
Michael Billington

The British Empire vs. Leibnizian Development

Michael Billington, EIR Asia specialist, addressed the Schiller Institute conference on Nov. 25, 2012.

I wish to begin my presentation on the concept of the global land-bridge, with two quotes, one by Gottfried Leibniz, one of the greatest minds of western civilization; another by Rudyard Kipling, a literary spokesman for the British Empire. Leibniz wrote, in 1697, in his journal *Novissima Sinica* (News from China):

I consider it a singular plan of the fates that human cultivation and refinement should today be concentrated, as it were, in the two extremes of our continent, in Europe and in China, which adorns the Orient as Europe does the opposite edge of the Earth. Perhaps Supreme Providence has ordained such an arrangement, so that, as the most cultivated and distant peoples stretch out their arms to each other, those in between may gradually be brought to a better way of life.

Kipling, who grew up in the British Raj, in his poem, “Ballad of East and West,” had this to say:

Oh, East is East, and West is West, and never the twain shall meet.

This is not simply a poetic statement of Kipling’s point of view, but rather, a statement of *policy* for the British Empire.

Throughout history, the issue of relations between East and West, with the East including both Southwest Asia and East Asia, and including both physical and cultural connections, has been a battle between two opposing world views. On the one hand, there are those who view man as Aristotle did—that we are born either as master or slave, with minds empty except for the data which is input from without through sense perception—those who consider

the “lesser races” as semi-humans who need to be ruled as part of “The White Man’s Burden,” the title of another Kipling poem, whose original title was “The United States and the Philippine Islands.” Kipling sent it to the racist, imperialist U.S. President Teddy Roosevelt, to encourage him to maintain full power over the Philippines after liberating it from Spanish colonialism, advice which TR accepted most readily—the first case of America adopting British imperial policies. The colonization of the Philippines lasted until Franklin Roosevelt ended it.)

Or, on the other hand, there are those who believe as Plato did, that man is defined by the creative powers of the mind, which contains the potential to assimilate all the discoveries of mankind which have come before him, a mind which is capable of wondrous new discoveries of universal truths, in science and in the arts. Such humanist minds naturally seek to unite mankind, however he or she may be born, under this search for universal truths.

Lyn and Helga LaRouche have often posed the image of a future for Eurasia and Africa based on the “global land-bridge,” with high-speed rail corridors connecting the contiguous land masses, and with scholars and statesmen of the three great cultures of Eurasia—Judeo-Christian, Islamic, and Confucian—engaged in continual dialogue to create the scientific and cultural cooperation which is required to further mankind’s mastery of the universe and the advancement of civilization.

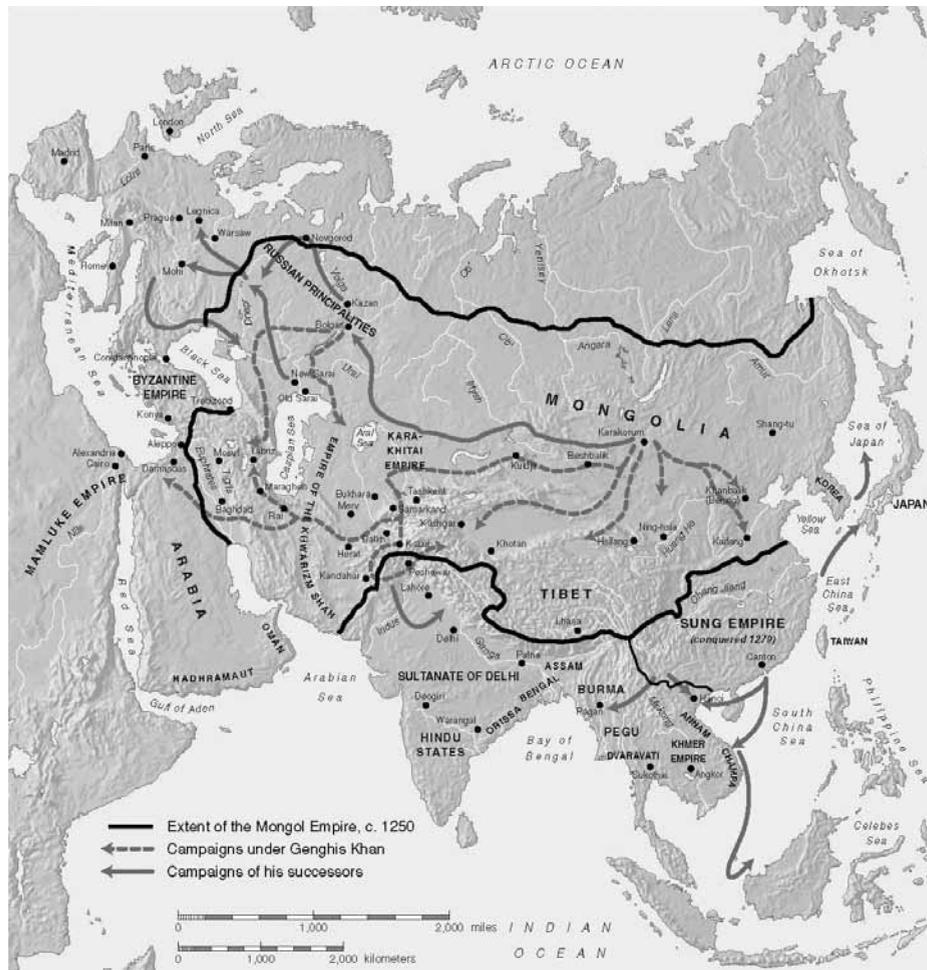
But it should be clear to all of us here today, that those who are opposed to such a vision have the upper



