

I. Schiller Institute Conference: Oasis Plan

Conference Presents Strategic Economic Vision for Peace in Southwest Asia and Beyond

by Stewart Battle

April 13—Following the Oct. 7 attack by Hamas on Israel, and the Netanyahu government’s decision to collectively punish Palestinian civilians in retaliation, Helga Zepp-LaRouche, founder of the Schiller Institute, called for an intensified mobilization to build support for an “Oasis Plan” for Southwest Asia as a whole. Such an economic development perspective is the *only* means, in her estimation, of bringing about a long-term peace to the region. The [April 13 conference](#) by the Schiller Institute, “The Oasis Plan: The LaRouche Solution for Peace Through Development Between Israel and Palestine and for All of Southwest Asia,” put this subject squarely on the table for the first time since this conflict broke out over six months ago.

The international, on-line event brought together speakers from five continents, and an audience from around the world. Organized in two panels, the day-long proceedings included important discussion periods, with translation in four languages. The Schiller Institute is preparing a rush-release of an hour-long video of conference highlights, to further the mobilization to stop the genocide in Gaza, de-escalate the war danger, and initiate international deliberation on a new world economic and security architecture.

Dennis Speed, of the Schiller Institute in New York, who moderated the first panel, began by introducing a short video excerpt from Lyndon LaRouche (1922–2019) speaking at the Zayed Center in Abu Dhabi, U.A.E., in 2002. (Transcript below.) LaRouche encouraged people to consider this region, which we call the Middle East, as if looking at it from space, seeing it as the natural crossroads connecting Eurasia and Africa, and with its accompanying defining condition: the lack of fresh water.

Helga Zepp-LaRouche continued this theme in her keynote address to the first panel, which was ti-

tled, “Creating the Conditions for Dialogue, Security, Peace, and Development in Southwest Asia.” She insisted that if the world is to avoid the near-term threat of expanding regional and potentially global warfare, a “cognitive jump” to a completely different approach is required, and issues of economics and security between nations must be considered as a whole. (See full transcript of Zepp-LaRouche below.)

After discussing details of the dangers facing the region (made all the more visceral by the news arriving during the second panel of Iran’s retaliatory strike on Israel), Zepp-LaRouche pointed to the elephant in the room: Not only is there a shortage of water in this region, but the requirements for a modern living standard cannot be satisfied from the existing “natural” water resources. In fact, many of the military conflicts here have been due to this lack of water. Therefore, solutions to this must be found—the ingenuity of mankind must be employed to increase the existing resources to provide what is required for a future-oriented and flourishing human society.

She cited multiple examples of where this has been employed to the benefit of the population, such as recently in China, where millions of acres have been reclaimed from the desert. In contrast to this, most of Southwest Asia has been explicitly barred from this opportunity due to geopolitical interests, which have seen the region primarily as a strategic chessboard rather than an area where human societies should be allowed to exist. That must now end, Zepp-LaRouche insisted.

Quoting from Friedrich Schiller’s *Wallenstein* trilogy in her conclusion, she said: “‘For if war does not end amidst war, where then shall peace come from?’ To inspire confidence in the enemy, that is the only way to peace! At the abyss of what could become the end of



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Some of the conference participants in Panel I (clockwise from upper left): Moderator Dennis Speed (U.S.), Helga Zepp-LaRouche (Germany), Donald Ramotar (Guyana), Connie Rahakundini Bakrie (Indonesia); Georgy Toloraya (Russia); Pavel Shidlovsky (Belarus), and Beryl Rose Sisulu (South Africa).

all life on the planet, are we, mankind, the creative species, and can we define a solution out of this danger? So let us put the Oasis Plan on the table of all governments of the world!”

A Robust Debate on Resolving the Conflict

The conference saw participation from many government representatives and high-level experts from around the world. From Palestine was the Palestinian Ambassador to Denmark, H.E. Prof. Dr. Manuel Hassassian, the Palestinian Ambassador to UNESCO, H.E. Mounir Anastas, and Palestinian physician, author, and peace activist, Dr. Izzeldin Abuelaish. Other governmental representation included Ambassador of South Africa to Mexico, H.E. Beryl Rose Sisulu; Chargé d’Affaires of Belarus in the U.S., H.E. Pavel Shidlovsky; and First Secretary and Expert in Humanitarian Affairs of the Russian Federation Mission to the United Nations in New York, Ilya Andreev.

