II. Munich Symposium

Dialogue of Cultures in Munich

by Werner Zuse

August 11—Many in Germany today feel that there is a lack of forward-looking, open discussion on the existential issues of our time. This is one reason for the tremendous enthusiasm of the approximately 70 participants in an August 4, Munich symposium: "The Implementation of the Four Major Global Initiatives and the Building of a Community with a Shared Future for Mankind," which was jointly organized by the Chinese Consulate General in Munich, Germany and the Schiller Institute–Germany.

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Chinese Consul General in Munich, Germany, Qiu Xuejun, speaks at the Munich conference. Helga Zepp-LaRouche, founder of the Schiller Institute, is to his left.

In his keynote address, Consul General Qiu Xuejun outlined the Chinese government's political perspective, noting that through its four global initiatives—the Global Security Initiative, the Global Development Initiative, the Global Civilization Initiative, and the Global Governance Initiative—it has presented a comprehensive framework for stabilizing international relations. The world is currently experiencing upheavals unlike any seen in over a century. He quoted President Xi: "The countries of the world are not sitting in more than 190 small boats, but in one large ship on which they share a common destiny. Small boats cannot withstand wind and waves—only a large ship can brave the mighty storms." The Consul General emphasized that humanity's shared future must guide the direction of policy.

China is offering the world its successful development model, which has lifted millions of people out of poverty, and has invested $1.92 trillion in the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) in recent years. As a result, trade between countries has increased dramatically. Despite its size, China has never sought power, and Qiu expressed his hopes that the two largest economies in Europe and Asia—Germany and China—will not allow themselves to be deterred from cooperation by a few voices in Europe. In this regard, the joint symposium with the Schiller Institute offered a positive contribution to the future of humanity.

As the world's second- and third-largest economies and the largest industrialized nations on the Eurasian continent, China and Germany have a special historical mission for the future of humanity, said Qiu. History has proven time and again that cooperation between the philosophical traditions of China and Germany "across mountains and seas" has ignited sparks of wisdom that illuminate the world.

Following Consul General Qiu, Helga Zepp-LaRouche spoke. The founder of the Schiller Institute expressed her gratitude for the hospitality of the Chinese Consulate General in allowing this joint symposium to be held on its premises. She addressed the extremely critical strategic situation surrounding the two ongoing military conflicts in Ukraine and Iran, both of which

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have the potential to escalate into a global war. She quoted retired General Harald Kujat, former Inspector General of the Bundeswehr and former Chairman of the NATO Military Committee, who in several publications has compared the current situation to that in August 1914, immediately before World War I. The difference from that time, she noted, is that nations today possess nuclear weapons capable of wiping out all of humanity and ending all life on Earth through a subsequent 50-year nuclear winter.

The Global South has realized with dismay that diplomacy no longer exists as a method of conflict resolution for Europeans. Therefore, the UN Charter must be strengthened by a new security and development architecture, as expressed in China's Global Governance Initiative. Following the start of what Russia had termed its Special Military Operation but now calls a war, the Schiller Institute articulated essentially the same idea in a call for a new global security and development architecture, and formulated Ten Principles outlining what such an architecture might look like.

Because the mainstream media has maintained absolute silence regarding China's four initiatives, said Zepp-LaRouche, there is no public awareness of them and, consequently, no public discussion about them. These initiatives, together with the BRI, could solve the economic problems not only of Germany but of all of Europe. Likewise, the refugee crisis can only be resolved through economic development in the home countries of those fleeing hunger, poverty, and war. Pope Leo XIV passionately addressed this issue in his speeches during a trip to Spain in early June: All refugees have the right to a secure future in their homeland.

Zepp-LaRouche underlined that this can be achieved by rebuilding these countries through cooperation between the West, China, and the BRICS nations. For decades, the Schiller Institute has been designing and advocating development programs for the Global South, which must now be implemented through this cooperation to ensure peace and prosperity for all of humanity. Therefore, the Global Governance Initiative must be placed on the agenda at the UN General Assembly in September. She emphasized that the ideas of the 15th-Century German Cardinal Nicholas of Cusa—who recognized a greater power in the One than in the Many—are very much in line with the views of President Xi Jinping, who sees humanity's task as creating a common future for all of humanity.

Not Enemies, but Potential Friends

Following Zepp-LaRouche, Prof. Zhang Weiwei, dean of the China Institute at Fudan University in Shanghai, addressed the seminar via video link. In his characteristic vivid manner, he presented President Xi Jinping's four Global Initiatives: The Global Development Initiative is intended to create the foundations for the livelihoods of all peoples and individuals around the world. The Global Security Initiative is intended to create a peaceful environment in which global development is possible in the first place. The Global Civilization Initiative means that every culture must learn from other cultures, rather than engaging in a "clash of civilizations." The Global Governance Initiative lays the foundation for peaceful development among the nations of the world.

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Prof. Zhang Weiwei

Zhang then addressed the difference in the view of humanity and the approach to action between China and Western countries. In China, he said, knowledge and action are one and the same, whereas in the West they are separate. That is why there is too much bureaucracy in Europe, which hinders action. In the United States and Europe, he noted, people constantly talk about Western values, whereas for China, the issue of

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Slide with examples of Mogao cave temples in Dunhuang, Gansu Province, China.

peace is the most important task. We must discuss matters together and benefit together. The most important difference, however, is the view of humanity. At the 2025 Munich Security Conference, the theme was "lose-lose"—meaning everyone is a loser. Thus, the West divides the world into friends and enemies, whereas for China, there are only friends or potential friends.

