

Southwest Asia: Where Do We Go From Here?

by Hussein Askary

Excerpts from the remarks of Hussein Askary on the LaRouche PAC International Webcast of January 17, 2020. The full webcast can be viewed [here](#).

Askary was interviewed by LPAC's Matthew Ogden, who discussed the January 15 international day of action called for by Helga Zepp-LaRouche after the drone strike that killed Maj. General Qassem Soleimani.

Zepp-LaRouche's [statement](#) calls for an immediate, emergency summit to be convened by the presidents of the United States, Russia, and China to address the danger of war.

A very important response after Helga Zepp-LaRouche made her international call, came from President Putin of Russia. President Putin does not have his hands tied in some geopolitical game. Therefore, he is free to move all over the world and create a new situation. The day before yesterday, Putin somehow echoed Helga Zepp-LaRouche's call by saying, in the concluding section of his State of the Nation [speech](#) on January 15, that the five permanent members of the United Nations Security Council—which include three of the leaders whom Helga has called upon—that these five permanent members of the UN Security Council have to intervene toward a peaceful solution for most of the conflicts we have in the world. And that their cooperation is very important and key to resolving many hotspots in the world. That's exactly what is needed.

Many people even in the West have admitted that Putin—people who are not fans of Putin—is now the real adult in the room trying to fix things. And they are somehow admiring of his attitude. So, President Putin is playing a very key role right now and we hope that it will be reciprocated by other leaders in the West, most importantly by President Trump. If you see what President Putin has done, he has intervened in very critical areas.

First of all, in Libya he achieved a ceasefire, through an agreement he got with President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan of Turkey, because the Turkish government is supporting one side in the conflict and Egypt and other countries are supporting the other side, General Khalifa Haftar and the Libyan National Army. Putin got the ceasefire going and a meeting between the two different warring parties in Moscow. Now, on the 19th, in two days, we will have the Berlin conference, which President Putin himself has announced he will attend per-



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Russian President Vladimir Putin with the President of Turkey Recep Tayyip Erdoğan in Istanbul, Turkey on January 8, 2020.

sonally. That, in a sense, will defuse the hotspot created by President Barack Obama and the British and the French and the other European partners, when in 2011 they went into Libya and killed President Muammar Qaddafi and delivered the whole country into the hands of terrorist groups who have been fighting ever since. So, this is a very important move.

The other place where a ceasefire has begun is Syria. Last week, President Putin visited Damascus, meeting with President Bashar al-Assad in very relaxed circumstances. They visited an Orthodox Church which was



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Russian President Vladimir Putin with Patriarch John X of Antioch and All the East, and Syrian President Bashar al-Assad, at the Orthodox Mariamite Cathedral of Damascus, Syria on January 7, 2020.

right in the middle of the Orthodox celebrations. The atmosphere was so relaxed that Assad made half a joke—it could be an offer—saying that President Trump might need to take the Road to Damascus to get his change of heart, like St. Paul did before. So, that was how relaxed it is when you are with President Putin, because you know that you are in safe hands. But this is not a joke. I’m sure that if President Trump says, “Look, I’m willing to go to Damascus,” President Assad will immediately welcome him.

President Putin also got the ceasefire in the Idlib region. We previously discussed that the Syrian Army was going to move into Idlib, where Turkish-supported militant groups are still active, and clean up the place. We have since heard that many of these groups have been sent to Libya by the Turkish Army, because the Turks have an agreement with the Libyan government in Tripoli, to support it. But immediately after that, President Putin went to Istanbul and met with President Erdoğan formally to inaugurate the TurkStream pipeline that will bring natural gas from Russia across the Black Sea into Turkey. In the meantime, they also agreed to the ceasefire in Libya and also the ceasefire in Idlib.

