

Hussein Askary

Justice for the Nations of Southwest Asia

Hussein Askary is Southwest Asia Coordinator for the Schiller Institute. He delivered this keynote presentation to the third panel, "Southwest Asia: Pivot for War, or Peaceful Development with the New Silk Road," of the March 20-21, 2021 Schiller Institute's international conference, "The World at a Crossroad: Two Months into the New Administration."



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Hussein Askary

Thank you, Diane, for your nice introduction. It's a great pleasure for me to keynote this panel, especially after yesterday's two fantastic panels.

First of all, I would like to wish all a happy new year, a happy *Nawrouz* (New Day)! Yesterday, we witnessed the vernal equinox, as the Sun positioned itself directly on the Earth's equator, shining equally on the North and South Poles of our planet, and on every nation, declaring the arrival of spring. Many nations in

Asia celebrate this as the first day of the new year. All nations are equal in the eyes of the Universe and the Creator of the Universe.

When we look at the world from space, and specifically at the confluence of the continents of Eurasia and Africa, we take note of a region, falsely called "the Middle East."

Figure 1 shows something the Schiller Institute and Lyndon LaRouche and Helga Zepp-LaRouche and their associates have developed—what we call the World

Land-Bridge. It connects all the continents and nations with development corridors. We imposed on it the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) corridors, which were announced by the Chinese President Xi Jinping in 2013.

The problem is that people are too much possessed by the idea of trade. The Silk Road is not simply for trade. It's a *development corridor*. So, when we talk

FIGURE 1

World Land-Bridge Development Corridors



Belt and Road Institute in Sweden (BRIS)

about development corridors and draw these lines, this is what we will come to discuss.

There is no such place as the Middle East! East of what? And in the middle of what? In the United Nations, or if you are a soccer enthusiast, you know that there is no FIFA football division called Middle East. The British East India Company coined that term to identify its colonies and property as seen from London. So, the Near East, the Middle East, and the Far East—far from London.

We, the United Nations, and FIFA, don't use British colonial terminology. We use scientific criteria of looking at distinguishable continents, land masses. So, we have East Asia, South Asia, Central Asia, and our region, West Asia, not Middle East. For reasons of including Afghanistan and even Pakistan, we say Southwest Asia.

The same thing applies to the term "Indo-Pacific," which is a geopolitical concoction. There is no such place as Indo-Pacific, and British geopolitics is making the Pacific (which means "calm" and "peaceful") more and more troubled and warlike!

Geopolitics have turned Southwest Asia into the "Middle of Hell." Look at the conditions in Libya and Iraq, and the continuing crimes against humanity that are being committed against the people of Yemen and Syria, by denying them food and medicine, and by destroying their infrastructure. We should also not forget the plight of the Palestinian people in the West Bank and Gaza, who are suffering under Israeli occupation, and who don't know if they will ever have a state or a homeland.

Our purpose here is not to seek retribution, but to seek justice for the victims of the endless wars. And we do that by building a beautiful future for the children today and for the coming generations. That is *our* definition of justice—honoring the victims by giving their offspring a prosperous and peaceful future. But work can and should start now, not in the future.

So, we go to Southwest Asia and its immediate neighborhood. This is a region of almost half a billion people, mostly young, under the age of 23, relatively well-educated. This is also the center of many ancient civilizations: Mesopotamia, Persia, Syria, Egypt, Ethiopia, and Yemen. It is the birthplace of Judaism, Christi-



Lyndon LaRouche keynotes the June 2-3, 2002 conference, "The Role of Oil and Gas in World Politics," at the Zayed Centre for Coordination and Follow-Up in Abu Dhabi, UAE. On LaRouche's right is UAE Oil Minister Obeid Bin Saif Al Nasser, and on his left, former Iraqi Oil Minister Essam Abdul-Aziz Al Galabi.

anity and Islam. It also happens to have two thirds of the known hydrocarbon reserves of the world. But most importantly, besides the young population, the "crossroads of the continents" is the real wealth of these nations.

