

Development or War in Asia?

by Michael Billington

April 2—Since Obama’s 2012 declaration of a “Pivot to Asia,” this war-hungry President has “pivoted” nothing. Rather, he has maintained and even expanded his (and Bush’s) policy of perpetual war in the Mideast, while also expanding the deployment of strategic forces in Europe right up to the Russian border. Nonetheless, Obama has also greatly expanded the U.S. military posture in Asia, and, in the past few months, is driving for a massive military encirclement of China along its entire coast, preparing for a thermonuclear assault on China.

In 2013, soon after Obama launched the “Pivot,” Chinese President Xi Jinping announced his ambitious and optimistic plan for a New Silk Road Economic Belt—rail and development corridors from China through Central Asia and the Mideast to Europe (**Figure 1**)—and the Twenty-first Century Maritime Silk Road through the South China Sea, the Indian Ocean, the Persian Gulf and the Red Sea, connecting with the over-

land Silk Road in the Mediterranean countries. Together they are known as “One Belt, One Road.”

This plan reflected the proposal issued by Lyndon and Helga LaRouche in the early 1990s following the collapse of the Soviet Union, to recreate the ancient Silk Road as the basis for uniting East and West in a joint development process, as the necessary precondition for ending once and for all the threat of thermonuclear war between the superpowers, and launching a new renaissance uniting all cultures based on the common aims of Mankind.

Russia was at that time being looted by western scavengers, and was in no position to adopt the proposal. The United States and its NATO allies rejected it altogether, choosing instead to follow the British Imperial policy of keeping the world divided against itself, as a means of control through their centralized global financial system.

FIGURE 1



FIGURE 2

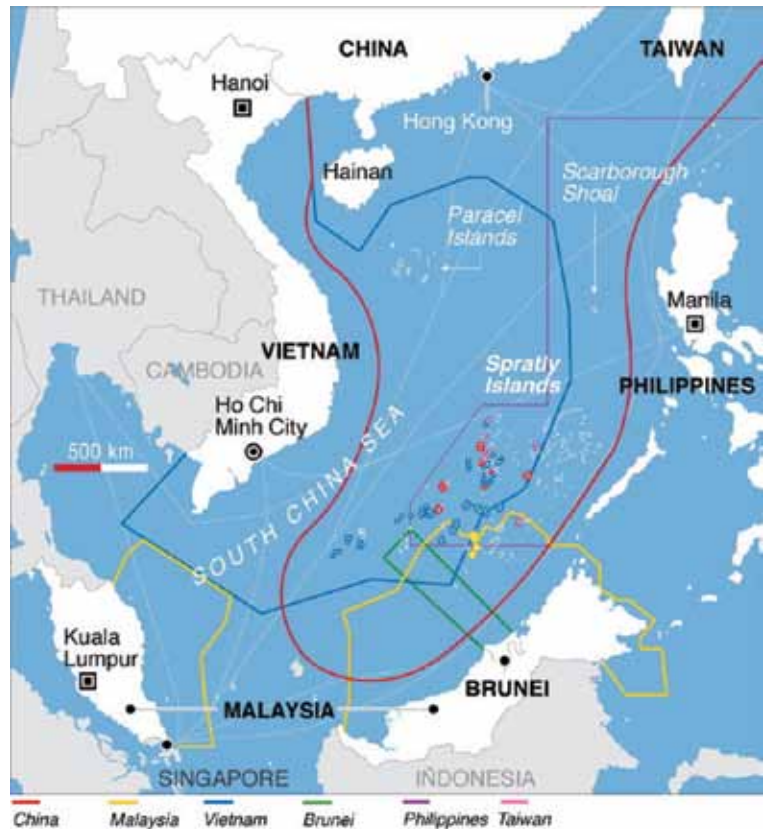


China, on the other hand, enthusiastically adopted the proposal, calling it the Eurasian Land-Bridge, and co-sponsored with Helga Zepp-LaRouche’s Schiller Institutes a Eurasian Land-Bridge Conference in Beijing in 1996. Mrs. LaRouche was a leading organizer and a speaker for that conference.

Now, China’s President Xi Jinping has restored LaRouche’s preferred name—the New Silk Road—and linked this new development paradigm with major new credit institutions: the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB), the BRICS New Development Bank, and several funds linked to the nations of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and to the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), among others, totaling hundreds of billions of dollars for global development.

