

How Wolfowitz and the Neo-Cons Sabotaged the First ‘Oasis Plan’

by Dean Andromidas

The only hope for Southwest Asia and an Israel-Palestine peace agreement, is the implementation of Lyndon H. LaRouche’s “Oasis Plan,” where a Middle East peace can be organized around cooperation for regional economic development. Such a plan would necessarily involve the construction of nuclear-powered desalination plants and other infrastructure throughout the region, enabling an exponential increase in the water supply to “make the deserts bloom.”

The recent appointment of outgoing U.S. Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz, one of the leading “children of Satan” of the Bush Administration, to the chairmanship of the World Bank, is aimed at sabotaging the LaRouche policy.

It is precisely this peace and development perspective that four decades ago, Wolfowitz worked to undermine when he was a graduate student, making it the subject of his doctoral dissertation. As readers of this publication know, Wolfowitz studied at the feet of the infamous philosopher Leo Strauss, the high priest of the neo-con movement. But his true mentor was Albert Wohlstetter, a “Dr. Strangelove” figure, who was convinced that no nation except the United States should possess nuclear weapons, and, more important, share in the economic benefits of nuclear technology.

According to the widely read book, *The Rise of the Vulcans: History of Bush’s War Cabinet*, by James Mann of the Washington-based Center for Strategic and International Studies, it was Wohlstetter who recruited Wolfowitz to write his doctoral dissertation as a polemic against nuclear desalination. Mann says that in the late 1960s, Wohlstetter visited Israel and brought back documents about a proposal by an American construction and engineering firm, Kaiser Engineers, to build a nuclear desalination plant there. Wohlstetter was said to have feared that such a project would lead to nuclear proliferation throughout the Middle East. Mann writes:

“Wolfowitz’s doctoral thesis amounted to an extended

argument against the idea of nuclear powered desalting stations, on the grounds that the benefits were exaggerated and the risks of nuclear proliferation were too great. He wrote about the difficulties of conducting effective international nuclear inspections, the risk of clandestine diversion of nuclear materials, and the dangers of helping a nation to improve its technological and scientific capability in the nuclear sciences. . . .”

But this is only a half truth. The Kaiser proposal was part of a package of Middle East peace initiatives launched in the mid-1960s by Presidents Lyndon B. Johnson and Dwight D. Eisenhower. These initiatives have a remarkable resemblance to LaRouche’s own Oasis Plan, and Wohlstetter had recruited Wolfowitz as part of a mobilization to sabotage such proposals.

Eisenhower: ‘A Proposal for Our Time’

On June 5, 1967, Israel launched the Six-Day War, whose catastrophic consequences the world is still suffering. Within days of the cease-fire, former President Dwight D. Eisenhower presented President Johnson with a peace initiative under the laconic title of “A Proposal for Our Time.” Drafted in cooperation with former Atomic Energy Commissioner Adm. Lewis L. Strauss, and Alvin Weinberg, director of the Oak Ridge National Laboratory, the proposal called for the construction of three dual-purpose nuclear desalination electric power stations, referred to as “atomic desalting” plants, one each to be built in Jordan, Israel, and Egypt. They would produce a combined output of 1,400 million cubic meters of water a year, equivalent to the entire flow of the Jordan River system!

Later, in June 1968, Eisenhower wrote an article about the initiative for *Reader’s Digest*. The purpose of building large atomic desalting stations in the troubled region, Eisenhower wrote, “is not only to bring large arid regions into

production and supply useful work for hundreds of thousands of people, but also, hopefully, to promote peace in a deeply troubled area of the world through a new cooperative venture among nations. I am optimistic enough to believe that the proposal, when implemented—as it is sure to be someday—may very well succeed in bringing stability to a region where endless political negotiations have failed. . . .”

Under the subtitle “A Power for Peace,” Eisenhower wrote that the plants would be dual purpose, producing both water and electricity in order to enable development across 1,750 square miles (4,500 square kilometers) of barren land, which would form the centerpiece of a scheme to settle more than a million Palestinian refugees. As does LaRouche in his Oasis Plan, Eisenhower pointed to the regional scope of the project. The electricity produced, he said, “would be used in pumping water to areas as distant as Syria and Jordan, and perhaps under the Suez Canal to parts of Egypt. The rest would be utilized for the manufacture of needed fertilizer and other industrial purposes; a plentiful supply of electrical energy would bring to the Middle East vast new complexes of industry, just as it has to many other parts of the world.”

