
II. Strategic Crisis—Dialogue

International Peace Coalition Dialogue

Leading Americans Speak Out: It Is Time To Reject Empire

The following are the edited remarks delivered to the 62nd weekly International Peace Coalition meeting, August 9, 2024, by Col. (ret.) Lawrence Wilkerson and Dennis Kucinich. A [report on that meeting](#) was published in EIR Vol. 51, Issue No. 32, August 16, 2024.

Wilkerson is a retired United States Army Colonel and former Chief of Staff of Secretary of State Colin Powell. Kucinich served as the United States Congressman for Ohio's 10th Congressional District from 1997 to 2013, and is an independent candidate for Congress in 2024.

Helga Zepp-LaRouche, founder of the Schiller Institute and the International Peace Coalition, thanked Colonel Wilkerson and Mr. Kucinich for their remarks, saying “what you said confirms what my deepest belief is, namely Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz’s philosophical view that the universe is made in such a way that every evil causes an even greater good to emerge. What you both said gives hope to the rest of the world that America can be saved.”

Col. Lawrence Wilkerson: ‘We Need To Reclaim Our Republic and End Our Damn Empire’

Thank you for having me. It’s a pleasure—I guess that’s the right word—to be here with such a distinguished forum today, and on such a day as today.

I think Anastasia Battle, and Helga Zepp-LaRouche have covered the granular situations we confront today quite well. I want to kind of take it up a little bit and talk about what I think is the principal existential threat in the world today. I want to talk a little bit about how I think we got here, and how we could get out of it.

In these times of insane overseas wars, which Helga enumerated quite well, sponsored and supported to



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Col. (ret.) Lawrence Wilkerson, former Chief of Staff for Secretary of State Colin Powell.

the hilt by America, of a troubled U.S. domestic scene not rivaled since 1860, of extremely poor leadership from all three branches of our government, I think it behooves us to stop a moment and take some stock. Indeed, it might be our very existence that is at stake, as the two previous speakers have hinted at, and Helga did more than hint at.

The sweep of human empires is well recorded for at least 3,000 years, and at least in sketches, for about 2,000 more. In that sweep of time—minimal in a geological sense; after all, humans have been here, we think, for 300,000 years, and appreciably so for at least 50,000 years—but in that sweep of 5,000 years, hundreds of empires—hundreds of them, large and small—have come and gone. That’s an important point: all of them are gone—vanished, disappeared!—save the most recent one, the American—in historical terms, a very young one—arguably, 1945 to the present day, or roughly 75 years.

All previous empires—the mighty Mongol, the even

mightier Mogul, the Eastern and Western Roman, the Persian, the Muslim, the British (upon which it was said the Sun never set), the Soviet, and hundreds of lesser ones—are gone! Vanished like smoke! All had their day in the sun, as well as the darkness of their collapse, in many cases. Some went out on fairly gradual glide slopes, like the British; others catastrophically, like the militarily forged empire of the Third Reich—Adolf Hitler. But all of those many previous empires, among them, none, zero, nada, had developed the technology to destroy both themselves and the rest of humanity—none of them!

‘Now I Am Become Death’

Yes, many had prescient prophets, who conjured the wrath of their various divine providences, conjured it to predict the utter destruction of the empire, which they preached and prophesied. But like all such religious or quasi-religious prognostication, their various deities never seemed to have the power to do much more than aid their political powers, to strengthen their hold on the masses—until came the American Empire. “Now, I am become Death, the destroyer of worlds,” a phrase sometimes attributed to Robert Oppenheimer, the father of the atom bomb, which of course came from Vishnu of the Bhagavad Gita. Apocryphal or not with regard to Oppenheimer, the words sum quite well what the Manhattan Project and Oppenheimer had accomplished. And what we live with and perhaps will die with today.

A single ballistic missile submarine carries sufficient weapons to destroy the world as we know it—a single submarine. If the blast and resultant radiation did not complete the job, the induced nuclear winter would. Saints forbid, we even contemplate a nuclear exchange, where all or nearly all of the thousands upon thousands of nuclear weapons—10,000 in two countries—are employed among the now nine nuclear-weapons states, ranging from the huge stockpiles [of] those two countries, the United States and Russia, to the small but lethal one of North Korea.