Janus Kramer

Mike Billington traced the origins of the World Land-Bridge, as fought for by Lyndon and Helga LaRouche, in the vision that Gottfried Leibniz presented in his “Novissima Sinica.”

FIGURE 1
The Mongol Empire



hand, and that they are prepared and willing to end civilization altogether, in order to prevent such cooperation and development from occurring, since they see such development itself as the greatest threat to their power, the power of the oligarchical system and its financial empire. The history of the multiple efforts to link these diverse civilizations, and the oligarchy's efforts to prevent such links, is my subject here, and must instruct our efforts in dealing with the crisis today.

The Silk Road

The earliest connections of the Arab world and Europe with distant Asia were forged overland, with what became known as the Silk Road, because of the silks from Asia, so prized in the West, which were carried across it. There is a rich history of the Silk Road, from Alexander the Great, to Roman times, to the Tang

Dynasty in China.

In the 12th and 13th centuries, the Western world was largely bankrupt as a result of years of insane Crusades, genocidal wars between Europe and the Islamic world, orchestrated by the money-lenders in Venice, which was then the seat of the world Empire.

Meanwhile, in Asia, the Mongols were launching their conquest (Figure 1), which would lay waste to much of Eurasia. Guided by a mish-mash of Buddhist, animist, and pseudo-Christian-cult ideologies, the Mongols, channeled through Persia, and functioning in direct collaboration with Venice, swept through the civilized world—first through China, destroying the great Song Dynasty Renaissance culture; then through the Islamic world, destroying the Abbasid Caliphate centered in Baghdad; and across Russia and central Europe, slaughtering populations, destroying cities, destroying irrigation systems, and all other signs of modern culture and civilization as they

passed. They stopped short of Venice, of course, which thrived by marketing the Mongol gold stolen from China and Baghdad, selling slaves to the Mongols, and exercising “free trade” in the wake of the Mongol hordes.

The Mongols also brought the plague, which continued to depopulate Europe even after the Mongols had returned to the Asian Steppe.

Only the 15th-Century European Golden Renaissance—the mobilization of the creative powers of the mind of man to throw off the shackles of linear thinking and turn calculated dreams of the future into reality, to prevent the extinction of mankind—saved Europe from Venice and the Black Death.

Renaissance Culture

And so, the revival of Platonic thought, aided by the Islamic Renaissance which had preserved the ideas of

Greek culture, gave a new birth to Europe. While Nicholas of Cusa was designing his plan of sailing west from Europe, to get to Asia, and to discover the New World which he anticipated lay between, so also the Jesuit missionaries were taking Platonic ideas to China and other parts of Asia in the 16th Century. Later, Johannes Kepler, at the request of the Jesuits, prepared his revolutionary ideas about the harmony of the spheres for transmission to China. (Venice's Galileo, on the other hand, snubbed the Jesuits when they asked for his help in preparing his work to be presented to the Chinese—perhaps the Chinese should be grateful for that snub!)