To the bankrupt financial lords of Wall Street and the City of London, this development policy is seen as

FIGURE 3



a threat, which must be crushed through economic and military confrontation.

Imperial Targets

There are three primary points of attack in Obama’s confrontation with China (**Figure 2**):

- The South China Sea
- The Southeast Asian nations
- The Korean Peninsula.

Lyndon LaRouche has long argued that the South China Sea must be regarded as an “Asian Lake,” which of course requires that the nations adjoining the “Lake” view their common interests as more important than their parochial concerns. How does this fit with China’s recent construction of artificial islands in the Spratly/Nansha island group, which has been used by Obama and his controllers to accuse China of “aggression” and “militarization” of the South China Sea?

One of China’s leading economists, Ding Yifan, addressing a Schiller Institute conference on the New Silk Road in San Francisco in November 2013, was asked about the danger of war. He responded (**Figure 3**):

“I can say a few words about that. The New Silk Road is also critical for Chinese strategic defense, because historically, the threat to China came over land, from the north, but since the Opium War [Britain’s Opium War of 1840], the threat always comes from the sea, from the ocean, from the southeastern part of China. So, with the Obama Administration’s pivot to Asia, China feels more pressure from Japan, from the military alliance between the United States and Japan, so the pressure comes also from the southeast part, while the New Silk Road is a big background for China to have some provisions of energy, of resources, for Chinese development, and by railroad China will have access to the European market. So this time, when the threat comes from the sea, from the southeastern part, China can resist with this background support.”

This identifies China’s strategic interest in securing peace in the South China Sea. It must be noted, of course, that while China claims sovereignty over the Spratly/Nansha islands, the Parcel/Xisha islands and others within their so-called “nine dash line” in the South China Sea, they have never challenged the other nations which have occupied and armed islands under their control, although they lie within the nine dash line China considers its sovereign territory. This includes the Philippines and Vietnam. Nor have they challenged other countries which have constructed or expanded islands by artificial means, also including the Philippines and Vietnam (**Figure 4**).

As to China “militarizing” the South China Sea, as is repeated *ad nauseam* by Obama and his fellow war hawks in the Congress, the Pentagon and the press,—China has for decades had minimal defenses on the island of Yongxing (called Woody Island in the West), the site of Sansha City, which is the administrative center of the Chinese islands in the South China Sea. The recent “discovery” of defenses on this island is a fraud.

FIGURE 4



But Xi Jinping’s pledge not to militarize the newly constructed islands in the Spratlys has been upheld, despite the hysterical screams in the West that China *might* deploy military forces to these tiny islands.

Contrast that to Obama’s massive militarization of the South China Sea. Not only is Obama regularly and intentionally deploying warships and war planes into areas claimed by China in the region—for no other purpose than to militarily provoke China—but Obama has also in the last year successfully pressured the weak Philippine President Benigno “Noynoy” Aquino to disregard the Philippine Constitution, which forbids foreign troops or bases on its soil without Senate approval, by turning over five sites to the U.S. military to construct major military bases, pre-position war materials,

and deploy the most modern and deadly air, sea, and land forces across their country—including a base on Palawan Island, which juts out into the South China Sea! It is clear to those who are not blind that this is preparation for war on China.

At this point, it is important to reflect on how Noynoy came to power. In 1986, the nation's last nationalist leader, Ferdinand Marcos, was overthrown in a coup run by a key founder of the U.S. neoconservative movement, George Shultz, then Secretary of State, and his deputy Paul Wolfowitz (later famous as the architect of the criminal war on Iraq in 2003). Lyndon LaRouche at the time had provided backing and advice to Marcos and his circle on the development of the nation. Marcos had built the first nuclear plant in Southeast Asia, had a master plan for industrialization, and made the Philippines self sufficient in rice—in fact, the economic development under Marcos made the Philippines the most admired nation in Southeast Asia at the time, even by South Korea. When LaRouche defended Marcos against the foreign-instigated coup (which was among the first of the “color revolutions” by the United States), he warned that the country would collapse into economic decay and chaos were the Marcos policies to be reversed.