The next speaker was Guo Qinglin, president of the Dunhuang Academy in China, who began his trip to Germany with a delegation by participating in the seminar. He presented the Academy's work on the restoration and preservation of the more than 700 Buddhist cave temples in Dunhuang, known as the Mogao Caves, which is a UNESCO World Heritage Site and represents one of the most magnificent examples of the integration of Chinese and Buddhist traditions along the ancient Silk Road. He emphasized that the goal, particularly through digitization, is to make this historical heritage accessible to all of humanity.

He, too, emphasized that every country must accept the sovereignty of all states and take into account the security interests of all states. "By cooperating with friends, we can resolve all of the world's crises."

The highly engaging presentation, during which he showed many images of the caves, was met with great enthusiasm by the audience, who were thus given a rare glimpse into one of the most significant intersections of various ancient cultures.

Building a Shared Future for Humanity

The next speaker, Eric Recke of the Sahra Wagenknecht Alliance (BSW) party, a member of the Saxon State Parliament, also had to speak online, as the well-known unreliability of Deutsche Bahn (German rail system) prevented him from attending in person. Recke has visited Shenzhen and Nanjing frequently since 2024 and said he had been able to witness the success of the four global initiatives there. BSW, he said, advocates that governments should be formed by experts from all political parties who, unlike the practice in Germany, would be required to have professional expertise. Germany has, through its current practices, become disconnected from global developments. Recke lamented that the decisions to phase out nuclear energy, natural gas, oil, and the internal combustion engine, have inflicted great damage on the German economy. In the future, the energy supply will no longer be guaranteed. Our rail network is becoming increasingly unreliable, and we are also falling behind in the airport sector. As a result, prices are rising, and the state must increasingly compensate for the losses incurred

by citizens and companies by taking on more and more debt, which is then no longer available for investment. This, in turn, leads to poverty and higher unemployment. That is why BSW is calling for a withdrawal from NATO and cooperation with the BRICS to revitalize Germany.

BSW wants to connect Saxony's rail network to the New Silk Road (BRI) and hopes that Chinese investment in Saxony can rescue struggling companies. On July 1, a motion he introduced in the Leipzig City Council calling for cooperation with China in culture and sports was supported by all parties represented in the Bundestag. In February 2027, he will run for the office of mayor of Leipzig, and if successful, he will be able to implement these plans directly. Germans, like the Chinese, want to live in prosperity. For the well-being of all people, we must therefore all work toward building a shared future for humanity. He himself had dedicated his life to this task.

Governance Initiative Follows the Tradition of Bandung

Next to speak was sinologist Werner Müller. He emphasized that China has been pursuing the Global Governance Initiative since the 1950s. In 1955, at the Non-Aligned Movement summit in Bandung, Indonesia, Zhou Enlai and other representatives of the Global South had promoted respect for national sovereignty, territorial integrity, non-interference in the internal affairs of other states, and peaceful coexistence. China has consistently followed this path and has risen to become the world's largest economic power and second-largest power without engaging in wars or colonial adventures. With its four global initiatives, China has set a new course in foreign policy. All nations could rally behind them.

Why isn't this being discussed here in Germany in the Bundestag, Müller asked. The problem for Germany may lie in the fact that the four global initiatives require a reform of international institutions—which is indeed necessary, because the interests of the majority of humanity must finally be taken into account.

The initiatives also signify a departure from the principle of "might makes right." This principle of might makes right was evident in the sabotage of Nord Stream 2 natural gas pipeline, the bombing of Iran, and the invasion of Gaza and the destruction of Palestinian settlements in the West Bank. According to the four global initiatives, all states, whether large or small, should have equal rights to prevent such acts. This is what is meant by "international democracy."

It is shameful that this issue is not being discussed in Germany; instead, reports in Germany focus solely on U.S. criticism of the initiatives. The United States fears that China wants to use this to shift the balance of power. Germany and Europe should no longer be mere pawns of U.S. interests but must finally pursue an independent policy. That is why the Global Governance Initiative must be made better known, and today's symposium is a good start toward that end.

The final speaker was Alexandra Motschmann, a writer from Starnberg, Bavaria. She emphasized that in the 5th Century B.C., there were important philosophers in various parts of the world who held similar ideas: Confucius and Laozi from China, Buddha from India, and Socrates and Plato from Greece. NATO, she said, still lives in an era predating these great philosophers and stands for war. She then recited a poem she had written titled "War and Peace." The world is more interconnected than ever, she noted, yet there remains a misunderstanding between cultures. The American Marshall Rosenberg had asserted: "The most important thing is peaceful communication." Friendship between nations does not mean agreeing on everything, but rather treating others with respect, listening to them, and being willing to understand them. Every culture is unique. She does not want a world government, but rather a "global understanding by all for all." Politicians must be held accountable for their actions. For example, German Chancellor Friedrich Merz defended the first attack on Iran by the United States and Israel in June 2025, even though it violated the UN Charter. Peace is the most important good.

Following the presentations, there was a lively discussion in which many guests criticized the federal government's policies and asked how they could be changed. An organic farmer from the Rosenheim district emphasized that EU policy had forced him to cease his production of organic milk. The problem in Germany, he said, is that a profession is no longer a calling but merely a "job." A Chinese Buddhist woman who works in nursing also pointed out that people no longer see one another as human beings but simply work to earn money.

After the event, most participants expressed their enthusiasm for this open dialogue at the highest level, which is unfortunately sorely lacking in Germany at present. They expressed their hope for further opportunities for such discussions between the world's cultures in the future.