Oasis Plan Conference

The Economic Basis for Peace in Southwest Asia

by Jason Ross

The following is an edited transcript of the keynote address to Panel 2 of the April 13 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 of the conference, "The Physical Foundation for the Economic Development of Southwest Asia," was moderated by Stephan Ossenkopp, Schiller Institute-Germany. The keynote speaker Jason Ross, Schiller Institute Science Advisor, was joined on the Panel by: Ilya Andreev, First Secretary and Expert in Humanitarian Affairs, Russian Federation Mission to the United Nations; Dr. Pierre Berthelot, Associate Researcher at IPSE, member of the Académie de l'Eau *and director of the journal* Orients Stratégiques*; Dr. Kelvin Kemm, nuclear physicist, former Chairman, South African Nuclear Energy Corporation; William DeOreo, hydrologist, president of AquaCraft, and proponent of nuclear desalination, based in Colorado, in the U.S.; and Dr. Izzeldin Abuelaish, a Palestinian doctor, professor, author and peace activist living in Canada, recently interviewed by* EIR*, who gave a pre-recorded statement. An article summarizing the conference and an 80 minute video of the highlights is available here.*

Schiller Institute

Jason Ross

I want to follow up on a few general thoughts from the previous panel before getting into some of the specifics about the physical economic development of the region, and how an outlook which includes that approach transforms the potential for achieving peace, for achieving broader political victories. The few elements of the context that I want to emphasize, first, are the global financial collapse afflicting the trans-Atlantic world, where we're seeing high levels of inflation and decay in industrial and other production, a growth of financial assets and money printing, at the same time that physical economic output is declining—something that Lyndon LaRouche laid out in a schematic in the 1990s, called the Triple Curve.

The second aspect is how this collapse intersects and really causes or provokes a push for a more generalized form of warfare. We see this in Ukraine, where the conflict between NATO and Russia that is playing out on that country's territory largely, is something that could explode into a broader conflict. And we see it similarly in Southwest Asia, where Israel—not content to do what it's doing in Gaza—has seen fit to attack, in Damascus, Syria, an Iranian diplomatic facility protected by the Vienna Convention. What's the goal here? It's the attempt to create a broader war.

The third aspect of the conflict I want to mention briefly is the British role in setting it up. This was also discussed more fully in Panel 1. Consider the British operation of divide and conquer, of setting people against each other. These Brits have had a lot of experience in colonizing large portions of the world, and a significant aspect of their ability to succeed in doing that was to ensure that local groups were fighting each other, rather than the British. I believe that plays out today, where there is plenty of hatred in Israel, in Palestine—that's not the only sentiment, but it certainly does exist. I think we need to set our sights to

the people setting up the game, where the people of the region are being used as if they were pawns.

So, we need a political resolution; we need peace. And we also need to talk more about what kind of outlook for the future will actually make that sort of peace possible—putting everything together: the political discussions, the military discussions, the economic, the development discussions.

The last important piece of context I want to bring up in this is China's Belt and Road Initiative, and, more broadly, the growing world role of the BRICS nations and of their institutions, like the New Development Bank as one example. The fact that we are in an international climate where there are multiple sources of financing for projects like this, not just the World Bank, I think really transforms the potential of what can be accomplished.

The Meaning of a Human Being

Let's begin with a top-down view of what it is to be a human being. I'd like to begin with a short quote from Albert Einstein. He said, "The eternal mystery of the world is its comprehensibility." What did he mean? In a certain sense, we are so used to the idea of human reason and the fact that, unlike the animals, we have transformed our relationship to nature, that we sometimes forget to keep in mind what an amazing miracle it is that these thoughts that we possess in our minds have physical power over the world around us, and let us transform our relationship to it. That's a very profound reflection.

Let me read also a quote from Lyndon LaRouche. This is from 1995, in a paper he wrote entitled, "What Is God, That Man Is in His Image?"

> Each person is given the intellectual potential which no animal has, the power not only to imagine states of nature which have never before existed in the universe, but, under certain restrictions, to impose those ideas efficiently upon the universe generally. The condition to accomplish this is, that that imagination is brought into accord with universal lawfulness. It is creativity so defined which represents the individual person's intellect cast in the image of God's efficiently creative intellect….
>
> By this means, one is enabled to recognize, among one's own efficient forms of intellectual states, a quality which is a reflected image of God.

