

Clinton team endorses 'new Silk Road' policy

by Jeffrey Steinberg

The Clinton administration has embarked on an effort to revive the state-to-state economic development strategy that was a hallmark of the late Ron Brown's tenure as President Clinton's secretary of commerce. The policy initiative, which has driven the British into a murderous rage, is focussed on two areas particularly central to the concerns of Clinton and Brown: triangular cooperation among the United States, Russia, and China; and the crying need to develop the African continent.

Beginning with a July 21 Washington, D.C. speech by Deputy Secretary of State Strobe Talbott, the Clinton team gave its unambiguous support to the Eurasian Land-Bridge policy, drawing a sharp distinction between their vision of the "new Silk Road" connecting China to Europe, and that of the British and their American assets, like Sir Henry Kissinger, who seek only to loot the economies of Central Asia and the Caucasus, and use the local populations as sacrificial lambs in a revival of the 19th-century imperial "Great Game."

In this context, a visit by Chinese President Jiang Zemin to Washington has been tentatively scheduled for Oct. 28, according to a senior Chinese official quoted by the London *Financial Times* on July 28. Of particular note, is that the two sides have reportedly made progress toward reaching an accord that would allow U.S. companies to sell nuclear equipment to China.

The open discussion in Washington of a "Silk Road" policy comes two years after Schiller Institute founder Helga Zepp LaRouche participated in a conference in Beijing on "The Development of the Nations Along the Eurasian Land-Bridge," and began campaigning around the world for the intensive development of Eurasia.

Talbott rejects the 'Great Game'

On July 21, Strobe Talbott spoke before the Central Asia Institute of Johns Hopkins University on "U.S. Policy in the Caucasus and Central Asia." He told the gathering, "The consolidation of free societies at peace with themselves and with each other, stretching from the Black Sea to the Pamir Mountains, will open up a valuable trade and transport corridor along the old Silk Road between Europe and Asia." Furthermore, he denounced the Great Game played by the British Empire in the 19th century against its Russian adversary, for dominance in the region: "For the last several years, it's been fashionable to proclaim and to predict a replay of the Great Game in the Caucasus and Central Asia. The implication, of course, is that the driving dynamic of the region, fueled and lubricated by oil, will be the competition of the great powers, to the disadvantage of the people who live there. Our goal is to avoid and actively to discourage that atavistic outcome. In pondering and practicing the geopolitics of oil, let's make sure that we are thinking in terms appropriate to the 21st century, and not to the 19th. Let's leave Rudyard Kipling and George McDonald Frazier where they belong, which is on the shelves of historical fiction. The Great Game, which starred Kipling's Kim and Frazier's Flashman, was very much of the zero-sum variety. What we want to help bring about is just the opposite."

He added that there was an alternative to the presumed inevitable and irresistible temptation of the great powers to replay the Great Game for the purpose of plundering the region for the oil and gas of the Caspian basin. "There's no question that overcoming old prejudices and predispositions from the era of Lt. Harry Flashman needs to be a constant theme in our own diplomacy in the region, and we are using our good offices to that end."

Fostering economic and political ties

Undersecretary of State for Economic and Business Affairs Stuart Eizenstat continued Talbott's theme, in testimony before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee the next day. "Despite its rich historical and cultural diversity, much argues for dealing with this vast region as a whole," he said. "Historically, this area has been both a cradle of civilization and learning and a transmission belt to Europe and Asia for scholars, traders, soldiers, and missionaries. . . . The Caucasus/Central Asian region also has great promise as a trade and transport corridor linking Europe with Asia."

Eizenstat confirmed that the area has become a priority for the Clinton administration. Four of the region's leaders have either recently visited the United States for consultations with the administration, such as Georgia's President Eduard Shevardnadze, Kyrgyzstan's President Askar Akayev, and Azerbaijan's Gaidar Aliyev, or will be coming, such as Kazakhstan President Nursultan Nazarbayev. Eizenstat confirmed that First Lady Hillary Clinton will be visiting Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan in the fall. He stated that the administration sees it as in U.S. interest to promote the rapid development of Caspian energy resources, multiple oil and gas pipelines, and transport corridors which will tie each nation to the others and to the West, and help end ethnic conflicts in the area.