Following the coup against Marcos, Cory Aquino, the mother of the current President, was placed in power. She immediately followed the dictates of the neocons in Washington, shutting down the completed nuclear power plant, ending the rice self sufficiency program, and scrapping the industrialization program. Rather than being the envy of all of Asia, the Philippines is now the basket case of ASEAN, sharing in none of the Silk Road development taking place across ASEAN with Chinese support. And, it has turned itself into cannon fodder for Obama's war on China.

ASEAN

The story is totally different for the other members of the ten-nation ASEAN. Obama attempted to corral the ASEAN leaders into an anti-China declaration at his Summit with ASEAN leaders at Sunnylands, California in February, but failed miserably. While none of the other ASEAN nations want to break ties with the United States, for obvious reasons, they are at the same time enthusiastically expanding their relations with China, and reject all efforts to prevent it.

The reasons are clear—while the United States is an important trade partner for ASEAN, and invests in ex-

tracting raw materials, it long ago gave up on building any infrastructure in Asia (or anywhere else in the world), while making extreme demands (and often imposing onerous sanctions) to impose Washington's view of democracy, human rights, and the environment. This is equally true of the IMF and the World Bank, which support “poverty alleviation” and environmental policies, but build virtually no infrastructure, thus keeping countries backward, without real development.

China is not interested in imperial demands, but in addressing the most fundamental human right, that of economic development, and in conditions which respect the dignity of man through participation in the progress of one's nation.

Look at the record in Southeast Asia, even before the Silk Road process and the AIIB are fully operative:

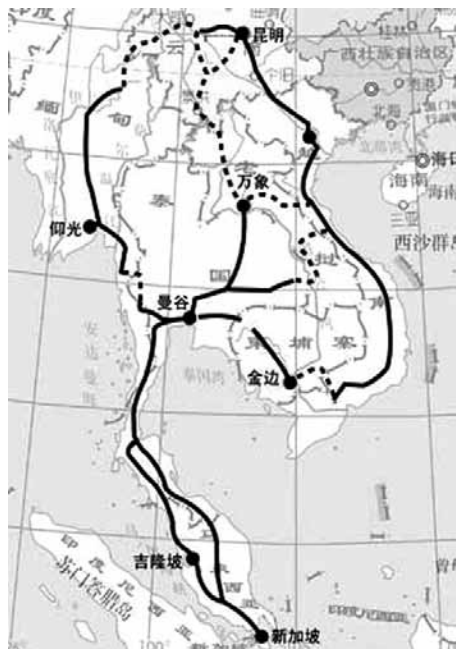
Indonesia: China Railway International and a consortium of Indonesian state companies won a contract in October 2015 to build Indonesia's first high-speed rail line, from Jakarta to Bandung, and plan to compete for other projects in the region. Three quarters of the funding will come from the China Development Bank. China won the contract against a viable Japanese bid primarily because China did not demand a guarantee for the project from the Indonesian government, which suffered total destruction in the 1998 “Asia Crisis” due to foreign contracts which had forced all the risk onto the government. This new contract for the Jakarta-Bandung Railroad is seen as a model for others among the Silk Road nations.

China has also built numerous power plants across Indonesia and has invested in port development. They completed construction of the longest bridge in the country in 2009, connecting Surabaya on the island of Java to Madura Island off the north coast. The *Jakarta Post* reported on Feb. 3 that since the sixtieth anniversary celebration in April 2015 of the famous Bandung *Asian African Conference*, “China has made a clean sweep of big infrastructure projects in Indonesia.”

President Joko Widodo has a vision of Indonesia becoming a “maritime fulcrum” for the Pacific-Indian Ocean, which he considers to be congruent with Xi Jinping's Maritime Silk Road. In fact, President Xi first announced the Maritime Silk Road while addressing the Indonesian Parliament in October 2013.

China to Singapore Railway: China is in the process of building a rail link from Kunming in Yunnan Province to Singapore (**Figure 5**), passing through Laos, Thailand, and Malaysia, a 3,000 km connection.

FIGURE 5



China and Laos broke ground on the 427 km high speed line connecting China to the Laotian capital of Vientiane near the Thai border in December. In Thailand, China has contracted to build a rail line from the Laos border to Bangkok, with a branch to the industrial center at Map Ta Phut, an ocean port southeast of Bangkok.