LaRouche put this perspective into practice in composing the book, *There Are No Limits to Growth*, which was a response to the Club of Rome's publication called *The Limits to Growth*. The Club of Rome had said that, essentially no matter what we do, humanity is doomed, because we would either run out of resources, we would be overwhelmed by pollution, or we would be overcome by huge teeming masses of human beings with nowhere to live. The solution that the Club of Rome put forward was to reduce growth rates, reduce population, reduce living standards to put off that inevitable calamity. LaRouche said: Forget it; this is the wrong approach. The limits to growth are those that we impose upon ourselves. The limits that mankind faces are in some sense laws of nature, but also the limitations of our imperfect knowledge of those laws of nature. We create resources. Animals use resources. We use resources, but we *create* resources; we're fundamentally different.

And that conception of the difference between human beings and nature is totally upside down in people's approach to ecology and related matters today. There is an axiomatic assumption that if we do it, it's wrong—that using our abilities to transform nature is somewhat of a sin. Nature were better left alone without our intervention. Here is a short video clip from Lyndon LaRouche, commenting on this outlook.

> **Lyndon LaRouche:** All people who are Greenies who say they are scientists must be expelled from the profession, because they're committing a fraud. Any Greenie who says he's a scientist is *per se* committing a fraud by his mere existence.
>
> **Ross:** We know that we have a basis of science that has to include human development. So, if you excluded that, or said that's an evil thing, then you can't be a scientist.
>
> **LaRouche:** No, you're not. You're a faker. If you believe in the Green policy, you're a faker as a scientist. Anybody who believes in the Green policy is a faker if they claim to have scientific capabilities. If they want to say they're stupid, then say, "Fine, you are stupid; that's true."
>
> **Creighton Jones:** Well they claim to say they're trying to maintain and continue existence in a universe which they deny has a principle of continued existence in it.
>
> **LaRouche:** It's all gibberish; it's just plain

gibberish. There's no truth to it; there really isn't. Any professor, you say, "Oh, you're a professor idiot. You got a professorship in idiocy."

The Green ideology actually is a hindrance to achieving the Oasis Plan and the kind of development that it represents. So, that is something to keep in mind.

Now, let's talk a little bit more about what makes the human species unique. Animals sometimes do activities that you may have heard only human beings participate in, such as using tools. An ape will use a stick to gather bugs; an otter will crack shells on its chest using a rock. Animals do use tools, *but not the same kind that we use.*

The distinction of the human species is expressed very clearly by the Greek story of Prometheus, the fire-bringer, whose story is told by Aeschylus in a trilogy of plays that he wrote, of which only the first now survives. In that first play, Aeschylus talks about how Prometheus brought fire from heaven and gave it to humanity, and what else Prometheus did in creating the human species distinct from the animals. Prometheus says:

> Still, listen to the miseries that beset mankind—how they were witless before and I made them have sense and endowed them with reason. I will not speak to upbraid mankind, but to set forth the friendly purpose that inspired my blessing.
>
> First of all, though they had eyes to see, they saw to no avail; they had ears, but they did not understand; but, just as shapes in dreams, throughout their length of days, without purpose, they wrought all things in confusion….
>
> They had no sign either of winter or of flowery spring or of fruitful summer on which they could depend, but managed everything without judgment, until I taught them to discern the risings of the stars and their settings, which are difficult to distinguish.
>
> Yes, and numbers too, chiefest of sciences, I invented for them, and the combining of letters, creative mother of the Muses' arts, with which to hold all things in memory.
>
> I, too, first brought brute beasts beneath the yoke to be subject to the collar and the packsaddle….

Prometheus explains that, through his gift of fire, through his gift of knowledge, he transformed what humanity was capable of.

