

III. SW Asia Being Transformed

The LaRouche Plan for the Reconstruction and Development of Syria

by Sam Nettnin

This is the edited transcript of the presentation of Sam Nettnin to Panel 1, “Join the Global Majority in Peace Through Development,” of the Schiller Institute’s March 11 conference, “To End Colonialism: A Mission for All Youth.” Mr. Nettnin is a member of the LaRouche Youth Movement. Subheads have been added.

The entire Schiller conference is available [here](#).

What we see in a typical Old Damascus residence, in the Old City of Damascus, is a courtyard which will always have a fountain in the center, at least one sitting alcove, and they’ll be quite lushly planted as well. You could find citrus trees, lavender, perhaps an almond tree that at this time of year would be blossoming quite joyously. If you were to visit the Old City of Damascus, you’d probably encounter a number of these places. The exterior is nondescript intentionally, but many of them have been turned into restaurants, cafes, and small hotels. But do bring cash, because sanctions prevent you from using the ATM or a credit card.

Syria is quite a diverse place. Some cities—like Aleppo and Damascus—are some of the oldest continuously inhabited cities in the world. They have a great diversity in culture and religion, and a real apparent continuity across civilizations. I think this really flies in the face of the perspective of the Clash of Civi-

FIGURE 1



Courtesy of Hussein Askary

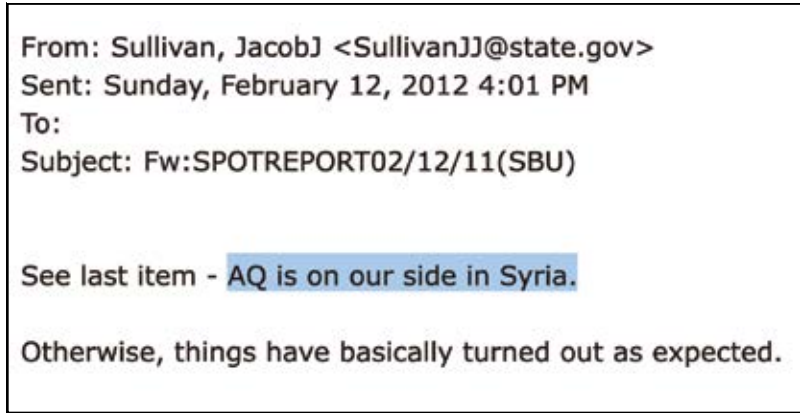
“There had been 413 firms, including textile manufacturing, engineering, and so on, operating in the industrial city of Shaykh Najjar. It became little more than a ghost town by the war provoked in 2011.” Here, the ruined former headquarters of the Sheikh Chamber of Industry.

lizations and people like Bernard Lewis, or Samuel Huntington.

Destruction and Reconstruction

Prior to the war that broke out there in 2011, Syria had some real modern, advanced industrial ambitions. For example, the development and construction of an industrial city just outside of Aleppo, called Shaykh Najjar Industrial City. The construction began in the year 2000, and by 2009, there had been 413 different firms operating in this city across diverse sectors, like textile manufacturing, engineering, and so on. There

FIGURE 2



WikiLeaks

A 2012 email from Jake Sullivan, then Director of Policy Planning at the U.S. Department of State, to Hillary Clinton, Secretary of State, under whom he served.

was heavy fighting between so-called rebel forces and the government army that really rendered Shaykh Najjar industrial city to little more than a ghost town (Figure 1).

There were some quite unsavory groups like ISIS and al-Qaeda that were employed in the warfare against Syria, and you see in Figure 2 an example—an email from Jake Sullivan to Hillary Clinton that was generously made public for our use, where he says that “al-Qaeda is on our side in Syria.”

So, for reconstruction to take place meaningfully in Syria, a lot of resources will have to be mobilized. To fully mobilize the domestic resources, you have to implement a Hamiltonian system of credit. That is to say, use a domestic infrastructure bank or treasury to strategically allocate credit to the domestic firms to fully employ people and resources. But a lot more investment will be required. I think the estimates were on the scale of hundreds of billions of dollars to reconstruct Syria.

Shaykh Najjar, the industrial city that I mentioned, and the area around Aleppo and some other areas like Palmyra, were liberated in the year

ern parts of the country—Al Hassakah—which bears the oil field.

2016. There has been some significant reconstruction carried out on the Shaykh Najjar industrial city. Some 600 facilities are now resuming production; mainly textile industry, but also engineering facilities and also chemical and food production....

In Figure 3, a map of Syria, you see that Aleppo is up there in the north, and Damascus, the capital, further down in the south. These are the two largest cities. The population centers, many of them are in the west of the country, which follows historical north-south trading routes. You also have population centers along the Mediterranean coast, and in the east on the Euphrates River. Where the U.S. military is currently occupying is in the in the northeast-

FIGURE 3 Political Map of Syria



University of Texas Library

Another area that is being occupied is al-Tanf, which is at the border with Iraq and Jordan. There's not a whole lot there, but it has a strategic location because of the U.S. occupation of the Damascus-Baghdad highway. You see Aleppo—the Arabic name is Halab, which in Arabic means “milk.” It has been said that this name originates from the story of Abraham having a flock of sheep in the mountain of Aleppo, and he would share the milk with the needy and destitute people of that area, so this retained that name.

FIGURE 4
Trade Routes Through Syria



Schiller Institute

Development corridors, as proposed in the Schiller Institute's Project Phoenix, integrating Syria's Five Seas Vision and the Belt and Road Initiative.

