The Shi’ites are the biggest single group in a very multicultural, multi-religious country. They have formidable spirit and drive. Many Lebanese who don’t like them, believe that Hezbollah is the one thing that maybe keeps Israel at bay, from interfering or invading Lebanon at will. Indeed, Israel is very nervous about Hezbollah’s strength, and it’s not just purely military, it’s this kind of a drive, a will, not to permit Israel to invade the country.

Similarly, with Hamas. Hamas is the Muslim Brotherhood. The Muslim Brotherhood has not been a terrorist organization, fundamentally, in 50 years. It is a relatively middle-of-the-road Islamist organization. I’m not arguing for Islamist movements, but they are a major force within the Middle East, and there’s a huge spectrum of them, from radical terrorists, genuine terrorists like bin Laden, or other groups in that region, to rather very moderate Islamic-oriented groups, such as in Turkey.

So, you can’t smear them all with one label. The Muslim Brotherhood continues to be concerned with Palestinian rights there. It’s an Arab organization, largely. If we don’t acknowledge full Palestinian

rights, and begin to solve that problem, this is going to continue to be a festering issue, that plays right into the hands of more radical organizations, whether we like them or not. They’re there, and there is a call, an issue, to which they can play.

Let me just mention one other term which has always been very important to me over the years, from the Egyptian ruler Abdel Nasser, if anybody still remembers him. Back in the ’50s and ’60s, he was the charismatic leader who sort of put Egypt on the Third World map for the first time, and he became the darling, really, of much of the Arab world. He stood up for Arab rights and spoke about them. Somebody asked him once, why do you think Egypt has such a major role in the Arab world at that point? And he said, the Arab world is in search of an “actor,” and Egypt is now that actor.

I think that applies to many situations around the world where there’s a strong need for some political voice to speak up on behalf of one or another injustice of the world, and whatever country takes up that challenge, automatically moves into a position of greater respect, and even support, by much of the world.

Sadly, all these three organizations—the Muslim Brotherhood, Hezbollah, and Iran itself—are formidable, political, ideological forces in the region. Iran is probably the oldest civilization in the entire Middle East. It has managed to survive decades and decades of American sanctions, and Israeli punishment, and assassinations by Israelis, etc., and they’re still holding their own. It’s a strong country, whether again, we may not like it all, but I think we have contributed to pushing Iran into a corner in which it is reacting, perhaps in a much more aggressive, reactive manner than might otherwise be the case.

We might talk about this before the interview is over, but just let me say here, we are not thinking enough in this world about why conflicts are coming about. Are they inevitable and can they be avoided? Sadly, in American thinking or much of the thinking of the world, these conflicts, wars, are inevitable, but they’re not. They just aren’t. And the trick is deciding how and why to avoid them, because it is doable.

The Military-Industrial Complex

EIR: That obviously brings up the issue of the military-industrial complex that President Eisenhower warned about a long, long time ago, that they need wars to be going on. They’re required by the military

industrial crowd and their Wall Street backers, thinking that this cannot be allowed to diminish or they're going to lose their power. I don't know what you think about that.

Fuller: It's very impressive when you look back at what Eisenhower said way back in the day and look at today's reality. I think he was spot-on in his observation. I try to avoid an entirely conspiratorial view that it's all Wall Street and military-industrial complex, because there are many huge capitalist organizations, corporations that do not profit from war and seek to avoid war, because it's not good for business. Many businessmen and capitalists feel, if you're not producing arms—it may not be necessarily good [to have] war at all.

But that said, yes, there is a war lobby, and it is linked with the idea that we must preserve American power and hegemony and dominance at all costs. And that plays, of course, into the hands of those who want to support America's overwhelming military dominance in the world today.

EIR: And yet we lose everywhere we fight.