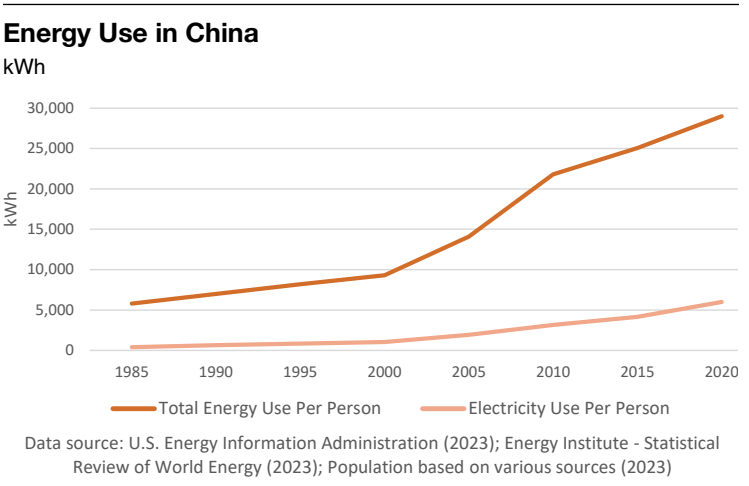
Infrastructure and New Types of 'Fire'

I want to speak very briefly about the forms of fire that we have used. At first, humanity was distinguished from the animals simply by using basic wood fire. This lets us do things; it lets us cook food, which makes it taste better, and not kill us; it lets us do some working of materials; and it helps protect us from animals, by scaring them away, as just a few examples.

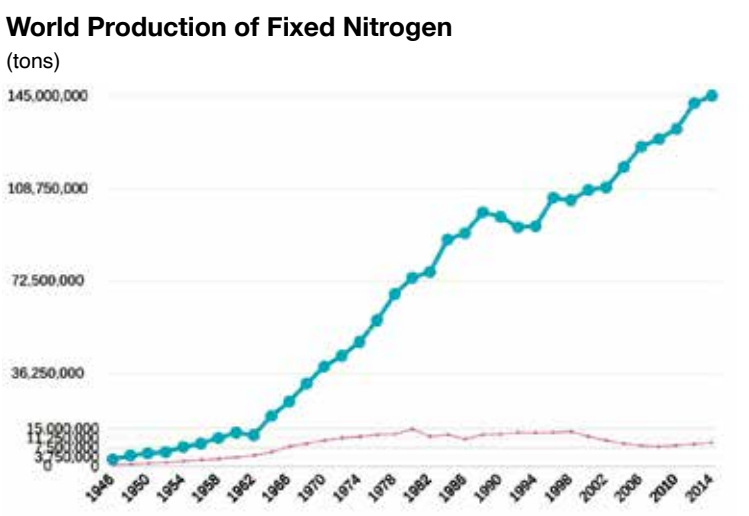
The most significant higher form of fire was the development of charcoal. Charcoal was made by taking big piles of wood, covering it with dirt, and then burning it. What would result? Charcoal. What could you do with charcoal? You could burn it and it would make much less smoke than wood; it was more energy dense, and it was capable of providing enough heat and energy to enable us to enter the world of metallurgy. The green rock on the right is a mineral called malachite. On the left, you see a small lump of copper. That copper was made from a piece of that malachite. Charcoal allows us to use more elements of the periodic table; to transform what we're able to do.

Thanks to charcoal, the copper on the left could be made from malachite, on the right.

By shifting from trees to using coal, we were able to unlock *enormous* amounts of power. Steam engines transformed manufacturing, making goods that had been available only to a few, available instead to the broader masses. And coal allowed a transformation of our sense of distance and space and time by making it possible to power trains, which could cross vast distances and bring communities and people and goods and resources and intermediate goods closer to each other, totally changing what kind of production was possible in a region.



Data source: U.S. Energy Information Administration (2023); Energy Institute - Statistical Review of World Energy (2023); Population based on various sources (2023)



Fixed nitrogen production in the world (thick blue-green curve) and in the U.S. (thin pink curve).

One of the highest forms of fire that we use today is electrical fire. It allows us to do things we couldn't do with a steam engine. You can power metal-working machinery with a mechanical steam engine, but you can get much better effects if you're using a laser.

The highest form of fire is nuclear. The combustion of a molecule of methane produces eight units of energy. Compare this to the combination of deuterium and tritium in a nuclear fusion reaction. This produces over 14 *million* units of energy; *over a million times more power*. This is the power of the atomic nucleus.