LaRouche Interventions and Initiatives

The term "crossroads of the continents" was used by the late American statesman and economist, and our teacher, Mr. Lyndon LaRouche, in a speech he gave in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates, in May 2002. In that speech, well-attended by oil ministers and half of the cabinet of the UAE, LaRouche identified three aspects that are necessary for achieving peace and development in this region. These are:

1. Developing the water resources and combatting desertification;
2. Industrialization in the sense of using petroleum not as a cash-generating export commodity, but as an industrial feedstock for petrochemical and plastics production, increasing the added value and usefulness of each barrel of oil by orders of magnitude; and
3. Instead of using oil and gas for fuel, LaRouche proposed that these nations build nuclear power, both to desalinate sea water and to provide power to its industrial base. Five years later, the UAE government launched its nuclear program, with the construction of the largest nuclear plant cluster in the region at the Al-Baraka site. The second of its four plants was just commissioned for operation last month. Each of the plants generate 1,250

megawatts of electricity and additional heat.

But much more is needed in this region, as we will see.

LaRouche's initiatives in this region did not start in 2002, but as early as 1975 when he visited Baghdad, my own birthplace. I was only seven years old then. I didn't know LaRouche. At that time, he proposed the Oasis Plan for achieving peace between the Arab nations and Israel on the basis of economic development, not mere political paper-work agreements.

In 1993, when the Oslo Agreement was signed between the Palestinians and Israelis, Mr. LaRouche said:

"Get the shovels and bulldozers in the ground immediately and start building the economic infrastructure necessary for the people." Otherwise, extremists lurking in the background like Ariel Sharon and others on the Palestinian side would do their best to sabotage the peace process by provoking violent actions. Unfortunately, they succeeded, because the U.S., Europe and the Israelis got busy making real estate deals, rather than developing the economy of the whole region as Mr. LaRouche had advised. By real estate deals I mean long negotiations about which piece of land I get, and which you get, etc.

Following the 9/11 attacks, in 2001—which, by the way, Mr. LaRouche warned of in advance could happen, to launch a police state in the U.S. and globally—the U.S. and NATO went on a rampage in this region, starting with Afghanistan. Iraq followed in 2003, and then we had the so-called Arab Spring, which was used as a springboard for invading more nations, including Libya in 2011, Syria in 2012, and launching the war in Yemen in March 2015. By the way, this week is the anniversaries of the invasion of Iraq, the wars on Syria and Yemen. These wars all started in March.

While campaigning to stop these destructive wars, Mr. LaRouche and our association presented alternative policies for the U.S., the European Union and these

FIGURE 2

The Eurasian-African Land-Bridge



EIRNS

nations, based on the understanding of the realities of this region, our knowledge of physical economics, and the importance of this region for the world.

As you may know, Mr. and Mrs. LaRouche and our association were developing, since the early 1990s, the concept of transcontinental development corridors or land-bridges, which evolved into the Eurasian-African Land-Bridge, also popularly known as the New Silk Road. (See **Figure 2**, showing primary and secondary rail routes.) It is on the cover of *EIR*. The Chinese government early on realized that this was the right strategy for the future, and by 2013, President Xi Jinping launched the Belt and Road Initiative, which now has become endorsed by more than 136 nations and more organizations, and has already transformed the world economy, despite massive opposition by the U.S. and some of its allies.

We started matching LaRouche's physical economics concepts with the BRI as a strategy for reconstruction in this war-torn region and for lasting peace. In 2014, we developed Operation Phoenix for the reconstruction of Syria and connection to the New Silk Road. My colleague, Ulf Sandmark, took the personal risk of travelling to Syria in the middle of the hot phase of the war in late 2015, and in later years as well, to present this plan to the Syrian leadership. It was in that context that we met with our last panel's speaker, Her Excel-

FIGURE 3

Operation Phoenix



Courtesy of Hussein Askary

lency Dr. Bouthaina Shaaban, Political and Media Advisor to the Syrian Presidency. [Her presentation appears in last week’s *EIR*.]

Operation Phoenix proposes (see **Figure 3**) the rebuilding of Syria’s cities within the context of connecting it to the New Silk Road by land and sea, and realizing the “Five Seas Strategy” which was proposed by President Bashar Al-Assad before the war. Syria, before the war, was self-sufficient in food supplies, medicine and many other important products. But most of that has been destroyed by the war.