Fuller: Somebody once commented to me, a correspondent who worked at the Pentagon. He said, you know, Graham, you don't get it (or some somebody in the Pentagon said to him), you don't get it. It's not about winning wars. It's about maintaining the organization, maintaining the infrastructure. As long as the funds keep coming in, as long as we can maintain the structure and the training and the weaponry and all of this, you don't have to win the wars. That's secondary. It's nice to win, but that's secondary.

EIR: What kind of an image of man is that, which thinks that the murder of millions of people and driving millions out of their homes are “secondary issues”?

Fuller: I agree. I agree. It's shocking, but I fear it's the human condition.

Operation Ibn Sina To Save Afghanistan

EIR: Let's hope that's not the case. I'll now bring up Ibn Sina who I mentioned to you before the interview. Helga Zepp-LaRouche's [idea](#) of an Operation Ibn Sina for Afghanistan is based on the tradition of a great Islamic leader who represented the kind of leader you talked about with Nasser, but at an even higher level—a great philosopher, a great poet,

and of course, also a medical genius. I wondered if you might want to comment. You know the history of Islam quite well. If you want to comment on the role of Ibn Sina, and Helga's idea of a so-called Operation Ibn Sina as a way of bringing the world together around the reconstruction of Afghanistan, but also applying that to these issues of festering wars in the Middle East.

Fuller: That's a very interesting question, Mike. Absolutely. I think by now, most Westerners are aware that there was a golden age of Islam. There was a time when intellectual life in the Muslim world—Arab world, Persian world, and beyond in India and even further east—was very rich. There were very interesting, open theological discussions about religion, about science, philosophy. There was no shutting down of the mind at that point. Many Muslims have written since then, about, “Has there been a closing down of the Muslim mind?” I think probably you can demonstrate that there has been.

The more important question is, “Why?” One simple answer—it's not the only answer, but it's an important answer—is, of course, the long centuries of Western imperialism—British, French, German, Italian, Dutch—and American in another sense, which really helped keep these countries “infantilized,” that's the word I would use most readily. They came to fatalistically yield to the power of outside forces that would prevent them from taking charge of their own lives, thinking about these issues more deeply. Many people trace some of the decline of Arab and Persian, and Muslim in general, Muslim intellectual and intellectualism, its sciences, its arts, and this gradual suppression of intellectual tradition within the Muslim world, largely to the *ulema*, the clerical class, which found itself entrenched in positions of power as long as they supported the regime in power.

They could have their voice over religious policy, absolutely; that contributed to it. Certainly, even the shift of the great trade routes from overland across the Silk Route, to new sea routes around the Indian Ocean to East Asia; that also was a factor in the decline of the Muslim world. But it's undeniable that this has taken place. I think in this sense, Ibn Sina is a reflection, is an aspiration to go back to what made the Muslim world so rich, so strong, so thoughtful, so productive intellectually in its time. I think it can happen again. There's no reason why it should not.

But the Middle East has been caught in this terrible mess now—you can go back many, many, many



Shahinshahnāma, 1581

Detail of an overview of the astronomical instruments and staff of Taqi Al-Din Al-Rasid's Istanbul Observatory.

decades, if not one hundred years of colonialism and foreign control and dominance by dictators supported readily by the West, etc. It's a long, sad story, but Ibn Sina is one great symbol. He's not the only one; there are many great symbols of a broader vision of Islam, a more open thinking, exploratory Islam.

Turkey and the Arab Spring

EIR: You have something of a specialty on Turkey within the Islamic world, and you wrote a book called *Turkey and the Arab Spring: Leadership in the Middle East*.¹ I take it this is your reflection on the Muslim Brotherhood, which was sort of the dominant force in the Arab Spring. As I understand it, [President Recep Tayyip] Erdoğan is part of that. Do you want to comment on that now in retrospect, with the downfall of the Arab Spring?

