

Critical Role of Egypt To Bring The New Silk Road to Africa

Here is the edited transcript of Hussein Askary's address to the March 23 *EIR* Frankfurt Seminar "Solving the Economic and Refugee Crises with the New Silk Road!" He spoke right after Helga Zepp-LaRouche's keynote address.

I am a member of the Schiller Institute and *Executive Intelligence Review*, which are organizing this seminar. I came back from Egypt two days ago from a one-week visit there, to launch the Arabic translation of the *EIR*

Special Report "[The New Silk Road Becomes the World Land-Bridge](#)." I personally, and other people, decided that Egypt should be the place from which to launch the Arabic translation of this massive global development idea, because of the importance of Egypt. Egypt is the most important Arab country, but it's also one of the important countries in Africa.

The idea of the report and joining the Silk Road was actually highly welcomed by the highest levels of the Egyptian government, because they realize now that this is the only solution for the deep economic crisis in Egypt, as well as in the entire region of Southwest Asia, the so-called Middle East, and Africa,



EIRNS/Christopher Lewis

Hussein Askary

by joining forces with China and the BRICS countries to develop their countries internally and utilize the connection to the world economy and the development dynamic which was launched by China with the idea of the New Silk Road.

Helga mentioned the Saudi bombardment of Yemen today. At this moment, there is a similar seminar in the capital of Yemen, in Sana'a, by a group of Yemeni experts and patriots to also launch the Arabic translation. They printed the Arabic version. The seminar is headed by one of the best modern Yemeni poets, Abdulaziz al-Maqaleh. It's organized by our friend, Fouad al-Ghaffari. Right under Saudi bombardment, they established a committee for coordination with the BRICS, and now they are promoting the idea of the New Silk Road and how Yemen will benefit from this.

FIGURE 1
The Land-Bridge into the Middle East



The World Land-Bridge

These (Figure 1) are some of the ideas which I presented in Egypt for people there. The launching was sponsored by the Egyptian Transport Ministry with the presence of the Minister of Transport, Saad el-Geyoushi. But I told

FIGURE 2

LaRouche in Abu Dhabi in 2002



people that our idea is not to build the New Silk Road. We had presented the idea of the New Silk Road 25 years ago, as Helga has said, and China adopted it as its policy.

Our idea is to go from the New Silk Road to the World Land-Bridge, where we connect Africa and the Americas to the Eurasian Land-Bridge. That's the concept. [Shows World Land-Bridge map.] Red lines are where we have a deficit in infrastructure and deficit in development. This is what is missing in the global map, but also a lot is missing in the Americas, even in North America and Europe right now. This is the new concept: It is not simply the New Silk Road, it is the World Land-Bridge. We can unite all nations of the world around one concept of economic development and cooperation.

I had the honor to be in the Schiller Institute and *EIR* in 1996 when the first Eurasian Land-Bridge/New Silk Road was conceived. I worked with Helga and others. I was still a young man. But the idea was a complete transformation. I joined the Schiller Institute in 1994 because I was living in Norway, and the Schiller Institute came to Oslo where Arafat and Rabin and Peres were meeting.

The Schiller Institute people said, "Look, if you don't develop the economy of the Palestinians, the Jordanians, the Lebanese, and the Israelis, there will be no peace." And I immediately joined, because that's the right concept. The usual problem in the Middle East and Africa is that people say the problem is the regime,

and if we get rid of the regime, everything will become good ... and then the economy will solve itself.

But that's a complete lie. However, this is what Europe and the United States are advocating.

People, including in Egypt, now completely understand the idea that the question of the New Silk Road is not trade, it's not moving goods from A to B. The idea is to build development corridors to develop all the areas between A and B. That's the concept. And this idea of a development corridor, all these development corridor lines should be 100-150 km wide, with transport, energy, electricity, oil and gas, water, and building new agricultural and industrial centers.

Mr. Lyndon LaRouche was in Abu Dhabi in 2002, attending a conference about oil and gas. There were four oil ministers in attendance (**Figure 2**). Here, the oil minister of the United Arab Emirates is on the right, next to Mr. LaRouche.

Mr. LaRouche shocked everybody by saying the Gulf countries should gradually stop exporting crude oil. They should use the oil as an industrial material for petrochemicals, chemicals, plastics, and other things, since the value of one barrel of oil transformed into an industrial product would be worth many, many times more than than it would be worth selling it as crude oil, or burning it. And Mr. LaRouche said, "You should utilize your position as a crossroads of the world."