The concept that Lyndon LaRouche uses to put this together, he calls energy-flux density. And this isn't the same thing as energy flux itself, which would be a flow of energy. LaRouche said that what is critical is not only the *amount* of energy, but its *quality*.

I illustrate this with two charts about China's development. The top curve is the use of energy of all forms per person in China. You can see that over the course of 1985 to 2022 there is an enormous increase; a more than five-fold increase during that time period. The lower curve is specifically of electricity use per person in China. Electricity is a subset of total energy. For electricity, we see an even greater increase. Combining these, if we look at the amount of energy in China that is electrical, or electricity as a percentage of total energy use, we see that it's gone from about 5% or 6% up to 20%. The *type* of energy being used is of a higher nature.

This is critical in terms of what energy allows us to do, and we'll be hearing from other speakers about the implications for water that having powerful energy sources opens up for us. In the case of materials production, take the example of nitrogen. Through our use of the energy-intensive Haber-Bosch process, we are able to take nitrogen—which life needs and which makes up most of the atmosphere—and transform it into an organic form. We can do much better than the biosphere alone. Another example of this is aluminum production, which has exploded over the past century by over 3,800%. Why? Because it requires enormous amounts of electricity, and with it, we transform our relationship to materials.

So take this as a general concept of infrastructure. This is a quotation from Lyndon LaRouche from 2010. He said:

> Man as a creator in the likeness of the great Creator, is expressed by humanity's creation of the "artificial environments" we sometimes call "infrastructure."

This infrastructure takes multiple forms. The infrastructure of transportation transforms our spatial relations. The infrastructure of an energy grid and its availability and consistency totally changes what kind of productive processes you can engage in. It totally changes what kind of factory you can set up and expect to generate an economic, physical profit. We also create artificial or synthetic environments in a social way. Are we creating an environment in which a peace is possible? Are we creating an environment in which higher levels of living standards capable of

supporting a growing population in abundance are achieved?

The Case of Southwest Asia

We now turn to Southwest Asia. Here you see a map of Israel and Palestine, This is straight from Google Earth or an equivalent product, and it's not retouched. If you take a look, I think you'll be able to notice that Gaza and the West Bank, compared with the Israeli-administered territories right next to them, don't look as green. That's not your imagination. Water, and the shortage of water, is a tremendous force in this area.

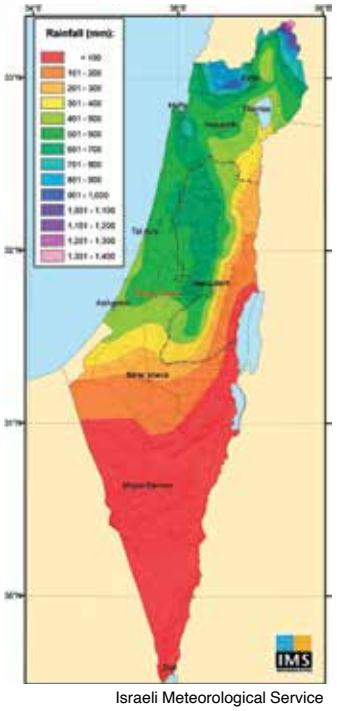
CC/Jacques Descloitres

Satellite image of Israel in January 2003.

If we look at consumption of water per person, we see an enormous disparity between Israelis, who individually have access to 247 liters per person per day (this statistically includes the West Bank settlers) compared to West Bank Palestinians, 82.4 liters. West Bank Palestinians who are not connected to the water grid have an individual daily use of just 26 liters. This is far below the recommended minimum of the World Health Organization. How can you have a two-state solution if a state is not viable for lack of water?

This is a map of rainfall. (I should note that my use of this map is not intended as a comment on the Golan Heights as part of Israel; this is just where the statistics are coming from.) You can see there is rain in the north, but very little in the south. The "natural" (so-called) water available to people in the region is far below what is required. This is not simply a matter of redistribution; it is one of absolute shortage. Jordan, Israel, and the West Bank and Gaza have only around 100 m^3 of what the World Bank considers "renewable" water per capita. (Actual withdrawals exceed this, and are causing aquifer depletion and other problems.) This is far below what is required for full development.