Eisenhower estimated that the project would cost \$1 billion and would be funded through a specially created international corporation supervised by the International Atomic Energy Agency. “The collaboration of Arab and Jew in a practical and profitable enterprise of this magnitude might well be the first, long step toward a permanent peace,” Eisenhower wrote.

After Eisenhower presented his proposal to President Johnson, on July 28, 1967, the State Department appointed the U.S. diplomat Robert F. Woodward as interim Director of Water for Peace, and two weeks later, on Aug. 14, Sen. Howard Baker from Tennessee introduced Senate Resolution 155, which read:

“Whereas the security and national interest of the United States require that there be a stable and durable peace in the Middle East; and the greatest bar to a long-term settlement of the difference between the Arab and Israeli people is the chronic shortage of fresh water, useful work, and an adequate food supply:

“Be it resolved that . . . [providing] large quantities of water to both Arab and Israeli territories . . . will result in: 1) new jobs for many refugees; 2) an enormous increase in the agricultural productivity of existing wastelands; 3) a broad base for cooperation between the Israeli and Arab Governments, and 4) a further demonstration of the United States’ efforts to find peaceful solutions to areas of conflict.”

The Senate approved the resolution without dissent. A technical group comprising Arabs, Israelis, and Americans was established at Oak Ridge National Laboratory, where detailed feasibility studies were drafted over the next five years—studies that would never leave the drawing boards.

Despite this promising start, and thanks, as we will soon see, to Wolfowitz and his evil mentors and collaborators, the proposal languished. In the 1968 *Reader’s Digest* piece,



President Eisenhower signalling the start of construction of the first commercial nuclear reactor at Shippingport, Pennsylvania, in 1954. Eisenhower’s vision of “Atoms for Peace” included the development of nuclear desalination plants to provide water and electricity for the Mideast, to make the deserts bloom—and make peace possible.

Eisenhower made the exact point LaRouche has consistently made since he first proposed his own Oasis Plan in 1975. Eisenhower wrote: “Our hope was that the Administration would help push it to fruition, but thus far it has merely been referred to the State and Interior Departments and the Atomic Energy Commission for study. Most of the professional diplomats seem to think that we must have peace and stability in the Middle East before the plan can be implemented. I contend that reverse is true: the proposal itself is a way to peace.”

Ending Nuclear Terror

The Eisenhower Mideast development proposal was the most articulated expression of a policy which had its beginnings with Eisenhower’s famous “Atoms For Peace” address, given before the United Nations in December 1953.¹ The intention of the “Atoms for Peace” proposal was similar to that of another LaRouche policy, which was adopted by Presi-

1. For more on Atoms for Peace, see Marsha Freeman, “How the Promise of Nuclear Energy Was Nearly Destroyed,” *EIR*, Jan. 14, 2005.



Paul Wolfowitz, a protégé of the Strangelovian Albert Wohlstetter, began his career for the “nuclear terror” faction with a doctoral dissertation attacking the Atoms for Peace program, in particular the plan for building nuclear desalination plants to develop the Mideast. Here, nearly 40 years later, as Deputy Secretary of Defense, he testifies in Congress.

dent Ronald Reagan, and in March 1983 was announced by Reagan as the Strategic Defense Initiative or SDI. The SDI aimed to overturn Henry Kissinger’s doctrine of Mutually Assured Destruction, and replace it with a doctrine of Mutually Assured Survival, based on cooperation between the United States and the Soviet Union in developing the technological means to render nuclear weapons ineffective in war, while at the same time, producing a new technological revolution.

The Atoms for Peace policy called for both the United States and the Soviet Union to provide fission fuel for the peaceful development of atomic energy for all countries of the world, under a program supervised by the United Nations Atomic Energy Agency. The policy was a direct counter to Bertrand Russell and H.G. Wells, who sought to use nuclear terror as a means of scaring the nations of the world into creating a world government. Eisenhower stated, “So my country’s purpose is to help us move out the dark chamber of horrors into the light, to find a way by which the minds of men, the hopes of men, the souls of men everywhere, can move towards peace and happiness and well being.” Eisenhower had rejected several early drafts of the speech because, he said, they would leave the American people “with only a new terror, not a new hope.”