U.S. Energy Secretary Federico Peña gave a press conference in Moscow on July 23, in which he reassured his hosts on the issue of the pipelines which will be built to transport oil out of the Caspian region. In response to those in the Congress and elsewhere who want to play the geopolitical game of fomenting conflicts within the region and between Russia and the United States, the better to manipulate for control over the resources, Peña told the Russians that the administration supports multiple pipelines, an approach which will not exclude Russia, as some desire. He said, "We are very hopeful about the extraordinary opportunities in the Caspian region for the development of oil and gas for the world. Our philosophy is to encourage all of the countries involved in the exploration and transportation of oil and gas from the Caspian Sea to work together. So, for example, we support the concept of multiple pipelines and multiple pipeline routes throughout the region, as oil and gas are extracted from the Caspian region. And, we have had conversations with leaders from many of the countries in the Caspian region, and we are encouraging the United States companies that are involved to also support the concept of multiple pipelines and regional partnerships. So we believe that the exploration and the transportation of oil and gas in the Caspian region will be helpful both to Russia and to the other countries which are involved today, and we believe this is helpful to the United States, because it will diversify the energy supplies throughout the world, which is consistent with our own energy security strategy."

Speaking in Africa, which will have to be linked to the

Land-Bridge for its future development, U.S. Transportation Secretary Rodney Slater told the African/African-American Summit on July 25, in Harare, Zimbabwe, that the building of transportation systems is often the first step nations take after long periods of strife. "As Africa moves forward on projects," he said, "I think it is important to know the key role that infrastructure development can play to improving a country's economy and a continent's economic standing." He said he intended to work closely with American transportation companies to get them to invest in Africa. He located his proposals in the tradition of his friend Ron Brown, who was known for advocating state-to-state relationships, using the private sector to promote the interests of the nation.

British agents lash out

At the Senate Foreign Relations Committee Hearing on U.S. policy toward Central Asia and the Caucasus, some of the senators who questioned Secretary Eizenstat after his presentation reflected the geopolitical strategies of such British-linked think-tanks as the Heritage Foundation. Leading in this line of questioning was Conservative Revolutionary Sam Brownback (R-Kan.), a first-term senator who chairs the Near Eastern and South Asian Affairs subcommittee. Brownback made clear that he views U.S. interests in the region as beating out two hostile competitors, Iran and Russia, for the benefit of multinational companies that want to control the resources. The day before, he had presented his views to this effect at a Heritage Foundation forum, "The Silk Road Strategy: American Foreign Policy in Eurasia."

Others who have followed this line of attack in recent weeks are Sir Caspar Weinberger, Reagan's former secretary of defense who was knighted for his services to the Queen, and who testified at the same hearing, and neo-conservative pundit Frank Gaffney, who wrote an opinion piece to the same effect in the *Washington Times* on July 30.

Lyndon LaRouche commented on U.S. relations to the nations of this region, in a radio interview with "EIR Talks" on July 30. To the administration's policy of fostering partnership among nation-states, he contrasted the approach of those who are associated with Kissinger and the British: "The Kissinger-Bush policies are like British policies, as you see that in the Congress, and elsewhere, and in the press. The forces which are associated with Kissinger and Bush, are pushing the United States to take a tough line against China—various kinds of conditionalities and so forth—at the same time that Kissinger and Bush, or his brother Prescott, push for commissions on business deals, negotiated on behalf of U.S. and other businesses, with the Chinese government. . . . The Bush-Kissinger policy is—apart from Kissinger being as slimy as he usually is, twisting and turning in the wind, to try to conceal his identity—but these guys' policy is the United States should take a tough line against China, and clear the way for businesses to engage almost in smuggling activities, and profiteering from smuggling activities."