

Saudi Paper: Land-Bridge Associated with LaRouche

The Saudi weekly magazine Al-Jazira, published by Saudi Al-Jazira Publishing House, which produces Al-Jazira daily, one of that nation's leading publications, published a beautiful and lengthy report by Dr. Atef Mutamid Abdulhamid, professor of Geography at the University of Cairo, on the history and revival of the Silk Road. The article was published in the May 25-June 1 issue, and titled, "Life Returns to the Old Artery: The New Silk Road, a Cultural and Economic Bond." It is a thorough review of the history of the Silk Road as an historical conveyer belt of cultures, philosophy, religion, music, scientific discoveries, and goods between some of the worlds most ancient cultures. Selections from the article, translated by Hussein Askary for EIR, appear below.

From the land in the East, from which philosophy and the territories where goods unknown to the West were rooted, a flux of goods, such as silk, moved across a land route extending from the coast of China to the heart of Europe. It is obvious that with the spices and trade, many forms of oriental cultures and arts were also communicated. The Silk Road is not one route, as many people believe, but many passages that transverse the two continents of Asia and Europe from the East to the West.

The most outstanding part of this road is the one which started from the old Chinese capital, Xian, diverging into two routes, one to the North and the other to South. Both of them pass through Central Asia, avoiding the terrifying Taklaman Desert. The two routes then meet in the Iranian North, to move westwards to the eastern Mediterranean ports, such as Antioch and Tyre, and even to Rome. The most important periods in the history of the Silk Road are: first, the interval between the early 3rd Century B.C. to the 3rd Century A.D., during the rule of the Han dynasty in China; and second, the early 7th-10th Century interval during the rule of the Tang Dynasty.

Although the general image of the trips along this road is that of camel and wagon caravans, many researchers and scholars agree that the most important virtue of this road, with all its directions, was that it was a very good transmitter of the cultures that existed in the world at the time, such as the Chinese, Korean-Japanese, Indian, Persian, Central Asian, Arabian, and Mediterranean Cultures. Many scientific discoveries and inventions that were made at that time, were transmitted and exchanged among the nations through which

the Silk Road passed. One of the most important images of the cultural exchange that took place, is that ideas and religious principles were mixed and interchanged along this road, which witnessed the emergence of the Confucian, Taoist, Buddhist, Manichaeian, Zoroastrian, Christian, Jewish, and Islamic religions. In line with each belief and religion, temples, mosques, and churches were built. . . .

The Silk Road has been organically connected to China. Therefore, China is the one nation that has been most interested in reviving this road, and has planned various projects and conducted thorough studies to develop a modern concept of the Silk Road.

Reviving the Silk Road

Great efforts are being exerted today to revive the Silk Road. These efforts are made on two levels: the Cultural and economic level.

- The cultural level: The cultural developments that the world witnessed during the 1990s, lead to the proliferation of concepts such as the "clash of civilizations," along with other concepts opposing the call for a "dialogue of civilizations." This was followed by the development of other cultural-political concepts with the objective of bringing cultures together for economic and political reasons. One of the best known of these concepts is the "Intercultural Dialogue" which UNESCO had, since the early 1990s adopted as a title for an international campaign to revive the Silk Road.

- The economic revival: After a five-century pause, the Silk Road was put on the agenda again, and many economic forces endeavored to revive it and blow life into it. It seems that the reasons behind this are the following: 1) The collapse of the Soviet Union and the fall of the "Iron Curtain" which was an obstacle for economic collaboration between Asia and Europe; 2) The increasing integration of Russia into the economies of the European Union, opening new horizons for communication with Asia (through Russia). At the same time, there has been a growing partnership between the United States and the nations of Central Asia and the Caucasus; 3) The European countries' eagerness to fill the power vacuum left by the other major economic forces that were supported by the Soviet Union in the past, and not allowing Russia to dominate economically in these regions. From another standpoint, there has been a growing tendency in the West to develop and support the nations of Central Asia, to block the way of fundamentalist religious groups and parties from taking power; 4) The warnings issued by internationally-known economists, such as Lyndon LaRouche, against a worldwide depression (which he believes is worse than the 1930s Great Depression), and that the recovery of the world economy requires a thorough search for all possible ways of increasing trade and economic collaboration on a global scale. . . . LaRouche has adopted the idea of "the Eurasian Land-Bridge," an expression which has become associated with his

name; 5) The increasing growth of the natural resources of the Caspian Sea nations, especially natural gas and oil; 6) The Chinese search for new markets all over the world, and to find resources for developing its own regions, especially the poor western part of China.