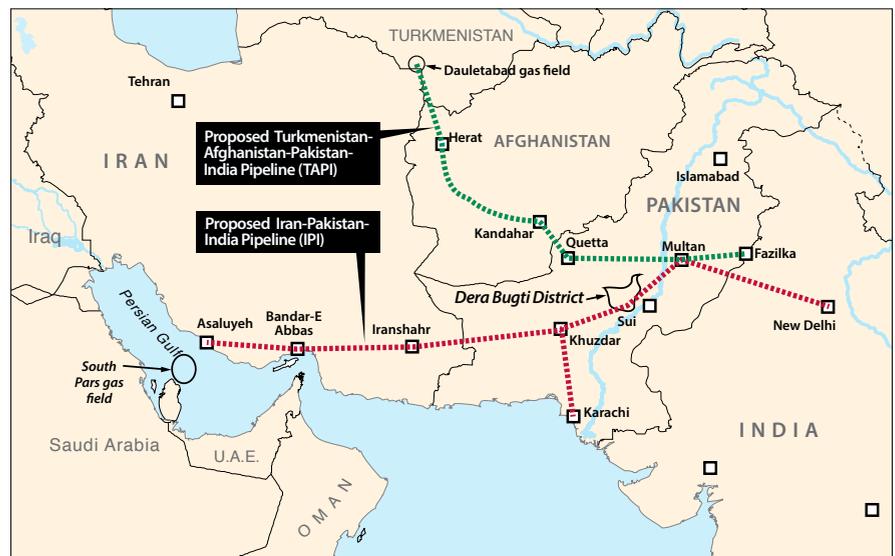
The Russians are solving things

in a way that is completely different than the failed efforts of the United States and the British and Western Europeans. Turkey had been on the opposite side in the war in Syria; they were fighting against the Russians. They shot down a Russian jet. The Russian ambassador to Turkey was killed right in Istanbul; he was killed by a Turkish security guard. But in spite of that, the Russians have kept their relationship with the Turks. TurkStream is a very big export project for Russia; it’s 950 km long. Russia will export 30 billion cubic meters of natural gas to Turkey, which will then be shipped to southern and central Europe. This was part of a project called South Stream, shut

down by the European Union, which would have gone from Russia across the Black Sea to Bulgaria, and then to Europe. But the Europeans backed out after the Crimean and Ukrainian crises.

There is a lot going on with natural gas, which is important for all the countries in the region. In the eastern Mediterranean, the potential for conflict is growing because huge amounts of gas have been discovered; it’s right in the Mediterranean, but it’s not clear which country owns what. These gas fields are shared by Egypt, Israel, Lebanon, Syria, Cyprus, and now the Turks also want to have a hand in it.

Two Proposed Pipelines in South Asia



There are certain agreements between Egypt, Cyprus, and Greece to mark where the borders go. The Egyptians are already active in this gas field with the Italian ENI company; they are producing gas. But there are areas where nobody knows where the borders go. And now you have between Lebanon and Israel a contested area which can become a cause for war between these countries. Also in Gaza, the Israelis are pumping natural gas which belongs to the Palestinians in principle. So, these resources are important, but in the absence of a comprehensive economic structure for all these countries, where everybody benefits in a win-win manner, these things always lead to war. Instead of having development on land, now we have conflicts offshore. So that's the kind of thing that you can expect.

Anyway, the Russian intervention in Turkey brings us to the importance of economic cooperation to get stability and peace in the region—something Lyndon LaRouche and our international Schiller Institute have been calling for. We cannot have peace without economic cooperation. Nations can realize that their stability and the interests of their future generations depend on making sure that their neighbors are prosperous and that every nation involved has long-term economic development plans.

'Development is the New Name for Peace'

The idea of integrating the infrastructure networks, which the Chinese Belt and Road Initiative is all about, is to integrate nations' economies into each other and make them somehow positively dependent upon each other for their prosperity and progress. Iran and Iraq and Syria are in the center of this. These three most inflammable places on Earth could become the most interesting areas where nations and big powers can work together.