The 'Five Seas' Plan

We can see in **Figure 4**, Syria's location here regionally.

This is where I think it gets interesting, because before this war that was launched in 2011, Syria had embarked on a plan called the Five Seas plan. That was to serve as a hub, particularly for energy transportation from places like Iraq, Iran, and the Gulf, to other places—to Türkiye and further afield into Europe. And to really use its strategic location with the Mediterranean, Black Sea, Caspian Sea, Persian Gulf, and Red Sea.

This plan was announced in 2004; and starting in 2004, Syria's President Bashar al-Assad has embarked on a kind of preliminary development plan to develop the infrastructure in Syria to be able to accommodate its future planned status as that transportation hub. Bashar al-Assad was the first President to make an official visit to Türkiye in 2004. In 2007 with Türkiye, a free trade agreement was signed, and a visa-free travel agreement was also signed. Many other countries were visited during these planning stages.

Especially in 2009-10, al-Assad, with a Syrian delegation in tow, virtually crisscrossed the Black Sea, meeting many, many different countries and reaching agreements with countries like Romania; there was a free trade agreement reached with Iran; there was an agreement made with Azerbaijan. And interestingly, there was a free trade agreement reached in December of 2010 with Ukraine, in a meeting with then President Viktor Yanukovich. Viktor Yanukovich, after signing

that deal, said that Syria was now Ukraine's gateway to West Asia and the whole region.

With this, and having a secular government, and having real diversity in Syria as I mentioned, kind of refutes the Clash of Civilizations geopolitical idea. You can see perhaps why Syria began to come under attack.

The main obstacles to that Five Seas Vision [were], at the time before the war—2004 to 2010—had been, securing a substantial amount of foreign investment, and ensuring regional stability. But in the last decade, a lot has changed in the world. We had the real cementing and establishment of the BRICS alliance that continues to grow; the announcements of China's Belt and Road Initiative, and the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank. What used to be the problem, of not having substantial foreign investment, is no longer the case. The main obstacle to Syrian development now is simply the political obstacles, namely the sanctions and so on.

Caesar Sanctions Halted Development

As you saw, Syria began to rebuild, but the Caesar sanctions—the name given by the U.S. Congress was the Caesar Civilian Protection Act of 2019, which is rather oxymoronic. It came into effect in 2020 and has really arrested any type of growth and development.

It's plunged over 90% of the Syrian people into poverty.

How could Syria rebuild? This Five Seas Vision can be reconstituted now, and with increased verve. Because Syria can join this East-West trade corridor as shown in **Figure 4**, bringing about the old Silk Road and building connections between Latakia, Aleppo, onwards to Baghdad and to Tehran; and reconstituting the ancient north-south trade routes.

The regional name for the Eastern Mediterranean in Arabic is Bilad al-Sham, which means "the left-hand territory." Does that mean everyone in Syria is left-handed? No, it means "contrary to the right-hand territory," which is al-Yemen. So, from the perspective of people on the Arabian Peninsula, here facing east, you have the left-hand country, which is now Syria, and the right-hand country of Yemen. So, Yemen retained this name, but after the Sykes-Picot secret agreement to divide up the Eastern Mediterranean, that's what has given us our modern political borders.

So, Syria can be integrated as well as a crossroads into Africa. The Saudis and the Egyptians had come to an agreement to build a bridge across the Straits of

Tiran, so that was very promising. The Suez Canal was expanded, and now allows for very large ships to traverse the Suez Canal, with constant two-way traffic. The ports of Latakia and Tartus can be expanded to match that. Is this type of development merely building infrastructure to move things from A to B?

The Idea of a 'Development Corridor'

The LaRouche organization promotes this idea of developing a development corridor ... which would really mean complete development—implementing the proper electrical and industrial infrastructure to really proliferate and augment existing cities and even create new ones to support even higher relative population density.

It's the responsibility now of the world citizen to stand in opposition to the type of political constraints that prevent this type of construction and development from happening; to relegate the ideas of supremacy and hegemony to history, and to usher in a new age of real prosperity and development, in cooperation with other countries for the whole world's prosperity and peace.

Thank you.

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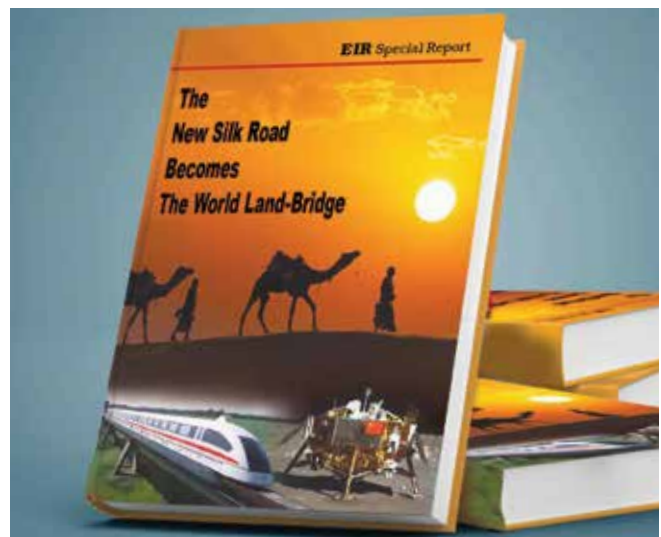
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