The Jesuits found a refined and advanced culture in China, more advanced than that of Europe in many respects, and leaders who were open to new scientific learning and to cooperation with the West. The Jesuits were surprised to find that Muslims, who had come to China over the Silk Road, had become the leading astronomers and scientists of the Chinese government.

These same Jesuits later facilitated the first international treaty between Russia and China in 1689, which defined the borders in the Far East well into the 20th Century.

Leibniz

Gottfried Leibniz established close ties with the Jesuits in China, reading translations of Confucius, Mencius, and the great Song Dynasty philosopher Zhu Xi, translated by the missionaries in China. Leibniz's journal, *Novissima Sinica*, conveyed the ideas of the great Chinese civilization to the European population.

Leibniz also established a close collaboration with the new monarch in Russia, Peter the Great. Leibniz saw the potential in Europe, Russia, and China working together to end the imperial system once and for all.

In a letter to Peter the Great in 1712, Leibniz wrote:

It appears to be the will of God that science should encompass the globe and should now come to Scythia [Russia], and that for that purpose its instrument should be Your Majesty, for you are so situated that you can take the best from Europe on the one side and from China on the other, and, through good institutions, improve upon the achievements of both.

But then again, there was Venice.

This great potential was crushed by the intervention of Venice, which used its power over corrupt Popes in

Rome to have the Confucian belief structure denounced as a heresy, as incompatible with Christianity. Contrast this to Leibniz, who, in his *Discourse on the Natural Theology of the Chinese*, wrote about Confucian beliefs: "It is pure Christianity, insofar as it renews the natural law inscribed in our hearts, except for what revelation and grace add to it to improve our nature."

But the intention of the Venetian Empire was to crush the collaboration with China envisioned by Leibniz. Since Confucianism was not only the Chinese philosophical belief system, but also its code of government, the proscription from the Vatican meant that Christians were required to denounce the Chinese system of government as well as the Confucian faith. So, as intended by the Empire, the Christians were soon expelled from China altogether, and the Empire again succeeded in breaking the bridge between East and West. China then turned inward, and decayed, setting itself up for the invasion of British gunships and opium a century later, and the raping of China and all of Asia for a century or more to come.

The American System

But the American Republic had emerged in the meantime, guided by the principles of Leibniz. By the time of the British Opium Wars in the 19th Century, the U.S. was developing machines for power, for transport, and for manufacturing which amazed the world. Abraham Lincoln's economist Henry Carey and his collaborators planned the Transcontinental Railroad, intended not simply to reach the West Coast of the United States, but to be extended, via ship, to Asia, much as Cusa wanted to reach the East by sailing West. The American System proponents aimed to unite what they believed were the natural allies, Asia and America, and to break the British Empire's stranglehold on Asia.

Carey also proposed that the Transcontinental Railroad be extended internationally, to "girdle the Earth with a tramway of iron." This concept led to Carey's collaboration with Russia in planning what became the Trans-Siberian Railway—the first Iron Silk Road.

Carey also became an advisor to Chancellor Bismarck in Germany, who had already studied and utilized the works of the American-System economist Friedrich List to unify Germany through the Zollverein (Customs Union), based on American System protectionist policies, as opposed to the British free-trade model.

This, of course, marked Bismarck as a primary enemy of the British Empire. When Bismarck then set about building a rail connection to Southwest Asia—

the Berlin to Baghdad Railroad—the British viewed this as a *casus belli*, which threatened to undermine their control of trade through their domination of the seas. By 1890, they had succeeded in overthrowing Bismarck, using their family connection with Kaiser Wilhelm II; the First World War was soon unleashed, starting with Japan’s war on China in 1894, instigated by the British, and the Balkan Wars which Bismarck had fought so hard to prevent. Once again Empire had intervened to prevent the unification of sovereign states in Europe and Asia, and to cut off the spread of the American System in Eurasia.

With the end of the World War, the British and the French implemented the Sykes-Picot agreement, dividing up the Islamic world, the Ottoman Empire, as spoils of war, and thus assured that there would be no regional infrastructure or other economic development, such that the oil and other resources would be controlled from London. Indeed, they assured that the 20th Century would be a century of war, continual long wars, from World War I into World War II, to the Indochina War, and other bloody “population wars” across the Third World.