Fuller: This brings up the very important question that I briefly alluded to earlier, about Islamism, Islamic movements, Islamist, whatever; there are many different terms. But basically, the idea of Islamists is, to put it

in very simple terms, it's a spectrum of views, as I said, from bin Laden to peace activists, from an Islamic perspective. But it essentially is Muslims saying, Look, Islam has something to say about the future of governance and society in the Muslim world. What it has to say, what we choose out of it, just as some of the early European movements, Christian Democrats, et al., felt that Christianity had something to say intellectually or religiously or theologically, about good governance in Europe.

So, I think the Muslim movements—some are horrible, brutal, violent, as bin Laden is the major case in point. The Taliban have been quite brutal in their own way. Saudi Arabia has been a very brutal state, supporting many brutal movements and ideas outside the country, indeed fomenting these ideas of intolerance—that there's only one form of Islam, and that's the Saudi form of Islam, which is Wahhabi, which is utterly uncompromising and very retrogressive.

The Muslim Brotherhood in the spectrum is rather centrist. It has accepted the idea of democracy. It has political parties. These are not secret organizations and terrorist organizations. It hasn't been that for half a century. It has accepted the idea of elections at

¹ Bozorg Press, 2014.

the student level, the national level, participating in elections, accepting the idea of some kind of democratic practice.

These ideas are utterly anathema to countries like Saudi Arabia or other Arab dictators, or Muslim dictators anywhere, who see this as subversive. So, they have moved all out—that’s why Saudi Arabia has been quick to condemn the Muslim Brotherhood as terrorists, even though it’s very, very difficult to make that case over the last 50 years. Fifty years ago, yes, they dallied in it, but not since.

Turkey doesn’t officially call itself Muslim Brotherhood, but certainly the ruling party has good ties with it. Turkey has become an abusive democracy, but it’s still a democracy. I mean, there are real elections. It’s an “unfair,” or “illiberal” democracy, is the term I think we use. But nonetheless, it still has elections. And I believe that when the day comes that President Erdoğan is voted out of power, if there aren’t manipulations, I believe fairly surely he will step down.

The question of the compatibility of Islam and democracy that the Muslim Brotherhood in particular, I think, has accepted, is far from over. The debate is far from over. We’re even arguing in the United States about religious ideas—in social belief, abortion, among other things. So, you cannot totally separate moral views from policy views, and moral views are importantly founded often on religious ideas. It doesn’t have to be, but that tends to be their source.

NED: Almost a Surrogate for the CIA

EIR: To what extent do you see the NED [National Endowment for Democracy], Open Society, regime-change crowd influence in the Arab Spring? And to what extent would you think that caused a backlash against it?

Fuller: At one time, when I was still working in Washington, I was a big believer in the National Endowment for Democracy, and I believed that democracy had a lot to offer to much of the world. I still believe democracy—it’s like Winston Churchill said, it’s the worst form of governance, except for all those that have been tried before it.

But somehow, over the years, the National Endowment for Democracy, or NED, really became almost a surrogate for the CIA. The U.S. largely got out of the business of having the CIA overthrow countries—and this wasn’t, by the way, the CIA choosing to overthrow these places; this was by Presidential Order or

Kissinger order or whatever. The National Endowment for Democracy became a much nicer face for regime change. Not by violence, but certainly through using all kinds of financial and ideological and training, and other kinds of things, to bring about change.

I believed that democracy was a great goal for the United States, but as I began to watch it over the years, I began to see how much of this was cherry picking. That democracy was, as I often said, democracy was a punishment to deliver upon our enemies, to overthrow them. Democracy is never a gift for our allies. You know, we’re not deciding that we’re going to bestow democracy upon Saudi Arabia or any other number of authoritarian regimes around the world.