Ambassador Hassassian went through a brief history of Palestine, noting how the Balfour Mandate had unleashed a century of aggression and ethnic cleansing on its people. In effect, this has meant that the Palestinians are paying the price for the Holocaust in Europe, a reality that Western leaders are conveniently choosing to ignore, despite their claims of concern for “humanitarian rights.” Ambassador Anastas began by agreeing

with Amb. Hassassian’s statements on the history of the current conflict and the genocidal nature of Israel’s actions. He added that UNESCO also sees the value in water development, and has had an intergovernmental program for water development since 1975.

While both of the Palestinian ambassadors expressed their differences with the Oasis Plan as a strategy for peace, saying that there can be no peace without a political solution first, they still expressed their support for the concept as an important element in establishing a sustainable peace over the long-term. Amb. Anastas said that the spirit and intention on which the plan is based—which is to have true economic and social development—will ultimately be the foundation for peace throughout the region, and Amb. Hassassian called it a “window of opportunity” for the two peoples to secure a common future.

Helga Zepp-LaRouche came back to this later in the discussion, responding that an economic development policy for all sides is in fact a “precondition” for any viable peace plan. She noted Lyndon LaRouche’s response to the Oslo Accords in the 1990s, when he insisted that the shovels must go into the ground immediately so that a vision for the future development of the region could supersede the political turmoil of the moment. There was such an agreement in Oslo, but it was sabotaged by the World Bank, which prevented the needed funding.

We must use this conference and the Oasis Plan concept to build support among governments and other institutions for an emergency comprehensive Mideast conference. Such an international conference, which puts something like the Oasis Plan on the table and its accompanying example of the Peace of Westphalia, can be the antidote to finally break the cycle of violence and despair for this region.

Dr. Connie Rahakundini Bakrie, a strategic analyst and lecturer from Indonesia, added to this discussion with a sweeping history, noting the 500 years of Muslim rule under the Ottoman Empire, then the Balfour Declaration, up through the present time, and ethnic cleansing since the 1948 boundaries were constructed. She focused on the British responsibility for this, and stressed that Indonesia, as a leading Islamic nation, has a serious role to play toward overcoming this crisis.

H.E. Donald Ramotar, former President of Guyana, expressed support for the Oasis Plan, not only as it applies to the crisis in Southwest Asia, but because such thinking is required to solve the global crisis as well. He emphasized that “the world has never been so close to nuclear war,” but still, the possibilities exist for escaping global poverty and war. Peace and development are both necessary, he said; you cannot have one without the other.

Professor Georgy Toloraya, Director, Russian National Committee for BRICS Research, presented a bold concept for resolving the disaster in Gaza. The BRICS, he said, could follow—but in a positive manner—the old protectorate idea from Hong Kong, and the BRICS could “rent” the relevant area for 50–100 years, with Saudi Arabia and Egypt—BRICS members—to be the managers, and the BRICS’ New Development Bank to organize funding for the infrastructure. Israel, he suggested, would no longer have any role.

Graham Fuller, the former Vice-Chairman of the U.S. National Intelligence Council, with many years in the CIA in the Islamic world, sent a pre-recorded message to the conference. Describing the Oasis Plan as, “the most exciting element to arise in a long time” in the Mideast, he likened it to the general character of the Belt and Road Initiative. Fuller referenced the negative impact of “decades of ugly geopolitics” in the region, with colonialist operations going back to the Crusades, “which never really ceased.”



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Panel II, on the physical foundation for the Oasis Plan, was moderated by Stephan Ossenkopp (Germany, not shown). Participants included (left to right): Jason Ross (U.S.) and Pierre Berthelot (France).

