

Rising Above Regional Turmoil: Gulf States and the Eurasian Land-Bridge

Dr. Mohammad El-Sayed Selim is Professor of Political Science at the Universities of Cairo and Kuwait. He presented this paper to the June 28 evening panel of EIR's June 28-29 Berlin seminar. The seminar brought together distinguished representatives of 15 nations, with Lyndon and Helga LaRouche, to discuss what had to be done to address the crisis of the world financial system.

The last quarter of a century has been one of the most tumultuous eras in the history of the Arabian (Persian) Gulf. This era witnessed four major wars, the Iran-Iraq War (1980-88), the wars resulting from the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait (1990-91), the socio-economic war resulting from the blockade against Iraq (1990-2003), and the Anglo-American invasion of Iraq and the subsequent war inside Iraq (2003-present). These wars have turned the region into one of the regions most dangerously armed and dominated by foreign powers. The main catalyst of all these conflicts has been the role played by different U.S. administrations. These administrations, especially the present one, have been key players in igniting these wars in order to justify American military domination of the region. They either played a tacit role, as was the case in the Iran-Iraq War, or an explicit one, as was the case in the Anglo-American invasion of Iraq.

As we move into the 21st Century, the region is yet to witness more wars. The Bush-Blair-Sharon alliance is already preparing to wage a war against Iran, using the Iranian nuclear program as a pretext. This war is quite imminent, as this alliance can only thrive on wars. If you have listened to Blair's comments on the election of Mahmoud Ahmadinejad as the President of Iran, and his references to Iran's commitments under the NPT [Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty], and looked carefully at his hysterical facial expressions, you will immediately recall his lies and same expressions before the invasion of Iraq. The man is already grooming for a replay of the Iraqi scenario. He referred to Iran's commitments under the NPT, but he neglected to refer to his own commitments under the same Treaty. Under the NPT, Britain is obliged to remove its nuclear arsenal and to help non-nuclear countries to use nuclear energy for peaceful purposes. However, the July 1990 London Declaration issued by NATO member states, referred to the determination of the alliance to keep nuclear weapons indefinitely. Britain was instrumental in is-

suing that declaration, and has consistently denied nuclear energy to developing countries.

Another war in the Arabian Gulf region will be catastrophic. Iran's military capabilities are intact, and as a result it could respond by devastating attacks. Some Shi'ite communities in the region are also likely to launch massive attacks against Western interests in the region.

NATO is also moving into the Gulf region as a part of its quest to emerge as the ultimate guarantor of global security. The alliance is already functioning in Eastern Europe, Central Asia, Afghanistan, and the Mediterranean, and is now moving into the Gulf through its NATO-Gulf Dialogue initiative. NATO is increasingly replacing the United Nations as the global security framework. If the present trend continues, we are likely to witness the withering away of the UN global security role and the handing over of such role to NATO. The main problem with this trend is that NATO is a Western-dominated institution that serves Euro-American security interests with no input from non-Western powers.

Another Side

This gloomy picture has another side, which reflects the awareness of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states of the long-term trends and their desire to benefit from the developmental opportunities which have emerged after the end of the Cold War. These states are already searching for strategic alternatives for the future. One of the main alternatives that is being considered, is the notion of the Eurasian Land-Bridge. These countries have become aware of this project and other projects which could contribute to the establishment of their physical infrastructure. I can refer here to the following cases:

- (i) The Qatari Dolphin Project through which Qatar supplies the Emirates, Kuwait, and India with natural gas;
- (ii) The Kuwaiti-Iranian project to build a 550-km-long pipeline to supply Kuwait with water; and
- (iii) The Saudi project to develop the railway network from Jeddah to Dammam, that is, from the western to the eastern coast, and connect it with the Iranian railway network.

In Kuwait, the Ministry of Planning has recently commissioned a study to assess the project of the Eurasian Land-Bridge, its potential impact on that country, and how to benefit from it to boost the Kuwaiti economy. The idea began with the notion of a northern Gulf economic zone linking Kuwait,



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Dr. Selim said that with NATO moving into the Gulf region, one of the main strategic alternatives that governments in the region are considering is to hook up with the Eurasian Land-Bridge.

Iran, and Iraq, and was later expanded to linkages with the trans-regional projects, especially the Eurasian Land-Bridge. I have taken part in preparing the final report of the group that assessed the feasibility of Kuwait reaching out to the Eurasian Land-Bridge. The final report recommended to the government that the Eurasian Land-Bridge project represents an excellent opportunity for the Kuwaiti economy. It also recommended that Kuwait should promote cooperation with Iran in the areas of transportation and communication, and should establish a system of national and regional railway connections.