President Franklin Roosevelt had intended that the United States, following the victory in World War II, would forge a world based on the development and scientific progress he had created in the United States, but his death left the U.S. under the increasing control of the British imperial enemy, up to the current era of the Bush family, tied to London and Saudi Arabia, and to the narcissistic British puppet Barack Obama, who has brought us to the brink of annihilation.

LaRouche’s New Silk Road

But the work of Lyndon and Helga LaRouche has demonstrated that there is an alternative to the seemingly inevitable decline into depopulation and thermonuclear war. Lyn had proposed his solution to the seemingly perpetual Mideast crisis in his 1986 proposal, the “Oasis Plan,” which focused on the creation of vast new water resources for the Arab world through the creation of lakes in the Egyptian desert, in the Qattara Depression; through nuclear power and nuclear desalination; through a canal from the Red Sea to the Dead Sea; and rail connections throughout the region, connecting to Europe, Asia, and the rest of Africa.

Most importantly, LaRouche insisted that collaboration between Israeli scientists and engineers and the skilled Palestinian workforce in greening the desert,

was the only basis for ending the political stalemate. Joint development first, then political agreements based on this mutual self-interest—not the other way around, as the British insist, so as to ensure there will never be either.

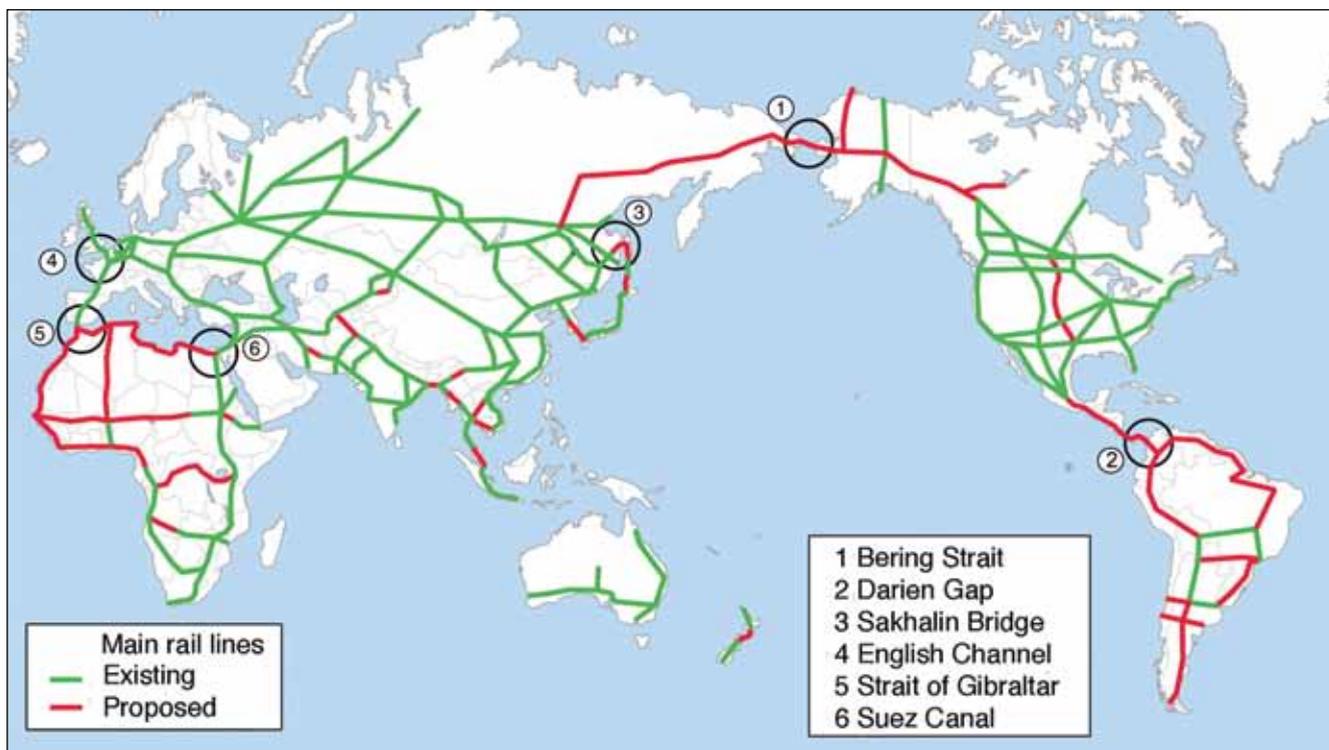
In 1988, as Lyn was being railroaded into prison, with myself and others, he proposed a bold plan for integrating Eastern Europe—which he forecast, correctly, would soon be shedding its Communist chains—through expanded agricultural and industrial projects across the region, leading later to the idea of the “Productive Triangle” of Paris, Berlin, and Vienna, with development corridors extended out through Europe to Asia and Africa.