And what has your country, America—my country, America—done in the past 22 years to multiply tenfold the dangers of such an exchange of weapons? Not even talking about the instantaneous problems we have right now in the Middle East and in Ukraine, the heart of Europe. We, America, have almost singlehandedly destroyed every one of the treaty regimes from the An-

ti-Ballistic Missile Treaty to the Intermediate Nuclear Force Treaty—a very important treaty, very applicable to Ukraine—to the New START Treaty. They gave at least the tentative, precarious balance and restraint to this horrific and now proliferated creation of the American Empire: nuclear weapons.

I repeat: No empire in all of human history ever developed the means to eliminate itself and the human race, none, until America. Oh, of course others would have done so in time, no doubt. But that hardly erases the reality that we did it! In fact, we did it! Worse, there is no way even to ameliorate the clear fact that we now are responsible for eliminating all the nuclear weapons treaties.

So, where does that leave us? As I began my remarks, it leaves us in the most dangerous world imperial power has ever managed to create, bar none. Far worse, it leaves us there with the principal imperial power in the world, America, sponsoring horrific and pointless wars. A country bereft of leadership and lacking domestic tranquility, and even basic common sense. That’s where we are today. It would be the subject of an exquisite Shakespearean comedy—or maybe, tragedy—if not so existentially serious.

There Is Hope

Now, after hearing my dismal picture of the situation with regard to these deadly weapons, I probably should stop and offer some hope. It’s difficult for me to do, because I have been exposed—personally exposed—to the stupidity of Washington’s leadership in a way that stays with me, and will be with me until I enter the grave. The George W. Bush administration was ripe with the problems I have only just now generally and briefly described. But in the name of optimism, I’ll offer some hope—I hope—myself:

The answer is democracy; that weary, heavily fatigued, much embattled concept of government our founders so relished and cherished, no matter how, in the beginning, they might have contaminated it with slavery and landed gentry. The people of this country must object to their imminent suicide! The people must object and object and object, and protest and protest, and vote lousy leaders into the streets, breed and elect new leaders to take their place, and then protest some more! They must reject cultish political movements for what they are: no different in their modern ways from the dismal prophets of old, who at day’s end, were do-

ing nothing but reinforcing the imperial writ—and had their billionaires, too.

We must find decent, caring men and women to substitute for the “useful idiots” (Bibi Netanyahu’s phrase)—The only “useful idiots” were sitting in front of him in the United States Congress, and they’re useful to the empire’s most disgusting, devious, and dangerous motives and actions—men like Lindsey Graham, and women like Marjorie Taylor Greene. And we must replace them with far better people! Mark Twain once said in a moment of humor, which he was wont to, “There’s really no distinctly American criminal class—save the U.S. Congress.” Twain would double down, maybe triple down, on that remark today.

Direct Action Is Needed Now for Change

We must campaign for change and campaign constantly, and directly, in the ugly face of empire. And we must work diligently in every way possible, on every level in the empire’s home, here in the so-called land of the free, to change the trajectory of empire! Even to end the empire on as gentle and little damaging a glide slope as possible, if we can. We must end these stupid, endless wars, each one of which has the potential to expand to the use of nuclear weapons! As has just been said, we have military officers in our armed forces, now, discussing—as they did in the early 1950s, when they didn’t know any better—they’re discussing the use, the utility, of nuclear weapons.

One way to do so in spades, is to agitate constantly for the reduction of the incredible 700-800 overseas bases of this empire, which enable, and even in some ways start these wars! We sprawl all over the Earth! The British never could hold a candle to us. And it’s contaminating the very fabric of our nation to be out there in such a way. Another vital effort, as I have suggested I hope by my remarks, must be to agitate strongly for new nuclear treaty regimes, and this time, with all the nuclear weapons states included, meaning that world pariah state, the one engaged in genocide in Gaza today: Israel. They must be brought kicking and screaming into the new nuclear weapons regime!

I hope you get the picture. We, all of us who care—and we are many—need to reclaim our republic and our democracy, and end our damn empire! And swiftly, not slowly. Thank you.



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Former Congressman Dennis Kucinich is now running for Congress as an independent. Here he is seen addressing the 2015 Conservative Political Action Conference in Washington.