And this is exactly the point which we are trying to promote in Southwest Asia, since this is a unique area. There is no other place on Earth which has the unique characteristics of the region in this zone. It's between three continents. It has more than two-thirds of the world's oil and gas reserves. But more importantly, it has more than 450 million people. Most of them are under the age of 30.

Therefore, they have the whole future in front of them. They also have natural resources. In addition, these are old nations with very, very ancient cultures: Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran, Iraq, Syria. Yemen is also an ancient culture. Although it has not been continuous, as it has in the other cultures I mentioned, the memory of it is still in the Yemen national character.

These are all people who have a very clear idea of their culture and their civilization. In addition, they

know that scientific development is the way forward.

But all the advantages of this region have been turned into disadvantages, because it has become the center of global conflict and proxy wars. In this region, we propose—in our Arabic report—the establishment of an Arab Infrastructure Investment Bank with which the nations of the region would be able to develop the region.

In the Gulf countries, not only is there oil, but there is also the sovereign funds of the Gulf countries, amounting to about \$2.5-3 trillion in plain hard currency funds.

But it's being used in financial markets, real estate markets in London, in Switzerland, in New York, and similar places. They should instead establish a joint development bank like the Chinese did, establishing the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank. This region has unique capabilities of being transformed very quickly economically, but the region's nations should utilize the idea of the New Silk Road.

Syria Can Launch a New Policy

Helga referred to the visit by President Xi Jinping in January to Egypt, Iran, and Saudi Arabia. At that moment, Iran and Saudi Arabia were about to enter into a real war, and the Chinese intervened with the idea of the New Silk Road. This was not a warning, but they said, "What the hell are you doing? You are going to destroy the world economy? This is not the way to do things, with crazy religious conflicts. You should work together. We will help you to build your countries, but also help you to work together for development."

This point has been made. Similarly in Egypt: With respect to the idea of the Silk Road, everybody was saying: "Oh, the Silk Road will compete with the Suez Canal traffic," for many, many years. As a result, the New Silk Road was completely blacked out in the Egyptian political and media circles. But now, President Xi Jinping brought the idea of the New Silk Road as actually being beneficial for Egypt, which we can explain quickly.

In the Arabic version of the report, we have the plan for the reconstruction of Syria. As I said, and as Helga said, there will be no peace, there will be no end to terrorism, there will be no end for political oppression, unless we develop this region. And therefore, Syria, ironically, could be the perfect starting place, to establish or put into practice the new economic ideas which

we have designed in this report: Utilizing Syria's position as a crossroads with Africa, Europe, and Asia, but also being a nation which is just coming out of war, they actually have no obligation to listen to either the IMF, the World Bank, the EU, the United States, or anybody else!

They can establish their own development bank and issue their own credit. They are not obliged to pay any debt at the moment. This puts Syria in a perfect position to launch a completely new economic policy. And from Syria, you can actually project that idea into many other nations. If one succeeds, many other nations will do it, too.

So, we're not going to go through too many details, because we're short on time. Egypt also could become a model, because Egypt is a very important nation. With President el-Sisi coming to power, Egypt has transformed its identity of itself and what it should do to solve 30 years of accumulation of economic and social problems. But they are in a conflict between doing small solutions here and there, or trying to attain the big change. I think the Egyptian Presidency and leadership—as I have understood it—are going for the big change. Not to solve it with small projects here and there, such as NGOs, EU donations, and other small, limited sources.

Instead, they will focus on mega-projects like the new Suez Canal, which they built in one year instead of eight years. They will build up new agro-industrial zones in the desert, reclaiming the desert of Egypt for demographic expansion. They will use high technology. Now they have an agreement to build nuclear power plants with Russia, which will allow them to start their first nuclear power plant, as well as high-speed railways and similar projects.

They will not start from zero. They will start from the point which China and other nations have attained, and utilize that technology, rather than starting from scratch. As for the idea of internal financing: The new Suez Canal was built by the Egyptian people, who were mobilized by their government to internally raise the money—\$8 billion to finish the project in one year. Ethiopia is doing its dam projects in the same way, which is the correct idea: The Millennium Dam and other development projects.