Then there is Yemen, the other horrible human disaster, a disaster caused by these geopolitical games. The conflict in Yemen could be resolved in the context of this kind of integrated economic development.

Let's look at Iran's role in the region. Iran is right in the center of East, West, North, and South. Iran's massive natural gas and oil resources are of interest to many other nations, big powers like India and China. In its southern natural gas fields, Iran has the second largest reserve in the world after Russia. For decades now there has been work on a so-called Iran-Pakistan-India peace

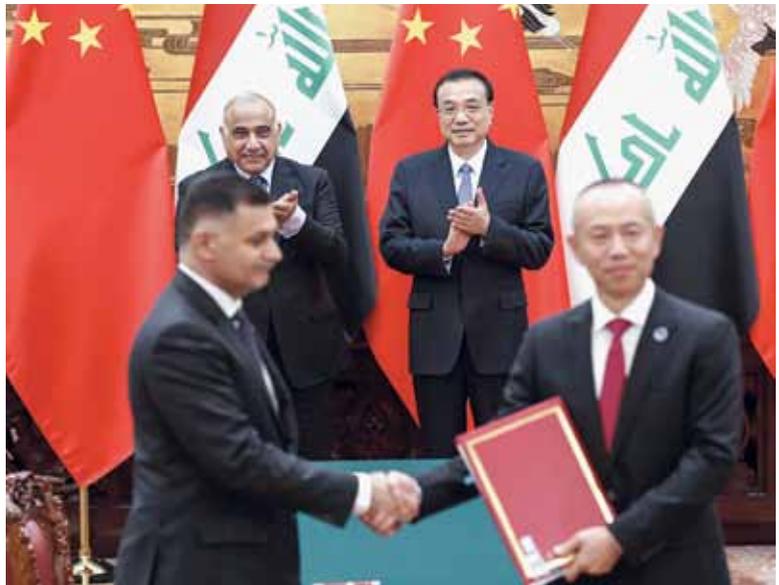


Photo via China's government website

Chinese Premier Li Keqiang (rear right) and Iraqi Prime Minister Adil Abdul-Mahdi (rear left) at the signing of a series of bilateral cooperation agreements in Beijing, China on September 23, 2019.

pipeline, which could bring natural gas from Iran, to where it is needed in Pakistan and India. Those two countries have a massive shortage of power, which could be used for industry.

The Iranians actually built their part of the pipeline, but it was stopped in Pakistan because the United States said the Saudis did not like Pakistan working with Iran. Also, ten years of tension between Pakistan and India has made it impossible for this project to go forward.

What has happened in Afghanistan is well known to many. It's a disaster after the U.S. and British invasion. The only thing which grows in Afghanistan is drugs—opium from the poppy fields. There was no intention of building for economic development. Instead, the Iran-India-Pakistan Peace pipeline was blocked.

Of similar importance is the North-South international transport corridor, which goes from India via the Arabian Sea to Iran's Chabahar port, or to Bander Abbas port, and then northwestward toward Azerbaijan. This corridor is actually now functioning; it's already built. India has been building the Chabahar port, which has become a very important transport corridor between South Asia and Northern Europe. It's very important for Iran. Despite all the economic hardships in the 1990s and 2000s, Iran has built a very efficient railway network which is very important for getting goods from the Gulf to the landlocked countries of Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, and Kazakhstan in Central Asia.

Iraq-Iran-Syria Rail



The northern (red) and southern (green) rail routes of the land bridge. The southern route has upper and lower branches that pass, respectively, through al-Qaim/Albu Kamal and al-Tanf.

every day, so this would be about 10 percent of Iraq's sales to China. The reconstruction fund is a credit mechanism whereby China will add to that fund at a ratio of 6:1. The Iraqis would have one part, and the Chinese export-import bank and other banks would put in six times more.