Atoms for Peace unleashed nuclear energy for the production of electricity. In the 1968 *Reader’s Digest* article, Eisenhower wrote, “A few months later, in June 1954, I sent a note to [Lewis L.] Strauss urging the intensive study of methods of desalting water by atomic energy, and I added, ‘I can think of no scientific success that would equal this in its boon to mankind.’” By the beginning of the 1960s, Oak Ridge National Laboratory had on its drawing boards proposals for the development of dual-purpose nuclear reactors for the generation of electricity and the desalination of water, and for the

creation of nuclear agro-industrial complexes, or “nuplexes.” One such proposed nuplex was the Bolsa Island plant, planned but never carried out, for Southern California. In 1964, these nuplexes were points of discussion and were looked upon with favor by both President Johnson and Soviet General Secretary Nikita Khrushchov.

Israeli Prime Minister David Ben Gurion was one of the first to mention nuclear desalination in respect to the Arab-Israeli conflict. In the early 1960s, when it became clear that Israel’s Dimona nuclear research complex was, in fact, producing nuclear weapons, Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser told the Kennedy Administration that the acquisition of nuclear weapons by Israel would become a *casus belli*. In a meeting at the Waldorf Astoria Hotel in New York, in 1961, President John F. Kennedy demanded that Ben Gurion explain Israeli intentions at Dimona, and Ben Gurion told the President that Israel’s greatest problem was the shortage of water, a need that could never be fully met by the Jordan River. Therefore, Ben Gurion said, with the advances of atomic research, Israel was preparing for the possibility of developing nuclear desalting plants.

This would prove to be a half truth, and Kennedy was not fully convinced—nor was anyone else. Nonetheless, Ben Gurion opened the door to the idea of offering both Egypt and Israel atomic desalting plants as a way out of a nuclear arms race. This began a process of pressing Israel to open Dimona to International Atomic Energy Agency inspections, and later, President Johnson would demand that Israel sign the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. Although Israel would always refuse to do either, it did allow the United States to conduct its own limited inspections of Dimona, and after the first inspections in 1961 and 1962, Ben Gurion allowed the United States to present its reports to Egyptian President Nasser. Once Ben Gurion was out office, and it became obvious what was going on at Dimona, Israel refused to have subsequent reports given to Nasser.

In June 1964, President Johnson and Israeli Prime Minister Levi Eshkol agreed to establish a bilateral commission to coordinate joint research in nuclear desalination. By the end of 1965, Kaiser Engineers, a subsidiary of Henry Kaiser’s huge industrial combine, Kaiser Group, in cooperation with the Catalytic Construction Company, finished their feasibility study for an Israeli “Dual-Purpose Electric Power-Water Desalting Plant.” In parallel to the Israeli project, the “United States Desalting Team,” appointed by the U.S. Atomic Energy Commission and U.S. Department of the Interior, finished its preliminary report in 1965, on a proposed desalting station at Borg El Arab, in the United Arab Republic (Egypt). As late as 1970, Oak Ridge drafted a proposal for one such reactor, as part of a nuplex to be build in the Gaza strip.

President Johnson launched the “Water for Peace” program in 1965, holding its first international conference in Washington in November 1966. This was to be part of a much broader “Water for Peace” initiative that would lay the foundations for a Middle East peace. In April 1967, the Johnson

Administration was ready to appoint Jack Valenti, one of President Johnson's closest personal advisors, as Presidential coordinator for the Israeli and Egyptian desalination projects. A month later, on May 23-31, 1967, the U.S. State Department convened the International Conference on Water for Peace in Washington, D.C., with no fewer than 6,400 participants. There were delegations from 94 countries, including Israel, Egypt, Jordan, Yemen, and Saudi Arabia. The question of nuclear desalination and the development of nuplexes were central themes. But less than one week later, on June 5, 1967, Israel launched the Six-Day War.