Support for the Oasis Plan

The representatives of South Africa, Belarus, and Russia expressed support for the Oasis Plan approach. H.E. Beryl Rose Sisulu, Ambassador of the Republic of South Africa to Mexico, said that South Africa’s experience “underscores the intrinsic link between development and peace, recognizing that sustainable peace can only flourish in societies where development is nurtured and inclusive growth is fostered.” She added later that “the Oasis Plan will ignite a lot of interest,” and can be “a tool to start peace negotiations between Palestine and Israel.” Amb. Sisulu also discussed how South Africa’s history of apartheid and its experience resolving racial and ethnic divisions give it in an important role not only in helping Palestine today, but the rest of the world.

Chargé d’Affaires of Belarus in the U.S., H.E. Pavel Shidlovsky, called the Oasis Plan “ambitious, a benefit for all,” which “grows on you the more you study it,” and said he hoped others would join. He said, “I fully agree with the statement of the Conference organizers that it falls to us to ensure that every life in the world is sacred, that international law must prevail to prevent genocide, and that economic development must be the engine for peace. We in Belarus adhere to the same approach.” Shidlovsky went on to note the emergence of a multi-polar world today, and praised the growing role of the BRICS, the Non-Aligned Movement, SCO, ASEAN, and Global South as a whole. He also pointed out that Belarus itself is an important crossroads between Europe and Asia, a fact which contributes heavily to the country’s economy.

The First Secretary and Expert in Humanitarian Affairs of Russia’s UN Mission, Ilya Andreev, said, “We



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Participants in Panel II. Left to right: William DeOreo (U.S.), Kelvin Kemm (South Africa), and Ilya Andreev (Russia).

support the main message, which involves the implementation of the large-scale Oasis Plan to supply the region with water, including for irrigation needs. It is precisely such a large international infrastructure project that could serve as an incentive for the economies of Palestine, Syria, Yemen, and other countries. Its launch would definitely have a positive impact on providing young people with jobs, including qualified ones; on creating conditions for the return of refugees; on the economic stability of the entire region. This is certainly a very attractive idea.... We are glad that such work is underway ... under the auspices of the Schiller Institute.”

Nevertheless, Mr. Andreev emphasized that reaching a ceasefire in this conflict and halting the humanitarian catastrophe remain the highest priority today.

The Scientific and Technical Basis for a Solution

The second panel of the conference, “The Physical Foundation for the Economic Development of Southwest Asia,” clearly portrayed how a durable peace could be achieved through use of the most advanced technology and engineering methods to green the deserts of Southwest Asia. Stephan Ossenkopp, Schiller Institute–Germany, moderated.

The keynote speaker was Schiller Institute Science Advisor Jason Ross, who began with a quote from Albert Einstein: “The eternal mystery of the world is its comprehensibility....” He developed three fundamental concepts which helped set the stage for what became a captivating panel dialogue:

1) Man, endowed with the power of creativity, is fundamentally good. And through human creativity, has the power to improve nature through scientific discovery and development of new technologies. He cited Lyndon LaRouche’s 1995 paper [“What Is God, that](#)

[Man Is in His Image](#),” where LaRouche says: “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.”

2) The “green,” environmentalist ideology is fundamentally evil, by its assertion that anything man does to transform nature is inherently bad.

3) The [Oasis Plan](#), as the basis for peace through economic development, is rooted conceptually in the 1648 Treaty of Westphalia, which brought the bloody Thirty Years’ War in Europe to an end. That treaty was crafted to create a lasting peace by promoting the “benefit of the other,” and foregoing all revenge. Ross, who used many illustrations throughout his address, showed a map of how border disputes in 17th-Century Europe were far more complicated than that of Palestine and Israel today.

The other experts on the panel included Dr. Pierre Berthelot, Associate Researcher at IPSE, director of the journal *Orients Stratégiques*, and member of the Académie de l’Eau in France; William DeOreo, hydrologist, President of AquaCraft, and proponent of nuclear desalination, based in Colorado, in the U.S.; and Dr. Kelvin Kemm, nuclear physicist and former Chairman of the South African Nuclear Energy Corporation. Their ensuing presentations all reflected an optimism that the problems of this region could be solved with the universal language and power of science. As Dr. Kemm said: “Over many centuries, if there’s one subject that has transcended political conflict, it’s been science.”

Of particular interest was a discussion of the advanced nuclear reactor designs now coming online—small modular reactors (SMRs), and thorium-based molten salt reactors—with the necessary power-gen-

erating capacity, cost-effectiveness, and flexibility to efficiently desalinate sea water.

