

## H.E. Iliia Subbotin

# What Russia Really Wants in Its Relations with Europe—Peace or War?

*This is the prepared text as edited of the presentation of H.E. Iliia Subbotin to Panel I, “Peace in the World through a New Security and Development Architecture for Each and Every Country. The Indispensable Strategic Autonomy of European Countries,” of the Schiller Institute’s July 8–9 conference, “On the Verge of a New World War—European Nations Must Cooperate with the Global South!” Mr. Subbotin is the Minister-Counselor of the Embassy of the Russian Federation in France. Subheads have been added.*



Russian Embassy in France

H.E. Iliia Subbotin

Dear participants of today’s international conference, organized by the Schiller Institute,

Dear Ms. Zepp-LaRouche, Dear Mr. Cheminade,  
Dear friends,

I’m stressing the word friends, because I really hope that this morning I speak in front of people, who are at least ready to listen and who do not have a “pre-cooked” vision of the international reality, like the one broadcasted by the mainstream Western media.

From what I was able to find in open sources about the Schiller Institute and its founder Lyndon LaRouche, I conclude that this audience will be able to think critically and to make its own conclusions.

The topic of today’s panel is “Peace in the world through an architecture of security and mutual development, to the benefit of each and every country.” I will present to you a view, based on the official position of my country and on my personal experience, including 23 years of diplomatic service.

I remember vividly my first contacts with the U.S. high school students in 1990–91, during the last years of existence of the Soviet Union. There was a program called “Friendship Caravan,” under which young Americans were visiting Soviet schools, spending several days in Russian families. After decades of the Cold War, it was a breath of fresh air. We were happy to make

new friends. The future seemed bright and marvelous.

In July 1989, the then President of the Soviet Union, Mikhail Gorbachev, visited Strasbourg and spoke in front of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE). In that historic speech he put forward the idea of the “common European home” and called to substitute “the geopolitical balance by the balance of interests” in order to create the wide economic space from Lisbon to Vladivostok. I see

here the link to the point seven of Helga’s “Ten Principles” for tomorrow’s world.

That was the turning point of the Russian foreign policy. For 30 years after that speech, my country spared no efforts to build the common humanitarian, legal and economic space, which would cover Greater Europe. Russia’s membership in the Council of Europe from 1996 until March 2022 was the most visible proof of that course.

### The Dissolution to the Soviet Union

Before I continue on the track of European integration, allow me to draw your attention to one circumstance, which is key for an understanding of the later developments. After the failed coup d’état of August 1991, in December of the same year, the Soviet Union was peacefully dissolved. Let me stress the two opposite versions of what happened. The U.S. leadership (namely President Bush the father) already during the 1992 electoral campaign started to talk about the victory in the Cold War, and the collapse of the USSR because of that “victory.” For us in the former Soviet Union the perception of the events was radically different.

We never felt we had lost the Cold War. In fact, it was our President who stopped it. The disintegration of the USSR became kind of “collateral damage” of the titanic shift in Russian policy. And, believe me, when it was happening, almost nobody understood what exactly was happening. Most of the people in the former

Soviet republics, except the Baltics and Georgia, wanted to continue living together. And I remember very well the feeling of the first months of 1992 that some kind of new union of the same republics would emerge very soon. The reality unfortunately turned out to be different. [We saw] deep economic crisis, unemployment, criminality, interethnic conflicts in a number of post-Soviet republics.

With all these difficulties Russia still stood firm in its desire to become a part of the Western world. In 1996 we joined the Council of Europe with its Court of Human Rights and many other institutes and instruments. In 2002 the NATO-Russia council was created. As from 2003, we agreed with the European Union on the creation of four common spaces, which would cover economic issues, issues of freedom, security and justice, external security and, finally, research and education.

Meanwhile, in 2000 I graduated from the MGIMO University, the well-known Russian diplomatic school, and was appointed to my first diplomatic post in Chile.

### **A Turning Point in European History**

Here I would like to recall one more personal episode from the late 1990s. In spring 1999, I was doing a Master's in international relations in Madrid, Spain. I lived in a shared flat with some other students, including a Yankee boy, called Stephen. We were going along quite well until NATO started to bomb Yugoslavia. For me this was another turning point in the European history of the last 30 years. Russia today is accused of bringing the war back to Europe—as if the aggression against Yugoslavia never took place! On the night when Russian paratroopers took control of Pristina airport, we had a physical fight with my U.S. neighbor. He started the fight, shouting something about “Russian pigs.” The U.S. might have been successful in Yugoslavia but not in [that] Madrid flat.

In terms of Russia-West relations, the Kosovo crisis is well known by the U-turn of Prime Minister Primakov's plane over the Atlantic (24 March 1999) and the beginning of a U-turn in global Russian politics. Although, as we know now, it took my country 20 more years to do the complete U-turn. The former Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Primakov was a truthful partisan of the concept of a multipolar world. In his active years in politics, he advocated for the multipolar system, which is becoming reality before our eyes now.