Wolfowitz and the 'Dark Chamber of Horrors'

Albert Wohlstetter, Wolfowitz's mentor, was one of the architects of the "dark chamber of horrors" and saw the threat to it posed by Eisenhower's peace initiative. As a former director of the Rand Corporation, Wohlstetter was part of a circle of policymakers who were committed to using nuclear terror, and the fear of nuclear proliferation, as a cover for a blatant policy of technological apartheid and the fostering of regional wars to undermine the aspirations of the developing world to economic development.

Wolfowitz's dissertation was more than an academic exercise; it was part of a mobilization to which Wohlstetter had recruited Wolfowitz as early as 1965, in an effort to kill the Eisenhower-Johnson proposals.

Wohlstetter et al. had help within the Johnson Administration from National Security Advisor McGeorge Bundy and Defense Secretary Robert McNamara, among others, who actively worked to undermine both Johnson and Eisenhower's initiatives. When Eisenhower made his proposal, they told Johnson that it was "too simplistic," a "panacea," although others, like Secretary of State Dean Rusk, saw its merits.

In his dissertation, Wolfowitz acknowledges the help of two important cronies of Wohlstetter, with whom he cooperated while a consultant at the Rand Corporation. One was William E. Hoehn II, who had written two anti-atomic-desalting tracts, one in 1967, entitled "Economics of Nuclear Reactors for Power and Desalting," and another in 1969, entitled "Prospects for Desalting Water Costs." Hoehn would later become Assistant Secretary of Defense and vice president of the Rand Corporation. He is now the "Coca-Cola Eminent Practitioner" at the Sam Nunn School of International Affairs at Georgia Tech.

The other was Victor Gilinsky who also served with Wohlstetter at Rand and is still a major figure in the nuclear nonproliferation mafia. Gilinsky was key in developing many of the so called "safeguards" that have stunted the development of nuclear energy and continue to deny nuclear technologies to the developing sector. After serving ten years at Rand, Gilinsky spent another five years, between 1971 and 1975, at the U.S. Atomic Energy Commission, where he was well positioned to block initiatives like those elaborated by Eisenhower.

Eisenhower and LaRouche On Desalination

Dwight D. Eisenhower commented in *Reader's Digest*, June 1968, on the failure to act on his peace Middle East Peace initiative based on regional cooperation in building nuclear desalting plants through the region:

Most of the professional diplomats seem to think that we must have peace and stability in the Middle East before the plan can be implemented. I contend that reverse is true: the proposal itself is a way to peace.

Lyndon H. LaRouche, Jr., commented on Aug. 21, 1990, in an article "Water and Transport Define Development," on the failure to act on his proposals for Middle East peace based on cooperation in nuclear desalination and water development:

For years, our proposals for economic development have been repeatedly brushed aside, with the advice that a political settlement must come first, and then economic cooperation for general development of the region might become possible.

We have repeatedly said, and rightly so, that that line of argument is wrong and even dangerously absurd. The simple reason is, that without a policy of economic development, the Arabs and Israelis have no common basis for political agreement, no common interest.

In 1975, at a time when Dick Cheney and Donald Rumsfeld were his closest advisors, President Gerald Ford appointed Gilinsky to the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission. Now a private consultant, Gilinsky is part of the neo-conservative campaign against Iran, and he is currently on the board of advisors of the Non-Proliferation Policy Education Center. Another member of the board of advisors, until her recent death, was Albert Wohlstetter's widow, Roberta. Her book, *Pearl Harbor: Warning and Decision*, which justifies pre-emptive attack, has been used as a planning aid by Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld and the neo-cons.

Wolfowitz's 'Big Lie' Dissertation

Under the title "Nuclear Proliferation in the Middle East: The Politics and Economics of Proposals for Nuclear Desalting," Wolfowitz's 400-page dissertation is one big lie. Although his purpose was to refute Eisenhower's and Adm. Lewis Strauss's peace initiative, the *Reader's Digest* article is not only not cited, but is not even in the bibliography. Strauss is quoted from the testimony he presented to the Sen-



The sabotage efforts delayed, but did not stop, nuclear desalination. This 1,800 cubic meter/day nuclear-powered desalting plant is in Kalpakkam, India, a project of the Bhabha Atomic Research Center, and there are several projects on the drawing boards in other countries.

ate on the project, but the actual conception of the proposal, that there would be an inseparable connection between the establishment of peace and the implementation of economic development policy, is intentionally obscured and ignored.