An important aspect of Operation Phoenix is our proposal for the establishment of a national reconstruction and development bank or fund. Ironically, the model we used was the idea of creating national credit as developed by Alexander Hamilton, the first Treasury Secretary of the United States, and one of the founding fathers of the American Republic. A sovereign nation must have the capability to autonomously issue credit for internal improvements. At the same time, it can reach agreements with other sovereign nations for long-term, low-interest rate credits for imports of technologies and know-how. This was, for example, the way the U.S. assisted Germany in the

post- World War II reconstruction.

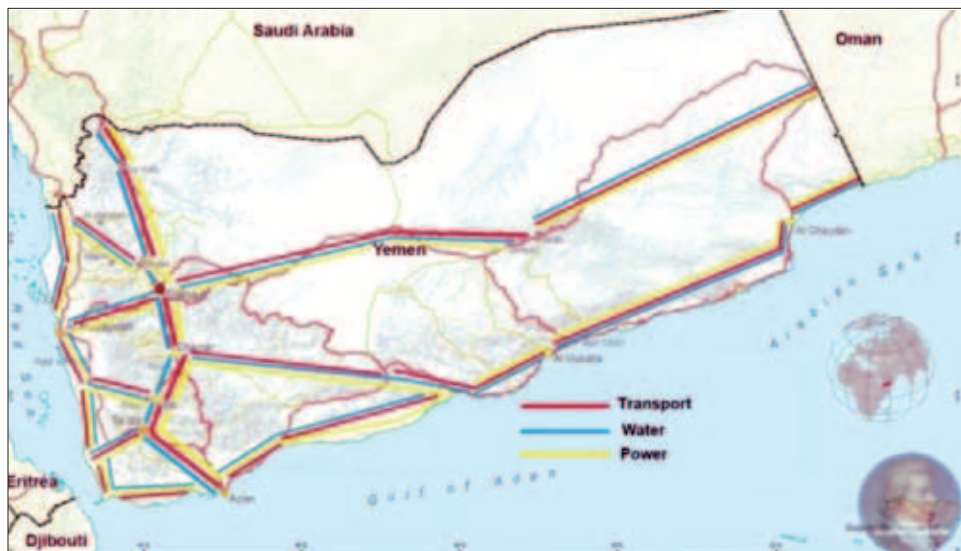
We move now to Yemen. In 2015, the war against Yemen was waged by the so-called Saudi Coalition. What is happening in Yemen is not a civil war, but a foreign invasion backed by the U.S. and Britain. But even in the darkest moments of this war, we had Yemenis, especially youth, reaching out to the LaRouche Movement for support against the war, but also for ideas to organize the people around a concept for peace and development.

They are called the BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa) Youth Parliament. They started teaching LaRouche’s economic ideas in their circles. In the center of their logo are images of LaRouche’s five keys to development. Together with them and the Yemeni Investment Authority, we put together a plan for the reconstruction of Yemen, connecting it to the Belt and Road. We called it Operation Felix: The Happy Miracle of the Reconstruction of Yemen. The ancient Greeks and Romans called Yemen Arabia Felix, because its people were the most prosperous and happy people.

We applied the concept of the “Development Corridor” as developed by Lyndon LaRouche (see **Figure**

FIGURE 4

Operation Felix Development Corridors



Courtesy of Hussein Askary

4) to the demographic, climatic, and natural resource distribution in Yemen. Then we matched that with the Belt and Road Initiative to make Yemen and the south Arabian rim a bridge between Asia and Africa. The development of Yemen’s ports is also part of the Maritime Silk Road strategy. Operation Felix was endorsed by the Yemeni Investment Authority in a special event convened in its headquarters in June 2018. Our friend Fouad Al-Ghaffari presented the plan at that meeting, because I was unable to be there at the time.