So, what can be done? What can be done to make this region, which is starved of water, one that can become a land of abundance, a bread basket? And how does that change the politics? This is a map of the Jordan River Basin [shows a map of the Jordan River Basin -ed]. The lighter areas that you see here—a river basin means what area of land, if rain fell there, would end up in a certain river. You can see to the east of the Sea of Galilee in the north, the Yarmouk and other rivers in Syria. The worry that Israel would have, is that these rivers would be dammed up; that the water would never reach the Sea of Galilee. That it could then not enter Israel's National Water Carrier, its water grid that takes water from the Sea of Galilee to supply Israel. So, the Golan Heights issue is not only a political issue. This isn't just about altitude and missiles being launched from a certain area; this is also about water. How would the resolution of the Golan territorial dispute be eased if there wasn't such a tremendous risk from Israel's point of view of losing access to water without control



Israeli Meteorological Service

Mean annual rainfall (mm) in various regions in Israel and the Palestinian Authority from 1981 to 2010.

CC/NielsF

National Water Carrier of Israel map shows pipelines, tunnels, open canals, and reservoirs.

over the Golan Heights?

This is a map of the National Water Carrier of Israel that I had mentioned. The water comes from up north, from the Sea of Galilee, and then passes through canals, tunnels, and so forth to bring it southward. You can see it splits into a couple of branches on the left part of this image. This is the water that allows, in large part, Israel's agricultural productivity. Also, Israel does a very good job of using its water in a capitally-intense way, by using drip irrigation and other technologies to get the most out of every drop. Israel has also been building desalination plants. All told, Israel's production of desalinated seawater in Israel is enough to supply the great majority of drinking water in its cities, and is already making up a quarter of Israel's water use. This reduces the pressure, then, on the National Water Carrier and the Sea of Galilee, but current desalination capacities are insufficient to the task.

What if that number were higher? How would this change the water available to the other nations of the region? People thinking about this, over decades—including, of course, Lyndon LaRouche with the Oasis Plan from the 1970s—have looked at expanding water resources in the area. There have been different proposals for canals to connect the Mediterranean either with the Dead Sea directly, or further up along the Jordan River, which would have the same effect of increasing the flow into the Dead Sea. There are also proposals for a water conveyance from the Red Sea, up through Jordan, to the Dead Sea. I'll say a little bit more about these. I know we have on this panel an expert [William DeOreo] who will be able to say much more.

One of the proposals is to go straight from the Mediterranean on the west to the Dead Sea to the east. This scenario would utilize the significant drop in water level down to the Dead Sea, where you could put in a hydro plant. Similarly, there is a proposal for a route from the Red Sea up to the Dead Sea, passing through the Kingdom of Jordan. This would include pumping water from the Gulf of Aqaba, the Red Sea. We pump it upwards; we desalinate it to provide water for new communities in the area. Desalination produces freshwater, and you also have to do something with the salt. It doesn't create blocks of salt; it creates very salty water. So, we're going to take that very salty water and we're going to keep it separate; we're not going to mix it back in. We can bring it to the Dead Sea, which won't mind the extra salt.

The water continues; more desalination up towards

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the Dead Sea, with water supply all the way up to Amman, Jordan, a city that really has significant water shortages. As the brine and additional water heads into the Dead Sea, you get to make some electricity. The amount of energy required to essentially double the Jordan River flow and dramatically increase water availability for the people of this region, is actually not that large.

I do want to say one word about what the Oasis Plan *is not*. One of the proposals for this region was the construction of the Ben Gurion Canal. This was to be a navigable waterway connecting the Mediterranean to the Red Sea. In other words, this would be an alternative to the Suez Canal. This isn't what we're proposing. The Suez Canal has plenty of capacity for shipping. What we're talking about is *water*.