The final report recommended that Kuwait should (i) initiate a multi-modal transport system with Iran between the Port of Showeikh and Iranian ports; (ii) ratify the Arab Railways Agreement between countries of the Arab Orient through which Kuwait could benefit from the projected inter-Arab railway connections; (iii) develop a new port at the island of Bobyan; (iv) develop a Kuwaiti railway network to be connected with Iran and Iraq, reaching to Central Asia; and (v) establish a free zone in the Port of Showeikh.

Kuwait is already moving in these directions in conjunction with other GCC states, as the notion of connecting with the Eurasian Land-Bridge is also being considered at the regional level. The GCC states' summit held in December 2003 requested the GCC ministers of transport and communications to prepare a feasibility study on linking the GCC states with the regional railways network. The reference here is to the emerging Arab railway network and the Iranian one, which could connect the GCC states with the Eurasian Land-Bridge.

As was pointed out earlier, these projects emerge against the backdrop of an uncertain security environment in the Gulf region. The problem is further complicated by the limited ability of the GCC states to resist foreign intervention. The connections between the GCC states and the Eurasian Land-

Bridge require extensive cooperation with Iran, and the Bush Administration is against that. India and Pakistan were able to resist American pressure to refrain from building the natural gas pipeline connecting them with Iran. But the GCC states are not in the same position as India and Pakistan in relationship with the U.S.A. One other hurdle is that the GCC states are inclined to give the private sector a leading role in building these projects. The private sector in these countries is not likely to take the risk of investing in these projects under the present uncertain conditions, especially given that that sector is dominated by a rentier approach to business.

The uncertainties surrounding the ambitions of the GCC states to connect with the trans-regional railways project call for an innovative approach to deal with these problems. In this respect, the idea of Helga LaRouche to hold an international conference in the Gulf region on the economics of the Eurasian Land-Bridge seems to be a good idea. I believe that the Gulf states will welcome that idea. A collective effort to defeat the projected aggression against Iran would also encourage the GCC states to break away, at least partially, from American hegemony, in the direction of coordination with Iran on the question of the Eurasian Land-Bridge.

Lyndon H. LaRouche, Jr.

The Danger of a U.S. Strike Against Iran

After Dr. Selim responded to a question concerning the possibility of a military attack by the United States against Iran, Mr. LaRouche added the following comment:

One thing that I've been trying to teach people a long time, about their own minds and other people's minds, is that most people live in a fishbowl kind of situation, where they have a mixture of certain false and relatively true axiomatic assumptions about what is possible. And therefore, they don't mentally live in the real world. They live in a synthetic world, which is composed of working assumptions, some of which are true and some of which are false.

I often cite the case of Frederick the Great at Leuthen, in the battle there: Every assumption would have said, in this case, that the Austrians would have had an overwhelming victory, or Frederick would have had to be routed. But he acted in a way in which the Austrians did not think possible.

Now, there are two ways in which this occurs. One, in which the decision is a sane one, that's made on the basis of, you strategically out-think your opponent, by doing what is



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Lyndon LaRouche: "The danger here is that some idiot will be deployed to do something absolutely mad: because they don't care."

rational, when your opponent is blind to a possibility. And that's good strategy. It's also good tactics.

The other case, is another case which came up, as promoted heavily by the RAND Corp., which was promoted in the case, for example, of the idea of what I was concerned about in 1975 in Lebanon. When I was in Iraq, and I knew that we were about to have a civil war explode under Kissinger's premises in Lebanon. So, I told my friends and hosts then in Iraq, that we could expect a breakout of a civil war in Lebanon, started by Kissinger. And this would be the beginning of a general war in the Middle East. And it happened at that time.

And the point was, a so-called "chicken game," which is a standard thinking among some people, especially neo-conservative types in the United States' configuration. If you say something doesn't make any sense, they may do it. If it's insane, they may do it. It's the great bluff. It's the use of, "I am a madman, playing 'chicken' on the highway," in the highways of California, the narrow highways.

And therefore, the danger here is—and it's a danger also from Israel—that some idiot will be deployed to do something absolutely mad: *because they don't care*. They don't care. The so-called "countervailing factors of risk" will not prevent them from doing something mad. They will do it on the presumption, the same way that somebody did something in New York City on 9/11 in 2001. They didn't have Hermann Göring handy to set fire to something, so they used another device, to create a "Reichstag Fire" effect in order to change the politics of the United States and the world.

Terrorist acts are often of that character. And the mentality of the Israeli right wing and its backers, in the Middle East: They are a terrorist mentality. They will do something for effect, hoping that the sheer horror of what they do, will deter people from an appropriate action, or cause them to launch a flight forward into an even more inappropriate reaction.