We have all kinds of things to say about the rights of Uyghurs in China, and I care very deeply about the Uyghurs in China. I’ve been there. I’ve written about it. But, I think the fact that they’re in China seems to be the more important point for the U.S. policy than what the state of the Uyghurs is at this particular time. So, it’s highly selective, which undermines the credibility, the ideological credibility of the United States in pushing for democracy. We’ll do it when we want to overthrow somebody, but we don’t have much to say about it otherwise. We don’t have much, even in human rights; I mean, this tends to be a weapon used to overthrow or seriously weaken countries

But if it’s a friendly country, we don’t do it. We never talk about the Kashmiris and Indian policy against Kashmir, or Indian policies against Muslims in general, or other religious groups in India, because India—they’re the good guys, so we don’t talk about it. But if its Palestinians’ rights being crushed in Israel, we don’t talk about it. But if it’s Chechens in Russia, or other groups in China, then we’re all over it. So, I just feel we ideologically corrode the very validity of pushing for democracy.

The Uyghurs and China’s Nation Building

EIR: I certainly agree with you on that. Let me take you up on the Uyghur, Xinjiang issue. I read the study you and Frederick Starr did in 2004, called “The Xinjiang Problem,” which involved scholars...

Fuller: But it was mainly Jonathan Lipman, who is an outstanding scholar of Muslims in China, who was my partner in writing that essay. Fred Starr very capably brought the book all together, many different disciplines, but it was me and Jonathan Lipman, who has a wonderful book about Muslims in China. Very read-

able, delightful book [[Familiar Strangers: A History of Muslims in Northwest China](#)].

EIR: I'll look that up. Since that time, of course, ISIS-linked Uyghurs carried out terrorist attacks in Xinjiang, and the Chinese response to that was to launch what they call a mass education or mass re-education campaign for the young people being influenced by the jihadis, but at the same time doing massive economic development in the region. They created new industrial and agricultural projects across Xinjiang. And certainly, that is quite the opposite of the so-called anti-terrorist campaigns in the West, which were largely bombing countries back to the Stone Age.

Nonetheless, what China is doing is labeled genocide by Mike Pompeo and his ilk, and in fact, they're imposing sanctions on China. Even the so-called diplomatic boycott of the Olympics is because of "genocide" in Xinjiang. I find this to be not only absurd, but really disgusting. You certainly know a great deal about the Uyghurs in Xinjiang. How do you look at that now in light of this crisis?

Fuller: You know, it's a complicated issue, Mike. For starters, I would not accept the term "genocide," which I think is being extremely loosely applied by Washington. Again, not so much on the facts of the issue, because if you looked at Palestinian treatment, the numbers are vastly less. But in the treatment of Palestinians in the West Bank and in Israel, there might be very comparable things.

But anyway, this is not genocide, but I think it is—some people have used the term—"cultural oppression." Some have even called it "culturicide." China is known to be—and I'm a huge admirer of China, I've studied Chinese history and literature and things. I have great admiration for China's past and indeed even present extraordinary accomplishments. But China is also a tough country in which to be a minority. The Han Chinese massively dominate, just numerically, the country, overwhelmingly, so that it's difficult to be a minority in China anywhere and not get "Han-ized," if you will, turned into Han Chinese linguistically, culturally, and otherwise.

This is not unique to China; other countries have pushed for cultural integration in the past. I don't know the years exactly, but I think in the 18th Century, France had an extraordinary policy of imposing, with some force, the language of Paris on the entire country and wiping out regional dialects and languages such as

Celtic languages or Basque and other such.

In the process of nation building, whether you like it or not, governments, whether good or bad, harsh, or not, tend to try to push towards homogenization of their population to make it easier to rule, to maybe make it easier for people to get along socially. I don't know. So, the Chinese are part of this long tradition. It's easy when you've got 1.4 billion people. I don't know what the statistics are of non-Han minorities, but they're probably pretty small in comparison.

So, yes, I do feel that the Chinese have been rather harsh in Xinjiang in the effort to Han-ize, or turn into "good Chinese," Han Chinese, the Uyghur population. And the Uyghurs, of course, are the furthest away from Beijing of any group in the country, way off to the West. I mean, the capital of Xinjiang province in China is closer to Islamabad than it is to Beijing. So, you're talking about a very distant, culturally long-time Turkic Islamic Muslim society. I deplore the re-education camps. It smacks a bit too much to me of kind of more fascist organizations in the past. But I think, I do not believe that calling this "genocide" is a legitimate term.

