

### III. Economics

#### Oasis Plan Conference

## We Have the Technologies 'To Go to Peace, with Water'

by Dr. Pierre Berthelot

*The following is an edited transcript of the presentation by France-based water expert Dr. Pierre Berthelot, to Panel 2 of the April 13, 2024 conference of the Schiller Institute, "The Oasis Plan: The LaRouche Solution for Peace Through Development between Israel and Palestine and for All of Southwest Asia." The second panel was titled, "The Physical Foundation for the Economic Development of Southwest Asia."*

*Dr. Berthelot is an associate researcher at the Institut Prospective & Sécurité en Europe (IPSE), a center of expertise on security affairs in Europe, founded in 1988, which brings together a community of researchers. He is also a member of the Académie de l'Eau, and Director of the journal *Orients Stratégiques*.*

*Panel 2 and the rest of the conference can be viewed [here](#).*

My topic tonight is very clear. The subject is water in the Middle East: Does it present the possibility to bring about peace or, on the other hand, is it maybe more an impediment, an obstacle to peace?

First of all, if we look at history, we should be pessimistic. Why? Let's say that water is usually more a bone of contention between countries. Why? Because you know that we are in an area in the Middle East



*Dr. Pierre Berthelot speaks at the Schiller Institute's Water for Peace conference in Paris, January 9, 2024.*

where water is scarce, and with climate change it's getting worse and worse. So, water is declining in this special area. This is the first reason. The second one is that when you look during the last 60-70 years, water at many times was a subject of conflict, but not always war. Sometimes it was just a bone of contention. I will give a few examples.

For instance, Türkiye decided in the 1980s to build more and more dams in the southeast of the country, both to increase the availability of water, but also as a way to fight the Turkish Kurds. This was a big problem for neighboring countries, especially Syria. [There was conflict over water between Türkiye and its neighbors in the 1980s over the building of dams in southeast

Türkiye, much having to do with the Kurdish minority—ed]. Syria and Türkiye were close to war around 2000.

Another example is Israel and its neighbors, as was very clear in the [first presentation](#) tonight, which was excellent, with maps. We saw that Israel wanted to also develop its agriculture, and also to have more water for its population, which was increasing and increasing, the Jewish population in Israel. The majority came, as you know, either from Europe or from Arab countries. So, they needed more water. And it was a bone of contention with the neighbors, as, unfortunately, the Oslo

proposal, and the Johnston Plan in the 1950s, were not followed. So, again, it was water shortages, as some historians say, which was one of the main reasons for the Six-Day War. Just a couple of months before the Six-Day War occurred, there were harsh tensions between Syria and Israel regarding the water resources. So, when you have all these examples, one must be made to become quite pessimistic. But on the other hand, even if today it seems quite difficult, I want to be optimistic. I want to be positive.

### **A Desalination Revolution**

The situation in some ways has changed. What changed? First of all, now Israel has enough water; Israel is one of the leading countries in desalinating water. They have many plants, as was shown by the first presentation, with very good maps. Israel is now even selling water to Jordan; so this is the first thing.

This desalination revolution that is occurring, is not only in Israel, but is also in the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, etc. This is a very important point. So in my opinion, when today Israel says, for instance, we can't create an independent Palestinian state, why? Because one of the threats for us is that if the future Palestinian state manages its own water without Israeli control—which is the current situation now—we are afraid that we will lack water. The two countries are very mixed in the management of water sources. You know that there are aquifer waters in the West Bank, for instance. So, this is one argument of Israel, but I think this argument is no longer pertinent. Israel now has, in my opinion, enough water—even if climate change threats are becoming higher and higher—as shown by this agreement with Jordan. This is the first reason why I am quite optimistic regarding the future.

Another example, just recently, is that an agreement occurred between Lebanon and Israel. It was not directly on the water situation, it was on energy; especially regarding the border in the sea, the dividing line between Lebanon and Israel. What is very interesting is that the major Lebanese political party, the Hezbollah—which is quite close to Iran, as everybody knows—the Hezbollah some years ago said, never, never can Lebanon go with an agreement with Israel; it's not possible, it is our fierce enemy. This is still the official discourse, but what is very interesting is that Hezbollah didn't do anything to pose some problems for the Lebanese government not to reach this agreement. So, it isn't supporting it officially, but it isn't opposing it; this is very interesting. It shows that even when you have a fierce

enemy in the area, they can reach a peace agreement. That's why I am quite optimistic.

I think that even if now it seems impossible—because we see the situation in Gaza every day, which is so terrible—if you say maybe in five years or in ten years we will have peace between the Palestinians and Israelis, some would say you are crazy; it's impossible. But I am still optimistic, because I just gave you an example that shows that even the worst enemies can reach agreement. Maybe in the Palestinian case, of course, in five years, in two years, in ten years, there will be maybe, I think, an agreement. I think it is possible, based on economic exchanges and based on water trade between Israel and the Palestinians.

But first, for instance, Hamas will oppose it, but maybe it won't do all in its efforts to break the agreement. Officially, they would say, we are not for this agreement; but maybe if in some years we have a new Palestinian president, for instance, maybe he can get an agreement with Israel regarding the situation of water. I mean, it's not impossible if we have this example of Lebanon and Israel, which are officially still, I would say, at war. There is not a peace treaty between Israel and Lebanon, but with American mediation, which is very interesting, they reached this agreement on the seawater border.