Bangkok-Kuala Lumpur: While a modern rail connection between Bangkok, Thailand, and Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, is not yet in the works, a contract for the link from Kuala Lumpur to Singapore should soon be signed. China Railway Construction Corp in December bought into a major real estate venture called Bandar Malaysia in Kuala Lumpur, and in March announced that they were setting up a regional hub there, aiming at winning the rail contract and making Bandar Malaysia the terminal for the Kuala Lumpur-Singapore high-speed rail link.

Thailand and the Mekong: Besides the rail connections, the Thai Prime Minister, former General Prayut Chan-ocha, who directed a military coup in Thailand in 2013 to end the massive upheaval and near-civil war conditions in the country, has made relations with China a priority (Figure 6). In March, Prayut co-chaired with Chinese Premier Li Keqiang

FIGURE 6



the first summit of the Lancang-Mekong Cooperation, an organization of the six nations along the Mekong (China, Myanmar, Laos, Thailand, Cambodia, and Vietnam) held in Sanya, in China's Hainan Province (the Mekong is called the Lancang in China). The new institution is essentially intended to coordinate the implementation of the Silk Road and the AIIB in the Mekong region.

As EIR reported in its landmark study, *The New Silk Road Becomes the World Land-Bridge*, see www.worldlandbridge.com, when the French were defeated in their colonial war in Vietnam in 1955, the United States sent engineers from FDR's great TVA project and from the Army Corps of Engineers to study the potential for reproducing the TVA process on the Mekong. They proposed an Indicative Basin Plan for 1970-2000, a project to produce 17,000 MW of hydro-power with a ten-fold increase in irrigation during the

dry season, doubling or tripling the productivity of that land.

With the assassination of John Kennedy and the launching of the Indochina War, the United States turned to a British colonial policy, waging war rather than fostering development. Even after losing that war in 1975, the United States never returned to its roots as a force for development, but sank deeper and deeper into permanent warfare and financial speculation.

As a result, it was admitted by the Mekong River Commission in its 2013 report, that “management and development of the River remains limited today, in part due to unregulated river flows. The vast floodplains in Cambodia remain largely undeveloped and only a small proportion of the irrigation, hydropower, and navigation potential has been realized in the basin. The River remains mostly in its natural state.” The promise for development, once identified with the United States, has been abandoned in the West, but is now being taken up by China, with the enthusiastic support of the nations of Southeast Asia.

Lyndon LaRouche has been directly involved in promoting development in Thailand since the early 1980s, when *EIR* co-sponsored forums in Bangkok presenting detailed engineering studies for the construction of the Kra Canal—connecting the South China Sea and the Indian Ocean by cutting a canal across the Isthmus of Kra in southern Thailand, above the Malacca Strait. The Canal would cut 900 miles from the trip through the Malacca Strait, far less than the distance saved by the Suez and Panama canals, but would nonetheless carry as much traffic as those canals because of the overcrowding of the Malacca Strait. LaRouche emphasized a more important aspect, that the Kra Canal “should be seen as a keystone, around which might be constructed a healthy and balanced development of needed infrastructure in a more general way.”

The Canal is also the unique means to end the insurgency in the south of Thailand, providing jobs, new cities and ports, and development zones—another example of peace through development.

Although the plan was close to implementation in the 1980s, with significant Japanese interest, the potential disappeared with the economic crises of the late Twentieth Century. Now, with China also showing great interest, the plan is back on the table, and can serve as a major hub of the new Asia-Pacific Basin development.

China is also massively invested in Cambodia and Myanmar, building dams, power plants, roads, oil pipelines, and more. Cultural and educational exchanges are being implemented across the region.

Of course, China is not the only country investing in ASEAN. Japan and South Korea are also building infrastructure, including transportation, water projects, and power plants. But the West no longer builds infrastructure, which is left to the private sector, which is not interested in investments that take several decades to develop. Infrastructure does not return short-term profits to a private investor, but rather generates an increase in the productivity of the nation and region as a whole. Americans once understood this, as government investment fueled every period of American progress, and the lack of such government backing drove every period of collapse. The key to peace and development lies in lifting the vision of men and nations to the future.