We also have to come to the deeper question: Who is it that deserves an independent state? The Chechens in Russia and the Soviet Union have been a totally distinct ethnic group. They're Muslims, not Christians, but they have been pushing, including using violence for years, for over a hundred years, to gain independence from the Soviet Union, or from Russia.

So, this is an ongoing problem. I certainly don't support violence on either side of this. But I do acknowledge that in any process of industrializing China, including its distant western regions, factories are going to be built, and even more to the point, hundreds of thousands, if not millions, of Han Chinese have come into areas that have long been occupied, long inhabited, by Muslim Uyghur people, Turkic Muslim Uygur peoples. And they naturally are deeply disturbed at this huge influx of industrial Chinese workers, who are changing the real estate, they're tearing down their old towns, they're weakening Islam, closing mosques, you know, imposing Chinese language requirements. Obviously, if you're going to live in China, you damn well better learn Mandarin.

You can't say that it's all brutal, but it's a complex issue of how do you integrate this country without using brutal techniques. I think China in recent years has moved in the direction of unnecessary harshness in that issue.

The Visionary Belt and Road Initiative

EIR: Well, let me say that they've built more mosques in Xinjiang than any other area in the world. You have to take that into consideration, too. What you're saying about Xinjiang is also true of Tibet, and our organization from the beginning—LaRouche's idea and the ideas of the Schiller Institute—was always predicated on the idea of peace through development; that you can't try to bring about peace and then development. You have to actually bring development as a way of addressing the common needs of all people, all religious movements, all ethnic differences, and so forth.

And certainly, that's the way the Chinese have approached both Tibet and Xinjiang, and in the process have dramatically increased the populations of Xinjiang, the Uyghur population, increased their standard of living enormously. Their argument is that when people complain about human rights, that the most fundamental human right is the right to life and to a decent standard of living. And they're very proud of having brought the entire country, including all the people of Xinjiang, out of abject poverty. There's still poverty, but [abject poverty] has been eliminated.

A lot of this is also in what they launched to take internationally, the process of development, through the Belt and Road. Xinjiang is a crossroad for the Belt and Road. So let me ask you to say what you think about the Belt and Road process, which of course, is also roundly denounced by the anti-China people in the West with all kinds of nasty terms. But it is a basis on which, if you believe in the idea that peace comes through development, then you can resolve these issues not only in China, but in Afghanistan and in the Middle East. In particular, I wonder what you think about the efforts by China to bring the Belt and Road into the Middle East.

Fuller: I think the Chinese idea of the Belt and Road is an extremely imaginative and exciting idea. It is visionary in the sense of uniting and bringing together diverse societies across Central Asia that have not been united since the days of Genghis Khan, who was a brutal conqueror, but for a hundred years thereafter proceeded to run a pretty enlightened and peaceful admin-

istration all across Central Asia, later, as a Chinese dynasty. So, I think it's inspired.

Central Asia has been the backwater of the world for a long, long time. Even though in medieval periods it was a rich center of commerce and trade and ideas and science, etc., along the lines of Ibn Sina, who lived in that area himself. This includes Iran, of course. It's an extraordinary idea that the Chinese have been developing here, in context with Russia as well. It's a complicated area. There are many ethnic sensitivities in the area. Muslims traditionally do not like to feel that they're under the thumb—however, you choose to interpret it—under the dominance, under the overwhelming power of non-Muslim power, and they would view China in that regard.