Because, as you know, there is a potential for energy from offshore oil and gas very close to Lebanon. And Israel has for many years now been exploiting these oil and gas resources, which is very interesting regarding our topic tonight; especially the Lyndon LaRouche Oasis Plan. Because we need some energy if we want this desalination plan to work. One way, of course, is oil and gas; another way is solar energy; and of course, nuclear energy is also a possibility.

There are some countries in the Middle East that are now engaged in civilian nuclear energy, like the United Arab Emirates, for instance. It was a project of former Colonel Qaddafi in Libya; he wanted to add nuclear energy, not military nuclear energy, but civilian nuclear energy. Why? To do exactly what LaRouche proposed in the 1970s, to use this nuclear energy to promote desalination water plants, which is a very interesting idea.

### **Promoting Peace Through Water**

So, just to finish, I will say we have this possibility of peace, and water can be a way to bring peace, because some experts say that water knows no boundaries. Water is flowing and crossing many countries, so it is in the interest of all these neighbors in the Middle East to go to peace.

It was also the spirit of the New York agreements in 1997. It was a project of the United Nations, of the International Commission of Law, to put forward some rules regarding the sharing of international rivers. One of the rules is that you can't take water from international rivers without informing your neighbor, because it's a common resource. This is a very interesting point.

In the past there were also many projects to promote peace through water. There was a Turkish plan in the 1990s, even between Israel and Türkiye, but at the last moment it didn't succeed. It was also the plan of President Sadat of Egypt, because when he made peace with Israel in the Camp David Agreement in 1979, of course many Arab countries, Muslim countries, and even some Egyptians were quite reluctant to this agreement between Egypt and Israel, saying it was a kind of betrayal. That's why, at that moment, President Sadat proposed to bring some fresh water from the Nile in Egypt to Israel, especially to Jerusalem, because they said it's a holy city not only for Jews, not only for Christians, but also for Muslims. So, we will bring water to Jerusalem, and the Palestinians will benefit from this water. The idea was to promote peace through water. Unfortunately again, this project did not succeed. As you know, President Sadat was murdered by extremists.

But nevertheless, in the Middle East, you have always had this idea that water can lead to war, as it is quite scarce; but at the same time, water can be a possibility to bring peace, because everybody needs water. You have the case of international water, international aquifers, international rivers; so the main possibility to reach remote places involves all the countries in a global plan. That was the spirit of the Johnston Plan in Eisenhower's era, and I think we have to work in the international community on this possibility. Because, as former President Shimon Peres from Israel said, if we want peace, water won't be a problem.

So, it is my opinion, there is enough water in some areas, and where you don't have enough water, you can imagine new solutions to have more water. That's why this project is very worthwhile, and we should succeed in desalinating water, and supplying all the countries in the Middle East.

We know that we have desalinating technology. We can strengthen this technology, of course, with new energy sources and maybe nuclear energy. That's why I'm still optimistic: Maybe not in the coming year; maybe in five or ten years. But there are many technical possibilities, now, to go to peace with water.

## The New Silk Road Becomes the World Land-Bridge

**The BRICS countries have a strategy to prevent war and economic catastrophe. It's time for the rest of the world to join!**

This 374-page report is a road-map to the New World Economic Order that Lyndon and Helga LaRouche have championed for over 20 years.

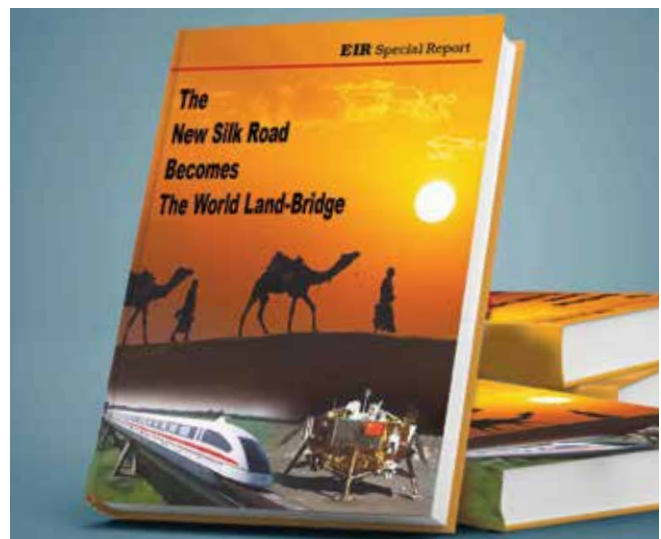
Includes:

**Introduction** by Helga Zepp-LaRouche, "The New Silk Road Leads to the Future of Mankind!"

**The metrics of progress**, with emphasis on the scientific principles required for survival of mankind: nuclear power and desalination; the fusion power economy; solving the water crisis.

**The three keystone nations**: China, the core nation of the New Silk Road; Russia's mission in North Central Eurasia and the Arctic; India prepares to take on its legacy of leadership.

**Other regions**: The potential contributions of Southwest, Central, and Southeast Asia, Australia, Europe, and Africa.



The report is available in PDF **\$35**  
and in hard copy **\$50** (softcover) **\$75** (hardcover)  
plus shipping and handling.

Order from <https://store.larouchepub.com>