Dennis Kucinich: ‘The Spirit of Turning Swords into Plowshares’

First of all, I want to thank the two previous speakers for their eloquent statements on the state of affairs. Having worked inside of the government for many years, I can certainly attest to the observations of Colonel Wilkerson and thank him for his service to the country, and for his true patriotism, and also thank Madame LaRouche for her very sharp, poignant insights into the current situation.

We all know—and that’s why we’re on this call—we all know that we’re on the cusp of World War III. In some ways, World War III is already happening on the installment plan. We have the extraordinary event of a genocide occurring in Gaza, with the participation of the United States of America, as should send a warning signal to everyone about the unconscious forces that are moving, not only in the Middle East, but throughout the world, in support of continuous war. This is not without historical parallel. The brilliant historian Barbara Tuchman, in her book *The March of Folly*, identified how throughout history, governments had made worse, not better reason, and made choices that destroyed their nations, and in some cases had a profound impact on civilization itself. We are at such a moment again.

The “thought forms” that bring us war have overwhelmed common sense. The policies that bring us war are enriching an elite class that is able to justify, in the most wicked terms, their designs in order to keep

the profits rolling in. The one thing I know from 16 years in Congress is affirmation of General Smedley Butler's statement that "war is a racket," because every war I've seen, since I was in the House of Representatives beginning in 1997, was based on lies. And that the lies are instrumental in not only trying to seize power and resources, but also in building profit.

'Intimations of Immortality'

We are in a dark period here of humanity, but we still have what rests within each of us, this inner light that connects with what we could call the primal human sympathies, as the poet Wordsworth described it in [his poem], "Intimations of Immortality"; the primal human sympathies that connect us each to each, and cause us to be aware of our common humanity. And this is something that this call is important for, because it's a reaffirmation of the common humanity which we hold across the world in the cause of peace: Not the peace of the grave, but peace that enables each person on the planet to live out their own individual destiny, or collective destiny, with their family and the people of their community.

We are now at a crisis point where, as was stated in the introduction to this call, we could be facing a nuclear war. There are those who talk of nuclear weapons as though it's no big deal. They talk about nuclear weapons that have a "limited" effect. When I was in Congress the last time, I cautioned about the use of so-called nuclear bunker-busters against Iran, and pointed out how any kind of nuclear weapon—"low-yield" as they call it—would create nuclear fallout that would spread thousands of miles and would poison millions of people.

The fact that we are still talking about nations using nuclear weapons shows how deracinated the moment is. The fact that the media goes along with the most stupid, inane discussions about policy in a brickbat of a Punch and Judy show, instead of deep analysis of the moment where we're at, shows the danger we're in. The fact that journalists, who tried to do the right thing and report exactly what's going on, are held to obloquy—that they're attacked, that they're raided—shows the danger of the moment that we're in. This is really a moment for *cri de coeur*, a cry of

the heart, to say: "Look, we're not going to stand for this anymore."

This government must stop—and it's our government in the United States where I'm speaking from—must stop in its endless preoccupation with war. Over a trillion dollars a year goes for war or preparation for war right now. More than half of our budget that is supposed to be for protecting the Americans' everyday lives, is now going for this idea that somehow America is still the unipolar ruler of the world, and frankly, that idea has long been gone. And if we don't recognize that we are in a world where there's power for all, we lose the opportunity to merge into that common humanity as a friend, instead of as a war machine.

The Common Destiny of All

So, I'm, as someone who has served inside the government for so many years, and who is aware of the base corruption of our society that continued militarism has brought, I, today, join with you in this call for ceasefires everywhere; for people to lay down their arms; for reawakening of the spirit of turning swords into plowshares; for an understanding that we have a common destiny. And if our destiny is to become part of nuclear rubble, then those of us who object to that, as we do today, need to be heard from. I object to it. And I know that future generations are depending right now, on all of us, to be able to be heard from. And how are we heard from? We're heard from in governments by being candidates and by being elected to office. We're heard from by organizing in town squares and bringing people together to cite the moment. We're heard from by using whatever tools we have on the internet to communicate and arouse the people to let them know of the challenge of the moment. And we're here through our commonalities, merging and creating a new consciousness that hopefully will be able to overtake this very sordid dance with death.

So, thanks to all of you for what you do. I'm hopeful that this conference is the beginning of many new efforts percolating all over the world for peace, for justice, and for humanity and the continuation of life on our planet. Thanks, everyone.