They would view Russia in that regard, but it doesn't



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Fuller: "I think the Chinese idea of the Belt and Road is an extremely imaginative and exciting idea. It is visionary in the sense of uniting and bringing together diverse societies across Central Asia."

mean that they will reject it. It just means there are going to be certain sensitivities about Islamic culture, Islamic history, and tradition, which will play an important role, I think, in the future of that Belt and Road. And China will need to—and Russia, of course—move very cautiously with full regard for the cultural and religious traditions of that area. But I think, yes, it can do a great deal for the welfare, the livelihood, standard of living, cultural development, and everything else to have this area opened up from an area that will go from, you can say Beijing, but in many senses, even from Korea, all the way across land and sea to now Italy, which, I think, is the westernmost point at this stage of the Belt and Road concept. It's very positive, it's a very highly constructive, imaginative idea.

EIR: Have you looked into the efforts between China and, let's say, Iraq, for instance, to bring in some of these Belt and Road projects? The last government had agreements on oil for development, which got crushed, unfortunately.

Fuller: I'm not terribly familiar with where Iraq stands on the Belt and Road. Inevitably, it will be part, it would be a natural part, going way back when it ran from Beijing to Beirut in effect, back in the day. I don't know where it stands now with Iraq, but certainly Iran.

In Iran, already, China is playing a very significant role in helping relieve some of the more oppressive aspects of American sanctions. Iran has been historically a major country, a major culture that was part of that Belt and Road civilization. It was a Muslim, Arab, Persian society, Turkic as well. Very important. All those three cultural groups. China does not always have the best reputation, going way back, as fully honoring societies that resist homogenization, and Muslim societies tend to resist, a bit, homogenization into non-Muslim cultures. You could have a long discussion about why. So I think the idea is brilliant, but as I said before, China and Russia need to step cautiously and sensitively with this huge new cultural region. That it will benefit that region, I believe, hugely.

Afghan War Targeted China and Russia

EIR: I read an [article](#) you wrote recently called "Time to Smash the Urge of Imperial Strategic Groupthink."

Fuller: That wasn't my title.

EIR: Oh, it wasn't. Okay. It's quite a title. Well, anyway, what I noted in there was that you said that the entire Afghan misadventure was less about fighting terrorism and more about establishing a base near the Russian and Chinese borders, sort of as part of the Great Game. There are indications that the pullout of Afghanistan was less about ending regime-change wars and more about repositioning for confrontations with China and Russia.

And you may have heard that Tony Blinken just yesterday basically acknowledged that. He said (I wrote it down): "In ending America's longest war and making sure that we're not sending a third generation of Americans back to fight and die in Afghanistan, that frees up a tremendous amount of resources and focus for other challenges." And the reporter even asked,

"Do you think the American people have an appetite for other challenges?" And he said, "Oh, I think the appetite is significant." I wonder what you think about this in terms of going forward.

Fuller: I think it was fairly clear back in 9/11, 2001, that the invasion of Afghanistan was about far more than bin Laden. Bin Laden certainly was the perfect poster-boy enemy for that invasion. And it wasn't outrageous—9/11 was an outrage, an outrage against the United States and generally, through the use of terrorism and murder.

But yes, I think it was not by accident that the U.S. was well aware that Afghanistan sits athwart China, Russia, Central Asia. They understood that all you have to do is read about the British Great Game back in the day, 19th Century, and America supporting the Afghans against the Soviet invasion in 1978. So the idea of the geopolitical significance of Afghanistan is well known. We just didn't talk about it very much, because it was a much better sell, to talk about terrorism and Afghanistan.

I am not sure that the U.S. is quite ready to throw in, give up its spurs in Afghanistan, for the very same reason: that it borders on Russia, borders on China, and might in U.S. eyes be a check, possibly to elements of the Belt and Road. If the U.S. has a better idea than the Belt and Road or could contribute to it or work simultaneously with it, that would be great. Now anyway, it seems to be a zero-sum game in American eyes, and it doesn't want to participate in any way that would facilitate this Chinese venture. I don't think we've really let go quite there, and it won't be until we start generously helping rebuild that country that we helped to destroy, that we become credible in our willingness to look for better days for the Afghan people and get out of the region.