Whenever peace is reached in Yemen, the reconstruction of the country can hit the ground running, since a complete plan is already available. Here too, we proposed the establishment of a national reconstruction and development bank for Yemen. I think our guest speaker on this panel from Yemen, H.E. Eng. Hisham Sharaf, Minister of Foreign Affairs, will address this issue in his statement next in this conference. [See his presentation elsewhere in this issue.]

Further to Iraq

In 2020, I was pulled into a heated debate in Iraq by a group of Iraqi young people about two issues: 1. The government delaying of the building of the strategic Great Port of al-Faw in the southern city of Basrah on the Gulf; and 2. The blocking by the same government of a cooperation agreement with China, called the

Framework of Cooperation on Export and Credits, popularly known in Iraq as the China-Iraq “Oil for Reconstruction Agreement.”

This was a very important credit arrangement reached in May 2018 between the Iraqi Ministry of Finance and the Chinese Export and Credit Insurance Corporation (Sinosure) to create a special fund where oil revenues from a fraction of Chinese purchases of Iraqi oil are accumulated monthly. These would be matched by a ratio of 1:6 by Chinese bank loans. The \$10 billion fund would then be used to

generate loans for infrastructure projects in Iraq, to be built by Chinese companies. These projects include ports, airports, roads, railways, power projects, housing, hospitals, and sewage systems.

It means a complete overhaul and reconstruction of the Iraqi infrastructure, which had been destroyed by the wars launched by the U.S. and Britain since 1991. The neglect of this infrastructure under U.S.-British controlled governments since the invasion of 2003 has left Iraq, one of the wealthiest Arab countries in the 1970s and 80s, with an electricity supply, for example, of only 4-5 hours a day for households and businesses—after 17 years. The same goes for water, healthcare, education, and other services.

But this Agreement with China was not activated immediately. When Prime Minister Adel Abdul-Mahdi finally activated it in October 2019, he suddenly faced a color revolution, which had originally started as a legitimate protest against the lack of services and the rampant corruption. But it was hijacked by forces that turned it into a violent revolt.

When the U.S. assassinated Iranian Major-General Qasem Soleimani and the leader of the Iraqi Popular Mobilization Forces in Baghdad on January 3, 2020, more chaos ensued, and that was the final nail in the coffin of the Abdul-Mahdi government, who was forced to resign, and consequently the paralyzing of the China-Iraq agreement.

Just one thing to say about Qasem Soleimani and the Iraqi Shi'a militia leader. These two men were not fighting the United States. They were busy fighting ISIS (the Islamic State), side by side with the United States.

The new government, which came in as a compromised temporary substitute, suspended the Agreement with China and used the funds intended for reconstruction to solve government budget problems.

I am not going to say more about the Agreement itself, because our guest from the Iraqi Parliament, [Haidar Al-Fuadi Al-Atabe, whose presentation to the Schiller Institute Conference appears elsewhere in this issue] would like to say something about it today. I have written extensively about it in our publication *Executive Intelligence Review*.

It was in this context that an Iraqi youth movement emerged in late 2020, demanding the activation of the Agreement. I used my knowledge of LaRouche's physical economics, previous reconstruction studies, and our historical development of the New Silk Road concept to give classes to those youth through social media. These groups started to grow in numbers, and gradually the Iraqi opposition media took note of this. Even members of Parliament became aware of this movement and its demands.

If we look at Iraq in the context of the Belt and Road, we can see that it can be a bridge for both the maritime and land-based Silk Roads, utilizing its pivotal geographic location in addition to its human and natural resources. If the infrastructure is developed, that development would be possible. In addition, Iraq will be able to rebuild its industrial and agricultural production capacity to free itself from the current total reliance on oil revenues. Iraq sells oil, and imports 97% of its all needs. Oil fluctuations have had a devastating impact on Iraq economically and socially in recent years. Besides, Iraq can develop a large petrochemicals industry, using its own oil.

The young people in Iraq are spontaneously organizing small demonstrations and writing posters. I didn't do any of this. The people themselves made the posters, putting them up everywhere they can reach.