Korea

We are now seeing the threat of a crisis in the Korean Peninsula serving as an excuse for a global war, launched by the United States against China. Obama was using the Syria crisis in a similar manner, as a cockpit for war against Russia—until Putin’s military intervention exposed Obama’s support for terrorists as allies in his drive for regime change against Assad.

And yet, just months ago, South Korea was working closely with China and Russia, and indirectly with North Korea, on development projects which were leading to a “peace through development” solution to this festering remnant of the Cold War. The recent nuclear and missile tests in North Korea—which no one of sound mind could have doubted would eventually take place—were used by Obama to successfully coerce South Korean President Park Geun-hye to totally scrap these policies. The long-standing Kaesong Industrial Region, where South Korea factories were functioning in the North with North Korea labor, a win-win policy, was unilaterally shut down by Seoul.

Obama is also preparing to move THAAD (Terminal High Altitude Area Defense) missiles into South Korea, which South Korea had strongly opposed before President Park’s capitulation. Park had earlier recognized that high altitude missiles are of essentially no use against North Korea, which does not need ICBMs to attack the South, but are in fact targetting China, just as the missiles deployed on Russia’s border in Europe were falsely claimed by Obama to be needed to defend

against Iran, when they were clearly aimed at Russia.

Then, by imposing additional South Korean sanctions, above and beyond the UN sanctions against North Korea of March 2, President Park has shut down the crucial cooperation between China, Russia, and both Koreas which was centered at Rason, a port city in northeast North Korea. China had built a road from its Jilin Province to Rason, while Russia had rebuilt the rail connection from Vladivostok through Kasan to Rason, and both Russia and China built port facilities there.

Most important, three major South Korean firms—Hyundai Marine, Korail (the state rail company), and Posco (one of the world’s largest steel companies)—had formed a consortium with Russia and North Korea, with the approval of Seoul. The consortium had been shipping Russian coal by rail to Rason, where it was loaded on Hyundai Marine ships for transport to South Korea, then shipped by Korail to Posco plants. Such win-win cooperation between the nations of East Asia was potentially leading to the reconstruction of the rail lines through North Korea, which would complete the Eurasian Land-Bridge from Pusan, South Korea to Rotterdam, Holland, as envisaged by Lyndon LaRouche

and others as the crucial completion of the New Silk Road for Eurasian cooperation and peace.

This optimistic process is presented in detail in the EIR Special Report, *The New Silk Road Becomes the World Land-Bridge*, which is due to be published in a Korean translation within the coming weeks. Never has this policy been more needed than now.

While the West blames all this on North Korea for refusing to unilaterally give up its nuclear weapons program, it is obvious that North Korea has observed how the United States treated Iraq and Libya after they gave up their nuclear weapons programs. Obama’s insane “strategic patience” approach to North Korea was simply a policy of preventing any constructive dialogue, allowing North Korea to continue its nuclear weapons program to justify the continuing, and now escalating, military build-up around China.

The future of mankind now rests squarely on the question facing the citizens of the world: Do we allow the world to sleepwalk into World War Three under Obama, or do we bring sanity back to the United States and Europe, and join with China and the BRICS in creating a future based on the advancement of the common aims of Mankind?

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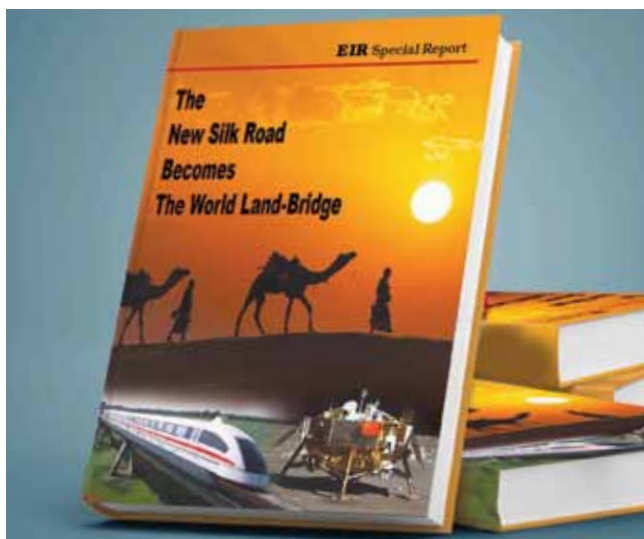
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