William DeOreo discussed the exciting potentials in large-scale water desalination for solving the extreme water scarcity in the region, on condition that plentiful amounts of energy are made available—a distinct possibility with nuclear power. He spoke of his own work in the Kingdom of Jordan, which involved designs for desalinating seawater from the Gulf of Aqaba, and conveying it northward. He said he was frustrated by those who wanted him to craft designs for water supply solutions that would only conform to water austerity for the population. He responded: “No, no, no! What we really need to do, is we need to increase the supply, to provide Jordan with the water that they need in order to have an advanced society.”

All the participants agreed that all these problems

must not be allowed to be the seeds of ongoing and future conflicts. The event drew to a close with an honest discussion of “Where do we go from here? How do we get these ideas implemented?”

Ross took this up, noting how many people there are around the world demanding a ceasefire, humanitarian aid, and work for fundamental solutions. A crucial measure of success will be getting more of these people beginning to demand: “We need the Oasis Plan! What are we doing fighting? This should be the future of the region!” By bringing this discussion more and more into the public debate, injecting this kind of future orientation, the political terrain can be drastically changed, making otherwise impossible resolutions possible.

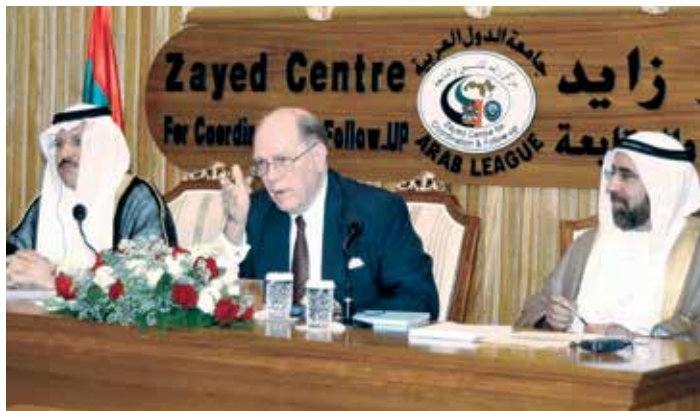
Kevin Gribbroek and Michael Billington contributed to this article.

Lyndon LaRouche Speaks at the Zayed Center in Abu Dhabi, UAE

The following are excerpts from a speech given by Lyndon LaRouche at the Zayed Center for Coordination and Follow-Up on June 2, 2002. The full speech, and discussion, is available in EIR, Vol. 29, No. 23 [here](#).

The world has come to a crossroads in modern history. If the world were to continue along the pathway currently chosen by my government and some others, civilization will be plunged, for as long as a generation or more, into a global dark age comparable to that which struck Europe about seven-hundred-fifty years ago. We must not pretend that danger does not exist; but, also, we must commit ourselves to the hopeful alternative which wise governments will prefer. Therefore, I shall speak frankly, but also optimistically, of a second crossroads, the Middle East.... For as far back as known history of civilization reaches, long, long before the discovery of oil, the Middle East has been the strategic crossroads of Eurasia and Africa combined, as it is today. With or without petroleum, the historic strategic significance of the Middle East would remain.... Given the desperate situation of the world today, we can not be so naïve as to presume that powers which may be great, or even simply powerful, will, therefore, react sanely to the relevant strategic facts of the situation....

Zoom in, as if from an orbiting space-station,



Courtesy of the Zayed Center

Lyndon LaRouche speaks at the Zayed Center, UAE, in 2002.

upon the past and present ecology of this region of the world’s biosphere. In our imagination, let us watch the long-range historical process, of melting of the great Eurasian glacier, over the interval from about 19,000 years ago, when ocean levels were approximately 400 feet below those today. Watch the evolution of the Mediterranean region over the following millennia. Watch the later phase of great desiccation of the once rich, desert regions of the Sahara, Gulf, and Central Asia. From the standpoint of that lapsed-time panorama, we are reminded in the most useful way of a fact we already know: that the most critical of the strategic economic factors inside the Middle East region as a whole today, is not petroleum, but fresh water. ...