Eighty-five percent of this fund will be covered by the Chinese side for the purpose of financing Iraqi infrastructure projects—railways, highways, hospitals, housing, water systems, power generation. It's similar to what is going on in Pakistan; it will start with \$10 billion capitalization, and will end up with \$30 billion, maybe even more. It's a 20-year agreement.

So, this kind of thing will continue. I'm very happy that the agreement is being implemented. The Iraqi government wants the projects to start as soon as possible. Young people are still demonstrating in the streets, but if the government can start putting young people to work in these projects, this will make people understand that this is the way to go. Because this is what they are really asking for; they want jobs, they want a future, they want employment. So, this is the kind of thing that, with China's intervention, with Russia's intervention, we can now get going. But not only in a single country; we can have it in the whole region.

Major Power Cooperation

As Mr. LaRouche said, this region has fantastic possibilities—the whole Southwest Asia region and parts

of North Africa. What is necessary now is to get an agreement among the major powers to first end these endless wars and then, as the LaRouche PAC put out, bring home the tanks and send tractors to the region. That's what is needed. President Trump has a golden opportunity to pull out the troops as he has promised; then the United States can send its engineers to this region. They will be welcomed.

The Iraqi government actually has a condition in its agreement with China that it will be allowed to choose other companies from Europe and the United States to participate in these reconstruction plans. So, American companies and President Trump should start negotiating with the Iraqi government as to which American companies should be involved in the reconstruction in Iraq and get part of that money allocated for these projects. That's a good deal, I think, President Trump can make.

This is the kind of thing which can bring us on track to what LaRouche had already proposed in Abu Dhabi in 2002. [Addressing](#) the Zayed Centre think tank, LaRouche gave a keynote presentation, "The Middle East as a Strategic Crossroad." All the resources are there. Only the tools are lacking to start reconstruction.

Go back to LaRouche's 1996 [Oasis Plan](#) and secure justice for the Palestinian people by implementing the economic aspects of the 1993/95 Oslo Accords.

We can have justice for the people of Yemen; stop-

The Mid-East: Crossroads of the Continents





Lyndon LaRouche (center) delivering the keynote address at the Zayed Centre in Abu Dhabi on June 2, 2002. On his right is H.E. Essam Abdul-Aziz Al-Galabi, former Iraqi Minister of Oil; on his left is H.E. Obaid Bin Saif Al-Nasseri, Minister of Oil and Mineral Resources, UAE.

ping the war and starting the reconstruction there according to the [plan](#) we have proposed to the Yemenis called Operation Felix. The Yemeni government in Sana'a has actually endorsed that plan. That will put that very sensitive area on the Maritime Silk Road and make it even safer for the trade between East and West and bring stability to the region.

We have a fantastic opportunity to get things back on track. It's calm in the region now, but if we don't solve these problems, if we don't put the bulldozers on the ground and start giving young people jobs and hope, the conflicts will re-emerge. There are many people who are interested in getting wars going.

Recruiting Young Minds

Askary responded to a question about the class series he is giving, in Arabic, on LaRouche's physical economics.

It was a big challenge for me to start this, but as I made a promise to Mr. LaRouche at the [memorial](#) honoring him in Bad Soden, Germany last year, I have kept my promise. The first introductory lecture for the first course has just taken place. It's going to be a series of courses, but the first course is devoted to Lyndon LaRouche's [book](#), *So, You Wish to Learn All About Economics?* Yesterday, I taped the first class, which deals with who Lyndon LaRouche is, why we are

starting this school, why we call this physical economics. I have received a very enthusiastic response already from people who told me it makes a hell of a difference when you speak to us in Arabic, rather than listening to an American talking to us in English.