But there is still a conflict over how to proceed with the other projects, whether it will be done by Egyptian financing, or should foreign investment or loans from the IMF and World Bank be sought. There is still a con-

FIGURE 6

Cape to Cairo Railroad Proposal



by building railroads and roads and connecting them to the major cities. I added the green zones where the Egyptian government is intending to reclaim four mil-

lion hectares of land to give for settlement to young people and companies. The government builds houses for them, builds the infrastructure, and gives them a loan for the first three years so they can grow food and set up small industries. The development corridor should be a bit further into the desert, so you can transform the demographics and economic situation in Egypt.

And then comes the idea of connecting Egypt to Africa (Figure 6). There are projects which have been on the drawing board since the 1970s in the Lagos Plan of Action, for example. But nobody did anything to build them. Now the Egyptian government and the South African government are intending to do that, from south and north to support the idea of connecting all of East Africa from north to south: The Cairo to Cape Town Railway. This is now actively being considered. It intersects Sudan, Ethiopia, Kenya, Tanzania, Zambia, Zimbabwe, and South Africa.

The landlocked nations of Rwanda, Burundi eastern Democratic Republic of Congo, and South Sudan which have never had rail access to the sea, will be able to access South Africa and Egypt by building connections to the Cape to Cairo trunk line. The three nations will also be able to eventually access the standard-gauge railway being built by China from the port city of Mombasa, to Nairobi and then to Kampala, Uganda.

Then the Nile River and the other rivers in Africa could be connected together (Figure 7) to have a river transport corridor from the north to the south, in the same way that the Rhine-Main-Danube are connected now, which provides transportation from East Europe and Western Europe. Here, the concept is the same.

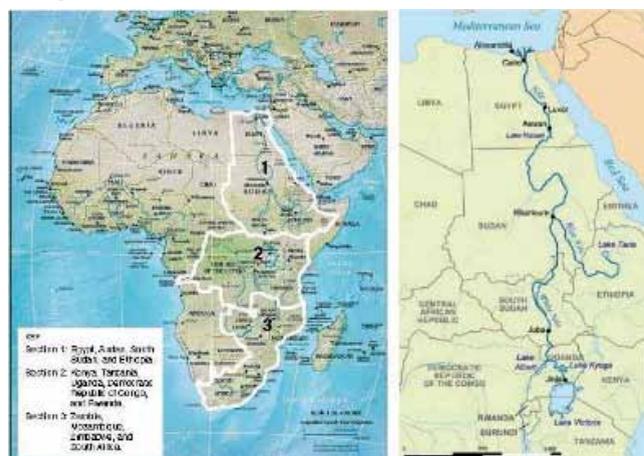
We have our friend, Aiman Rsheed, an engineer in Egypt, who has developed the concept of building the Africa Pass he calls it (Figure 8), which goes close to the Libyan border. It is all desert today, but there are enormous water resources accessible there, there is fertile land, and there is no reason why that part of Egypt is not being developed.

There is also a possible east-west connection from either Port Sudan in Sudan, or Djibouti, to Dakar in Senegal, to connect the entire Sahel region with modern infrastructure. This idea is supported by the Organization of the Islamic Conference, but no financing has been forwarded to it.

This is the point at which China comes into the picture, and transforms the situation. The Chinese say, okay, this is an enormous economic development

FIGURE 7

Proposal to Link African Rivers



potential, and it's rich with raw materials. It has also large populations, agriculture, every requirement you need to develop that region, but it lacks infrastructure.

The Chinese have offered to build these transport corridors from the ports in Mombasa and Lamu in Kenya, on the Indian Ocean, and open up all these landlocked countries, such as Ethiopia, South Sudan, and the Central African Great Lakes region, including eastern Democratic Republic of Congo, Uganda, Rwanda, and Burundi.