I would like to stop with a picture of five young men. They are somewhere between 14 and 17 years of



Courtesy of Hussein Askary
Typical of the widespread enthusiasm in Iraq for peace and reconstruction among all age groups are these youths from Samawah, demonstrating in support of activating the China-Iraq Agreement.

age, from a city in southern Iraq where the living conditions are the worst. What are they asking for in their posters? “We want to activate the China-Iraq Agreement,” “We want to Join the New Silk Road,” and “We want to build the Faw Port project.” These kids can become engineers, scientists, or construction workers if we start the reconstruction process; or otherwise they might potentially be recruited to some militia or extremist group. These are the choices they are facing, and you can see what their preference is, what *they* want, what kind of future they want to have. These are the issues we should be discussing—what kind of choice we want to give them and other youth around the world, which this conference is dedicated to.

Many major political forces and parties in Iraq, especially in the South, are now publicly calling for the activation of the China-Iraq Agreement, and joining the New Silk Road. Some of the them are doing that out of opportunism, since the October elections are approaching. But what this shows is that there is a groundswell in the population around this question.

In conclusion, I would say to especially policy-makers in the United States, Britain, and other NATO countries: It is never too late to mend your ways and do the right thing.

Therefore, it is the right time that this region, which

had been a cockpit of global geo-politics, can suddenly become a place where the major powers—the U.S., Russia, and China—could work together.

One more thing. The people of Iraq, Iran, Syria, Libya, Afghanistan, and Yemen are not out to get retribution or vengeance for what was done to them. They are asking for peace and for having the right to a decent living standard. But, believe me, they will keep fighting the invaders of their countries to the last man, which is really unnecessary. If you think you can starve them

into submission and force them to give up their sovereignty, independence, and their dignity, you are mistaken. You have not learned anything, and you know nothing about history.

But if you do as Mr. LaRouche repeatedly said, “pull out the bombers, drones and tanks, and bring in the tractors, technology and engineers,” then the people of Southwest Asia will welcome you with open arms. That is what justice means for me, and for them.

Thank you.

Hisham Sharaf

Our Goal: Peace in Yemen, and Joining the New Silk Road

Hisham Sharaf is the Foreign Minister of Yemen. He delivered this presentation to the Schiller Institute's international conference, “The World at a Crossroad: Two Months into the New Administration,” during the third panel, “Southwest Asia: Pivot for War, or Peaceful Development with the New Silk Road,” on March 21.



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Hisham Sharaf

It's a good opportunity that we send our best regards to our good friend Helga LaRouche, the head of the Schiller International Institute. At the same time, it is also my pleasure, from Sana'a, to welcome all the participants of the “World at a Crossroad” conference, which is now ongoing.

And it will be my pleasure, also, to participate through those days, in your conference, which comes by the way, close to the sixth anniversary of the aggression against our country, on the 26th of March 2015. I would like to recall that, on that day, we thought that this aggression would be over as soon as they realized—the Saudis and the Emiratis, and all of those who joined them—they would realize that the people of Yemen do not really obey such kind of an aggression or try to yield.

Nowadays, you hear a lot about Ma'rib. What's happening in Ma'rib? It is a land of Yemen; it is our land, where we have our gas and we have our oil, and it's *our right* to have our influence and our control on our land.

We are not crossing any other lands, and we are free to move in any of our land's borders.

It goes, also, to the issue the things that we are passing through. Corona, the COVID-19—we tried our best to manage handling this issue, regardless of the fact that the world did not stand by us. Maybe some countries are trying to help us, but because of the blockade, we cannot really get any help. We are trying our best through some UN assistance to do something for our population.

Presenting the issue of the donors conference for Yemen: We knew that the UN had organized that meeting, with some kind of a proposal for \$3.7 billion to try to help in alleviating the miseries of our people, which were caused by the Saudis and their allies. But the reality of the subject is politics. Because of politics, we only got about \$1.7 or \$1.65 billion and this is not really enough to do many things. But why not? Let's try to handle what we have in our hands. We are trying to end this aggression as soon as possible by calling for peace.

A Sustainable and Justified Peace

The Yemenis and the National Salvation Government are calling for peace. We need peace for our people; we don't need it for the conflicting parties. And we are not ready to be proxies of anyone, as sometimes they mention. Yemenis are peace lovers. Yemenis want