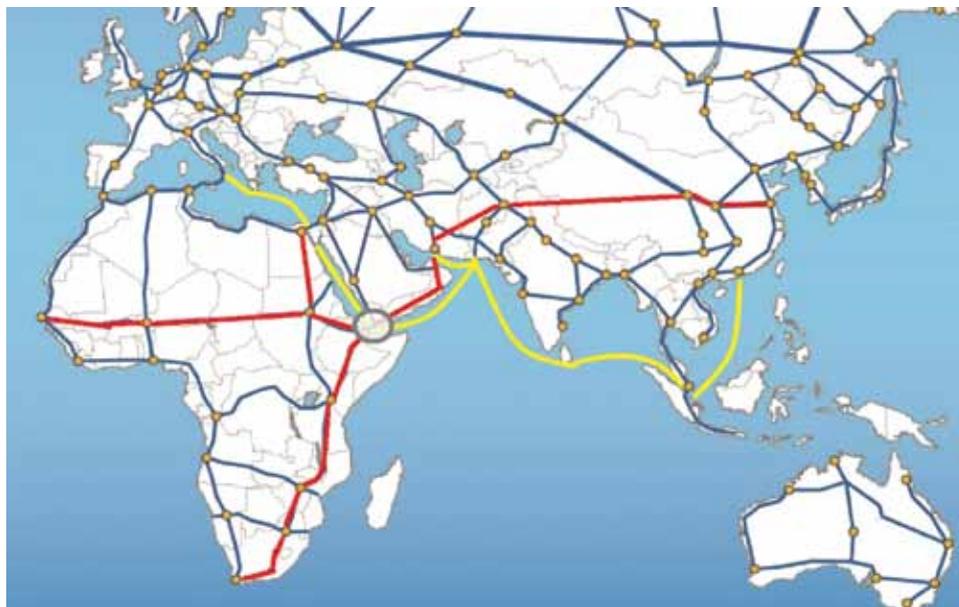
I'm very happy with the response so far, but as I said in my introduction to the course, the reason we started this school is not just to explain economics. Young people are demonstrating in the streets. They have the full right to be frustrated and angry, but they need to learn the basics of how to build a nation's economy, to know what economics is really about. What is being taught

as economics in the Arab countries is similar to what is being taught in the West. It's all about how to

LaRouche's 'Oasis Plan'



Yemen in the New Silk Road



manage limited resources, which is completely wrong and destructive. As LaRouche understands well, economics has to do with the development of the human mind, being creative and being productive.

I've gotten a very interesting response today from some people, and I think the class series will expand; a new set of leadership is dearly needed. Young people need to understand how economics works, to understand how building a nation works. What is the scientific basis for doing that? Understanding the cultural basis for a progressive and sustained economy is very important for young people to grasp these days, especially in the Arab countries. This is the goal we have set out to achieve.

We need to bring people to not only understand why it is good to build infrastructure, but how economic processes work in a scientific manner, so they can replicate that in their own mind. And when we are not here, they can continue doing that on their own. So, that's very encouraging and a very beautiful reminder that it is great ideas that change history, and therefore we have to keep our promise to Lyndon LaRouche to keep these ideas alive and enrich them and spread them as much as we can.

It is also very important, as we know from the work of LaRouche, that you

cannot have a discussion of economics detached from reality. Therefore, we have to give people examples of what is going on; show them how they can analyze and understand the situation; how they can propose solutions from their understanding of LaRouche's ideas and economics. The economics LaRouche is discussing is not simply production of certain products; it's a whole process. It has philosophical, scientific, historical aspects which people need as an education to be able to cope with current situations.

Therefore, we need to give people a sense that all these ideas are related to what is going on now. The way to deal with the situation today is for them to craft the ideas to implement this kind of understanding of economics in their own situation. It helps them understand the big picture; it helps them understand the context in which their lives are situated. But also it gives them the means to open their minds and look a bit further than their immediate situation to find out how the situation could be changed. Therefore, we will combine the education of the curriculum with the discussion of the current economic and strategic situation. The two go hand in hand.



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Author Hussein Askary (left) is now teaching a course, in Arabic, on physical economics, based on So You Wish to Learn All About Economics? (center) by Lyndon LaRouche (right).