Drugs and the U.S. Cultural Decay

EIR: My last question: the issue of the cultural decay in the United States and in the western world generally. I read some reviews of your memoir, the book you wrote about the death of your son to drug addiction.

As you probably know, it was just recently announced that there have been over 100,000 American overdose drug deaths this last year. That's by far the highest ever recorded. The economic and cultural decay in the country has really left a whole generation of children who have no sense of a positive

future. They don't have a sense of a mission in the world. This, of course, has resulted in some horrible atrocities like the child killers—we had one just the other day in Michigan—and record-high teen suicides. Since you did have that experience, how do you read this yourself, in terms of what we're going to have to do to revive the culture in the United States?

Fuller: Well, drugs in many ways are the bane of the modern world, everywhere, in some sense. In the United States, as you know, we've not had a great deal of luck even with the banning of all kinds of drugs over the years, have not had great success with it. And the so-called war against drugs that's been going on, what, 20, 30 years, as part of many administrations punishing various Latin American countries for helping produce this stuff, in which we are the main market.

This goes back a long way, and with all the problems that you talk about; yes, it's really sad. It's been exacerbated by COVID. It's got to be exacerbated by just existential angst from global warming, the future of the world.

What I now feel, there is an excessive sense of individualism within the United States culture. Individualism has been a wonderful feature of American culture and produced amazing artistic accomplishments and scientific and technical accomplishments, all kinds of things. But it does have a downside. This extreme, extreme individualism of the United States, which means that there's not so coherent a society, as you might find in, say, slightly more traditional European cultures, but even they are suffering from drugs.

I'm not sure what the answer to all of this is, but certainly the conditions of American life, the discrepancy between rich and poor, and the negativism that emerges from this, that you can see in the music and the arts and other things, certainly is exacerbating it hugely. But in some senses, it's a global problem. It's a human problem.

Addiction to Never-Ending Wars

EIR: Let me close by asking if you have anything else you'd like to like to say to our audience.

Fuller: Just to express my concern about where the U.S. is headed now, the viability of American democratic practice at this point. I think the future of the world is going to be ever more demanding, for starters, because of global warming, and pandemics. Also, the negative impacts of technology. Apart from the many

wonderful aspects of technology, there are many, many socially negative impacts of technology.

My fear is that countries are going to find themselves increasingly unmanageable, in which the power of the state is going to be perceived as more and more necessary. Just in COVID alone, to try to control the spread of COVID and manage the treatment of COVID, has required a great empowerment of the state, not just in the U.S. but globally.

So, I think in a country that's as intensely individualistic as the United States is, where people can say, "Well, you know, I want to do what I want to do and it's my freedom, it's my body," there are all kinds of very good reasons for pushing back against this. But I think in the modern world and the modern world of delicate technology and countries existing on delicate balances of how technologies interact, you can't really survive in a country that is verging on the anarchistic in many regards, that cannot provide good government and good governance.

I fear very much for where the future of the U.S. is headed right now. It may not just be the United States. It may be the West, and the West may be ahead of much of the rest of the world. But the problem of control of populations getting ever bigger, and the crises—global warming, disease, technology, etc.—I fear are going to hugely empower states. China is basically arguing that they are the vanguard of the future in this regard.

The thing that I find most deeply depressing about the United States is its addiction, still, to never-ending war. We talked about that briefly before, but I think I am appalled that even with very progressive thinkers like Bernie Sanders, even Bernie Sanders has not dared to grasp the nettle of the Pentagon budget and the ongoing wars, or only very slightly. It's still, you know, "We can't afford medical care, we can't afford infrastructure, we can't afford COVID, or one thing or another." But boy, we can afford those damn wars. I'm appalled that even today, nobody, just about nobody, is suggesting that maybe, one-third of the Pentagon budget might go a long way to beginning to solve a few of these domestic problems. It's beyond the pale, that discussion, right now.

EIR: Yeah, either party.

Fuller: Either party.

EIR: Thank you very much.