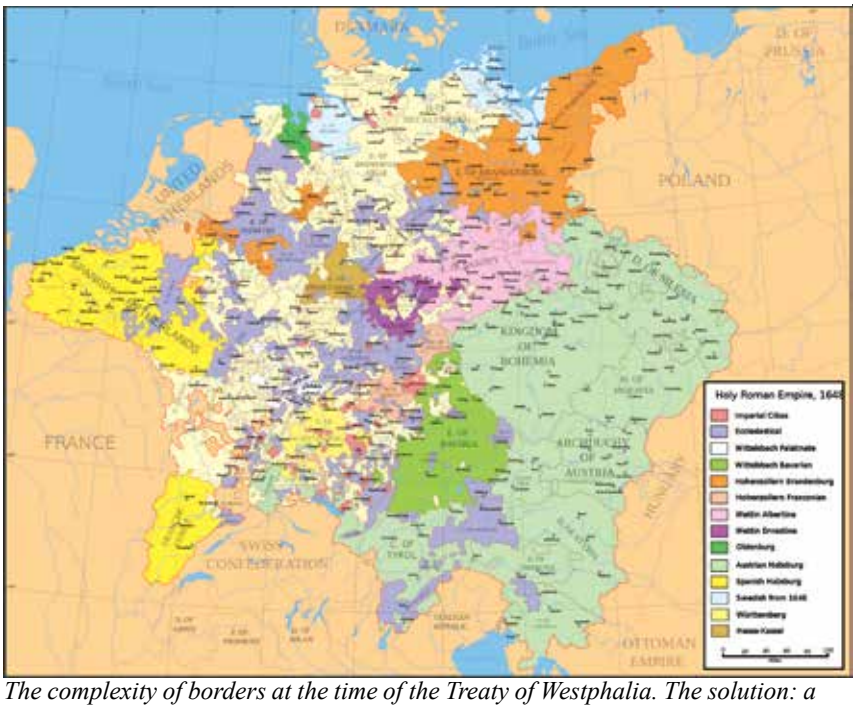
A Higher Conception of Peace

So, putting all of this together, along with projected rail lines, other transportation connections—and, if

we think about the broader region, in a Belt and Road Initiative kind of framework—we see an area of the world that is a natural hub of connectivity. This is where continents come together—Europe, Asia, Africa. This is a fantastic location. With sufficient water, with peaceful development, with transportation, this is an area that would truly be flourishing.

The last topic I want to address is the Treaty of Westphalia, which was signed to conclude the 1618 to 1648 Thirty Years' War. This is a map of the Holy Roman Empire at the time, a very complex political situation. You thought you've seen difficult borders? Take a look at these. Discontinuous; a mess, right? A lot of difficulty. There were eight million people killed in the course of this war; Protestants versus Catholics, in large part, was how it was framed. Many areas saw more than one-third of the population killed; some even had more than two-thirds of the population eliminated.

Holy Roman Empire, 1648



The complexity of borders at the time of the Treaty of Westphalia. The solution: a higher conception of peace.

What was done? How did this fighting end? The Treaty of Westphalia took an approach that was future-oriented. I want to read a couple of quotes from that treaty to finish off this presentation, because I think they are relevant to our needs today.

From Article I of the Treaty of Westphalia:

> And this Peace must be so honest and seriously guarded and nourished that each part furthers the advantage, honor, and benefit of the other….

Each side should act for the benefit of the other; benevolence.

And from Article II:

> On both sides, all should be forever forgotten and forgiven—what has from the beginning of the troubles, no matter how or where, from one side or the other, happened in terms of hostility …. Instead, the fact that each and every one, from one side and the other, both before and during the war, committed insults, violent acts, hostilities, damages, and injuries, without regard of persons or outcomes, should be completely put aside, so that everything, whatever one could demand from another under his name, will be forgotten to eternity.

A future orientation.

I close with a short quote from Lyndon LaRouche; from 1979. He said:

> The only human thing is to give the lives and suffering of the dead meaning. Not merely by establishing peace in the Middle East, but by establishing the basis for peace, which gives fulfillment to the lives of the present and future generations of Palestinians and other Arabs, and thus purpose and fulfillment to the sacred lives of the dead.

This, of course, applies to the Israelis as well.

Ask yourself: how does a future-oriented policy in which the shortage of water is addressed from an international perspective of regional and global development—how does this transform the political terrain? What kind of peace can be achieved?