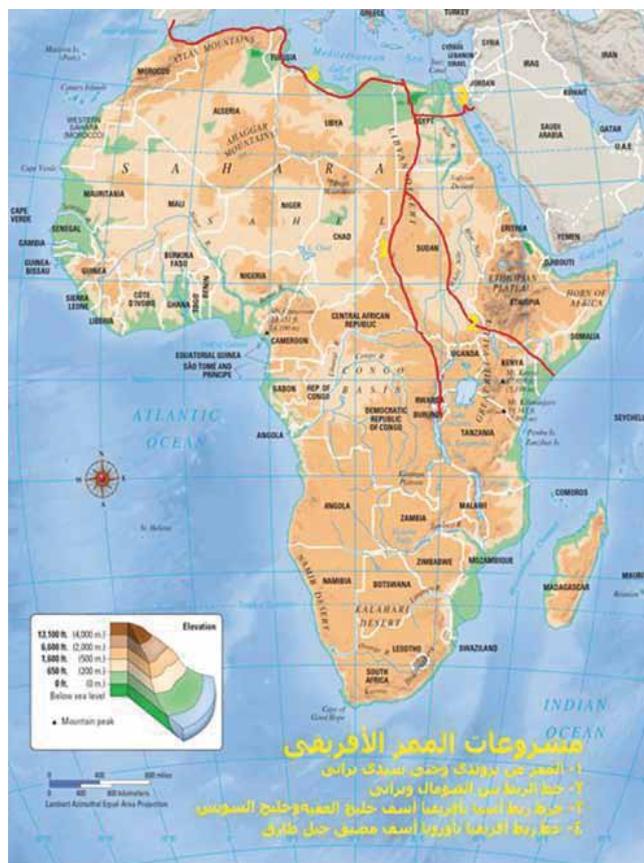
Such areas or nations need the rail infrastructure for both exports and imports of goods and technology, to open up that whole region for development.

These nations only need to develop infrastructure and educate the labor force. The Chinese are training Ugandan Army personnel to turn them into an Army Corps of Engineers, enabling them to participate in building railroads and developing the country instead of policing the population!

Another undertaking is the Trans-Aqua project, which was thought up by Dr. Vichi. But this is the kind of concept I was presenting in Egypt, to emphasize that the time of mega-projects is back. The Chinese have proven it. These massive major infrastructure and development projects can be built. They have been undermined by the trans-Atlantic financial world, which claims that these mega-projects are romantic ideas. If a military dictator wants to become famous in history, he will build a huge football stadium and call it "President So-and-So" Stadium. But project opponents pretend the same is true of these mega-projects. However,

FIGURE 8

Africa Pass



mega-projects are now back on the map, and all they have potential to be implemented. This is the idea of saving Lake Chad.

Africa could then be transformed from the colonial system to the modern sovereign, community of sovereign nations system.

The Right Way for Egypt

The Transportation Minister of Egypt, Dr. Saad El-Geyoushi (**Figure 9**). He said "I have to present this report to the Egyptian people." But he also announced for the first time in this press conference, that Egypt is intending to invest 1 trillion Egyptian pounds, which is about \$100 billion, over the next 14 years, on roads, railways, and logistics centers. He also announced that Egypt is negotiating with other nations in Africa to build a 50,000 km network of roads and railways. This was information coming out for the first time. But he said, "Our intention is to integrate Egypt's vision," we have a plan for 2030, "we will integrate our internal develop-

FIGURE 9

Egypt Transportation Minister Dr. Saad El-Geyoushi

Launching at Egyptian Transportation Ministry
Dr. Saad El Geyoushi



FIGURE 10

Admiral Mohab Mamish

Suez Canal Authority – Ismailia
Admiral Mohab Mamish



FIGURE 11

Former Egyptian Prime Minister Essam Sharaf

Great Cairo Library



ment with the idea of the New Silk Road.” So, there are clear intentions.

We were then invited to the Suez Canal Authority (**Figure 10**). This is Adm. Mohab Mamish, a military general in the navy. He’s a close friend of President el-Sisi. He was the general who made sure that the new Suez Canal was dug in just one year, as the President had ordered, to prove to the world that Egyptians can do these massive projects. They can raise the money for them, they can build them. Of course, they got technical help from other countries, but the concept is that Egypt can do these things, with support.

We were also taken on a boat trip in the new Suez Canal. but the point was that they welcomed the Land-Bridge development corridor idea very, very much. It’s not the first time they have heard about it, but it’s the first time they have heard, and seen a concept which they themselves had in their minds, but that they never believed could become a reality on a global scale.

When we presented the idea of the New Silk Road, what the Chinese are doing, what the BRICS nations are doing, and what the Egyptians themselves can do, then the whole situation becomes transformed. We had four or five seminars. We had seminars every day—televised events. But the gentleman there (**Figure 11**) is the former Prime Minister of Egypt, Essam Sharaf, he responded: “I was just in China, and I’m very, very happy to see this idea here in Egypt.” He was surprised, and he said, “This is the right way for Egypt to go. We have to study this and implement this, because for 30 years we have not done enough for the development of Egypt.”

We also had other seminars. Thank you very much.