In 2007, I was for the first time appointed to Stras-

bourg, to the Russian Permanent Mission to the Council of Europe (CoE). Since then, I have been dealing with the CoE file in different capacities. On February 10, 2007, President Vladimir Putin delivered his landmark Munich speech. He spoke about the indivisible nature of security, of the failure of the unipolar world (maybe it was too premature, but seen from today, that was the right conclusion), of the excessive use of force by the U.S. and NATO.

Recalling the events of the late 1980s President Putin stated clearly: “The fall of the Berlin wall became possible thanks to the historic choice of the Russian people in favor of democracy, freedom, openness and sincere partnership with all members of the big European family.” And of course, he was advocating for a more balanced system of security. (*Point 1 of Helga's principles: for an international security and development architecture as a partnership between sovereign nation-states.*)

### **The West Ignores President Putin**

Was my President heard in Munich? Judging by the events which followed he was not. In August 2008 Georgian leader Saakashvili attacked civilians and Russian peacekeepers in Tskhinvali. Together with my colleagues, I spent long hours of discussions in the Committee of Ministers to prove the obvious—that the attack was started by the Georgian side.

An international inquiry commission, headed by the Swiss Ambassador Heidi Tagliavini, came to the same conclusion. However, none of these conclusions was able to correct the fact that an armed conflict between the Russian army and a U.S. trained and equipped Georgian armed forces took place. Luckily, the war lasted only a few days and, as we see now, became a very good vaccine for the Georgian society and leadership against any future attempts to start an armed conflict with Russia.

In 2009 we celebrated the 60th Anniversary of the Council of Europe. The former President Gorbachev was invited to pronounce the main speech at the solemn ceremony. On that occasion, I was lucky to spend three days with the man who changed history. He is often seen in my country as too pro-European, but allow me to quote some key messages from his 2009 speech: “Europe hasn't fixed the key question—namely, creation of the solid basis for peace of the new security architecture.” [This was] President Gorbachev, not Putin, 2009. Another quotation: “The roots of actual

problems are in the wrong assessment of the events, related to the end of the Cold War and the breakup of the Soviet Union.”

Sorry for the prolonged excursion into modern history, but I’m deeply convinced that to understand today’s reality we must have a clear picture of what happened yesterday.

In 2012–2015 I was working as a seconded political advisor of the Council of Europe Brussels office. It was a unique chance to learn the “Brussels bubble.” Moreover, it was a period of time when foundations for the current Ukrainian crisis were laid. You might remember that the EU and Ukraine were negotiating an Association Agreement with a free trade zone, which would enter into conflict with the already existing free trade zone between Russia and Ukraine.

My close colleague and friend was among the top negotiators on our side at the EU-Russia talks to find a way out of the dead end. According to him, there was no will on the EU side to come to a mutually beneficial agreement during these talks. The refusal by President Yanukovich to sign the Association Agreement was used to spark the Maidan coup d’état, which led to the civil war in Ukraine. And again, we witnessed the unwillingness of the Western leaders to implement the Minsk agreements, which stopped the open hostilities from 2015 till 2022.

### **The Treachery of the West**

Now we all have heard the confessions of [French Prime Minister] Hollande and [German Chancellor Angela] Merkel that they had no intention to implement the Minsk package and the only goal of the deal was to give Ukraine more time to rearm and conquer the rebel regions by force. What was the intention of the Russian leadership? For me, the answer is quite clear: my President, supported by the political class, wanted a genuine peace deal, of course on decent conditions, where the key is recognition of Russia’s leading role in providing security in Europe. The guys in Washington, D.C. apparently did not see such a role for my country. To a large extent, this explains why we’re still at open conflict.

Let me go back to 2017. I took the post of Deputy Director at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) of Russia, responsible for the Council of Europe file. My biggest headache was the institutional crisis. The Russian delegation in the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) was deprived of its key rights, and consequently our authorities decided to stop

paying our contribution to the CoE budget until these rights were fully restored.

By summer 2019, working closely with the Secretary General, [Thorbjørn] Jagland, and the reasonable part of the members of PACE, we were able to fix the problem. The Russian delegation returned to the Assembly with full rights. The Russian contribution to the CoE budget was fully paid. Would all this be possible without the genuine desire of my President, of our political class, to keep Russia as part of the Greater Europe? Definitely not! We were also lucky to have at that moment of history, responsible and independent leadership in the CoE (Jagland).

What happened next? Russia realized that the United States, in Ukraine, was preparing the worst scenario. We made a last effort—the “diplomatic offensive” of December 2021–January 2022. It happened that I was able to discuss these events personally with two main Russian envoys: Deputy Minister Ryabkov (he worked with the U.S.) and Deputy Minister Grushko (he was in charge of the NATO track). The parallel conclusion of both esteemed colleagues: there was no wish on the U.S.-NATO side to seek any compromise with Russia.