But it is even worse. In his introduction, Wolfowitz wrote, “It is the contention of this writer that the benefits from nuclear desalting have been vastly exaggerated while its costs have been underestimated and the potential harm it can do largely ignored.” He continued with the amazing assertion: “Scarcity of water has not been the cause of the recent wars in the Middle East, and the introduction of large supplies of desalted water can make only a marginal contribution to reducing tension that many lead to future wars.”

To make his case against the economic benefits and feasibility of nuclear desalination, Wolfowitz asserted that low-interest loans, between 1.6% and 4%, as discussed in the Kaiser feasibility study, were simply unrealistic. There was no need for such a large input of electricity, he said, and he claimed that since the Middle East has all the oil, why introduce nuclear energy? Of course, he failed to deal with the fact that Syria, Jordan, Israel, the Palestinian territories, and Egypt are not oil producers.

Such arguments go on for more than 300 of the study’s 400 pages. But the point that really shows that the study is a fraud, is Wolfowitz’s argument on preventing the proliferation of nuclear weapons. Throughout the study he discussed Israel as if it had no nuclear weapons; Israel’s Dimona Reactor is not even mentioned. Yet, he claimed that building nuclear reactors in Egypt, Jordan, and Israel could lead to proliferation, because these countries, by their nature, would divert fissionable material to nuclear weapons programs.

By 1972, the year his dissertation was published, even taxi drivers in Washington knew that Israel had nuclear weapons. In July 1970, Central Intelligence Agency director Richard Helms testified in the Senate that Israel had the means to

build a weapon, a fact published a week later in the *New York Times*. That Israel was developing nuclear weapons was known by policymakers since 1956, when Ben Gurion, Shimon Peres, and Moshe Dayan brokered a deal with the French government whereby Israel would be supplied with a nuclear reactor, and the means to develop weapons, in exchange for Israeli participation in the Anglo-French attack on Egypt during the Suez crisis of 1956. (This is a crisis into which Eisenhower intervened, in support of the sovereignty of Egypt.)

Wolfowitz, like Wohlstetter and his cronies at Rand, knew that Israel did not need nuclear desalination plants for acquiring weapons-grade plutonium, because they knew that the Dimona research reactor is a derivative of the French G-1 reactor, which was designed for the sole purpose of producing weapons-grade plutonium. Israel had fooled no one.

One can only conclude from the Wolfowitz dissertation that his purpose was also aimed at protecting Israel’s nuclear arsenal. For Wolfowitz, Wohlstetter, and all these Dr. Strangeloves, Israel was part of their “dark chamber of horrors,” and should remain so.

It is important to note that the synarchist circles in France who gave Israel the means to make a bomb, are the counterparts of Wolfowitz et al. One has only to look at the case of Jacques Soustelle, who, as France’s Atomic Energy Minister between 1959-60, oversaw the transfer of nuclear technology to Israel. This is the same Soustelle who, after 1960, would break with President Charles de Gaulle and lead the Secret Army Organization (OAS), which launched a military insurrection against de Gaulle when he decided to give Algeria independence. In the 1980s, this same Soustelle became one of the key French sponsors of Benjamin Netanyahu, the darling of the American neo-cons. Along with George Shultz, Soustelle became a board member of Netanyahu’s Jonathan Institute for the Study of Terrorism.

When Richard Nixon became President in 1969, his Secretary of State, William Rogers, revisited Eisenhower’s approach in an effort to negotiate a peace under what was known as “The Rogers Plan,”² but this was sabotaged through the intrigues of National Security Advisor Henry Kissinger.

The policy was again revived in 1975, when LaRouche first announced his “Middle East Peace and Development Plan,” which, like the Eisenhower plan, proposed to set the foundation for Arab-Israeli peace via large-scale regional development projects, including water management, transportation, and nuclear energy. Over the last three decades, this policy had gone through several revisions and is now known among policy circles throughout the world as the Oasis Plan for a Middle East Peace.

As Eisenhower wrote almost four decades ago, the implementation of this policy is “sure to be someday” a reality. If not, there is little hope for the Middle East.

2. See Jeffrey Steinberg, Michele Steinberg, and Dean Andromidas, “Will the Kissinger Legacy Again Kill Lebanon,” *EIR*, April 8, 2005.