This then evolved into the idea of the New Silk Road, and while Lyn was locked up, Helga took the lead, not only in fighting the injustice against Lyn and the rest of us (often together with my late wife Gail), but also in organizing the Eurasian nations, and nations throughout the world, behind this uplifting concept of “Peace through Development.”

This culminated in the historic 1996 conference in Beijing, titled the “International Symposium for Development of the Regions along the Euro-Asian Continental Bridge,” which included participants from 36 countries, and featured a presentation by Helga on “Building the Silk Road Land-Bridge as a Grand Design for Peace through Development, To Fulfill the Common Aims of Mankind.” Helga soon was known around the world as the “Silk Road Lady.” The long-term vision was for the Land-Bridge to be extended internationally, as development corridors, with hundreds of new, nuclear-powered cities along the routes, opening the vast, resource-rich areas of the Russian Far East and Central Asia, and around the world, for development (**Figure 2**).

Two of the three prongs of the Eurasian Land-Bridge have been completed, although still in a rudimentary way. The Trans-Siberian Railroad is being upgraded. The vast upgrading of the completed central route through Central Asia is now being taken up both by China and Russia, to facilitate the transport of goods coming from the rapidly developing industrial centers in the interior provinces of China. The Southern route, linking Asia with the Arab world and Africa as well as Europe, is now, finally, leaping ahead, as the formerly isolated nations of Laos, Cambodia, and Myanmar are being brought into the Asian development scheme through cooperation among virtually all the Asian nations.

FIGURE 2
The World Land-Bridge



Tunneling the Bering Strait

Another milestone was achieved in Moscow in April of 2007, when the Russian government sponsored a conference on “Megaprojects of Russia’s East: A Transcontinental Eurasia-America Transport Link via the Bering Strait.” Lyndon LaRouche, who had championed a Bering Strait rail connection between the U.S. state of Alaska and the Russian Far East for 30 years, as one of the essential “Great Projects,” necessary to transform the globe for the coming centuries, was invited to present his ideas on the Bering Strait tunnel.

The conference came at the moment that the British were renewing their war plans against Russia, declaring President Putin to be the “new Stalin,” and trying to again drag the U.S. into waging their wars for them—British brains and American brawn, as they like to say. But one common theme, from LaRouche and others at the Moscow conference, was that “war avoidance” required precisely this kind of mutual physical-economic development first, linking potential adversaries in real economic development, as with his Oasis Plan in the Middle East—uplifting the productive powers of labor of all sides of a conflict, and putting the common aims of mankind above the interests of the financial oligarchs.

Are we to survive the current financial collapse and the British drive for war? Tony Blair made very clear why the British are willing to risk global thermonuclear war, when he insisted as long ago as 1999, that the world has outlived the Peace of Westphalia, with its concept of sovereign nation-states. If Russia and China, or any other nation for that matter, refuses to capitulate to this British revival of imperial global rule, then war, if not “preferable” (as Obama likes to say), is necessary.

Of course, this is not new—it has been the intention of the British Empire since its inception. But the American Revolution intervened and spoiled its plans. Now, under Bush and Obama, the U.S. has become the tool of the Empire, turning the power of government over to the speculators in the banking system in London and New York, and waging war on nations at will, and without reason. If we are to survive, we must return the power of sovereign nations to their people, and unite those sovereign nations around the concept of that Peace of Westphalia so despised by Blair and his royal friends—that the interest of each nation is the interest of the other—and that cooperation among sovereign nations for mutual development is the common aim and interest of mankind.