In these circumstances, the special military operation became the just and non-alternative step to guarantee Russia’s security and to protect Russian people, whom the Kiev regime wanted to deprive of their language, religion, culture, values.

### **Will the West Join the Multipolar World?**

What was the reaction of the West? Hatred and mantra, that the only way out is a “strategic defeat of Russia on the battlefield.” And no effort is spared to reach this aim. According to open sources, \$150-plus billion have already been spent to arm Ukraine. By the way, a couple of years ago the G20 agreed to accumulate \$100 billion to help the green transition of the developing countries. This commitment has never been implemented!

Let me stress that it was not Russia that broke the relations with Europe. (That was exactly the case with our withdrawal from the Council of Europe.) The breakup was the initiative of the Western countries (second part of the title of our session: “Essential Strategic Autonomy of the European States”). I will not discover America if I say that now there is no such autonomy and that the European political class is almost totally controlled by the U.S. Can this situation change? I hope so. And the fact that such an organization as the Schiller Insti-

tute exists makes this hope stronger.

The multipolar world is emerging. It's a fact of life. New centers of economic growth—China, India, Brazil, Turkey, Gulf countries—are here. Their financial power and political influence go along with their economic success. The share of the G7 in the world GDP is already less than that of the BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa).

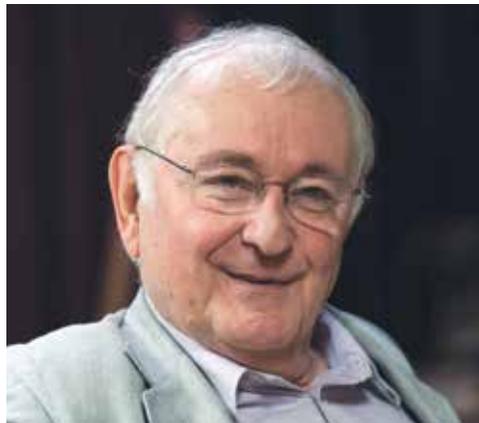
The hegemon who loses its dominance reacts maliciously. By staging internal conflicts and wars between

brotherly nations, like those in former Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union. Will Washington be able to change the course of history? I do not think so. I am sure most of the politicians in the West understand this. The open question is, when will Europe—Germany and France primarily—wake up and free [themselves] from the shackles of U.S. control? When and if this happens, Russia will be ready for mutually beneficial dialogue of equals, on the basis of our fundamental interests. We are not looking for self-isolation.

Jacques Cheminade

## The Rise of the Global South Against Geopolitical Blocs

*This is the prepared text as edited of the presentation of Jacques Cheminade to Panel II, "Why It Is in the Strategic Interest of European Nations To Cooperate with the Global South," of the Schiller Institute's July 8–9 conference, "On the Verge of a New World War—European Nations Must Cooperate with the Global South!" Mr. Cheminade is a former Presidential candidate in France, a leader of the Schiller Institute, and President of the Solidarité et Progrès political party. Subheads have been added.*



S&P/Johanna Clerc

Jacques Cheminade

Of this Ram Mohan Roy, the Tagore family of Indian Bengal was the political and spiritual heir, and in the 20th Century, Rabindranath Tagore was the most accomplished expression of this heritage. Xi Jinping addressed the 23rd summit of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) on July 4, quoting "the great Indian poet Rabindranath Tagore": "The ocean of danger, doubt and denial that surrounds man's little island of certainty challenges him to dare the unknown. We must rise

to the call to action of our time."

We are gathered here in Strasbourg in the face of the risk of a conflagration in the world, the risk that "humanity will one day annihilate itself in monstrous destruction." Today, we are experiencing the first signs of this conflagration in Europe, and particularly in my own country, France.

It is at such tragic moments that it is essential to restore hope. That's why I want to start by showing you the four bas-reliefs on the base of the statue commemorating Gutenberg, just a few minutes' walk from here. This work, executed in 1844, carries the impetus of social emancipation for all the peoples of the world. You'll see Europe, Asia, Africa and America, everywhere doing justice to our share of humanity. You'll find Schiller and Franklin, Confucius and Ram Mohan Roy, Erasmus of Rotterdam, Mahmud II and Abbé Grégoire.

In the midst of the storm, here and now, this is the call we are hearing from the countries of the Global South and East. The 23rd SCO summit was attended by [Indian President Narendra] Modi, [China's President] Xi Jinping, and [Russian President Vladimir] Putin; representatives of East Asian countries; and Pakistan and new SCO member Iran, via video-conference. Discussions focused on security, respect for national sovereignty, and the desire to gradually develop trade in national currencies rather than dollars. In all, representatives of more than 40 percent of the world's population were in attendance.

If we add to this the members of the BRICS Plus [Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa, and a growing number of others], we're talking about more than 66 percent of the world's population and, in terms of National Product measured in purchasing power parity,