Therefore, it could be said that China is the nation which is most interested in reviving the Silk Road, not only for its historical role in that, but also its aspirations to reach into Eurasia culturally, politically, and economically.

The First Eurasian Land-Bridge

The Russians believe that it is possible to activate the existing networks of transport structures. One of the greatest continental transport lines in the world is the Trans-Siberian Railway, which connects Eastern Europe with the Far East. The eastern end of this railway could easily be connected to the Chinese railway network. Some of the best joint efforts were made in the form of holding meetings of research circles, and conferences, among nations from both Asia and Europe to increase the cooperation with China on building the main network of transport on this route; that is, by connecting the individual national basic infrastructure networks with each other. Many of the connections are not completed yet, and some of them need upgrading to qualify at the level of the greater Silk Road network.

Gradually, the attention was moved from simply reviving the old Silk Road, to developing it to accommodate the huge and growing level of world trade 2,000 years after its initial establishment. And, in order not to associate the name with merely the trade in goods, it has become the Eurasian Land-Bridge.

LaRouche's Role in Developing the Concept

There has been one prominent scientific personality in the field of economics who has contributed to the development of the idea, as well as spreading it to all parts of the world. That is American economist Lyndon LaRouche. LaRouche's first contributions came through developing his idea of the "Productive Triangle," which he coined in 1989, following the fall of the Berlin Wall. The sides of this triangle expand from Paris to Berlin, and Vienna. This triangle hosts the greatest concentrations of industrial capabilities and skilled labor in the world. LaRouche presented detailed plans for extending arms from this triangle (in the form of transport and energy lines) to Eastern Europe to help revive their economies. These arms would reach Moscow and St. Petersburg in the North, Kiev in the Center, and the Balkans and the Black Sea in the South. Many studies state that the immediate objective of this idea is to help the economies of the East to recover after coming out of Soviet control, but the more important long-range goal is to pull the world economy out of a depression worse than that of the 1930s. After the fall of the Soviet Union, LaRouche developed his idea to connect Asia with East Eu-

rope and the Productive Triangle in West Europe. Simultaneously, China, due to its enormous industrial development, intended to develop its western regions, finding new markets, and connecting its economy with the world economy through the New Silk Road, which it identifies as "the project of the century."

The Project of the Century.

Helga-Zepp LaRouche evaluates the Chinese situation by describing it as the fastest growing economy in the world. With this growth, and the realization by the Chinese that the American market could potentially shut down in the face of their exports, they have been looking for new markets in Central Asia, the Middle East, and Europe. Therefore, China (according to Zepp-LaRouche), is making major efforts to activate the economic plans aiming at increasing the size of China's transport and communication network with more than 10,000 kilometers of new railroads (to reach 90,000 km in 2010). It also increases the number of highways, surface railroads, and underground railroads, and intends to build more than 100 seaports and airports. There are also plans to build 300 new cities in the next quarter of a century, to accommodate the number of inhabitants, which is expected to increase by 200 million. Add to this, the basic economic infrastructure networks, such as the power generation plants and distribution networks, and water and irrigation channels from the South of the country to the dry northern regions. Four nuclear power plants are planned to be constructed in the next ten years.

In brief, these infrastructure projects are indeed "the project of the century."

Whether in China, Russia, or in Central Asia and the Caucasus, the scientific discussions have shifted from simply talking about railways, roads or oil pipelines to the higher level of "Development Corridors." LaRouche developed the concept of development corridors, in order to emphasize that the Eurasian Land-Bridge does not aim at merely transporting goods and commodities, but at developing the regions and nations, in Asia and Europe, through which it will pass. The concept of the "development corridors" is based on creating a land belt along the route with a width of 100-150 kilometers. In the center of this belt, there will be main lines for high-speed railways (which reduce the cost of transport of goods in a more efficient way than any other means, and are safer). On the sides of these main lines, there are pipelines for gas and oil, artificial water channels and rivers, and high-capacity communication lines, such as fiber optics for electronic communication.

These belts and lines will be extended to form the center of existing or potential urban expansion, and the building of new cities and urban centers. Eventually, there will be secondary land transport lines, connecting these urban centers to the main lines on this Land-Bridge.