

I. The New Paradigm

KRA CANAL CLOSE TO A REALITY

A Hub for the Maritime Silk Road

by Michael Billington

Jan. 21—The concept of cutting a canal through the Isthmus of Kra in southern Thailand, has been a conception in the minds of visionary thinkers for hundreds of years. In the early 1980s, it nearly came to fruition, as associates of Lyndon LaRouche—including especially Pakdee Tanapura of Thailand—mobilized leaders of the Thai government, American scientific institutions, Japan's Mitsubishi Global Infrastructure Fund (GIF), and leaders from every major country in the region (except Singapore and China), to two conferences in Bangkok dedicated to implementing this great project to unite the Pacific and Indian Ocean Basins via a canal.

But the British Empire has repeatedly, throughout history, acted to stop the building of the Kra Canal for two reasons: Because they wanted to maintain the strategic chokehold over Asian trade which they enjoyed through their colonial outpost in Singapore and the Malacca Strait, but primarily because such a project would facilitate cooperation among the Asian nations for mutual development, and resistance to western imperial dictate—a result to be feared and undermined by the Empire.

Financial and political crises in the 1990s, caused by British financial interests and their lackeys such

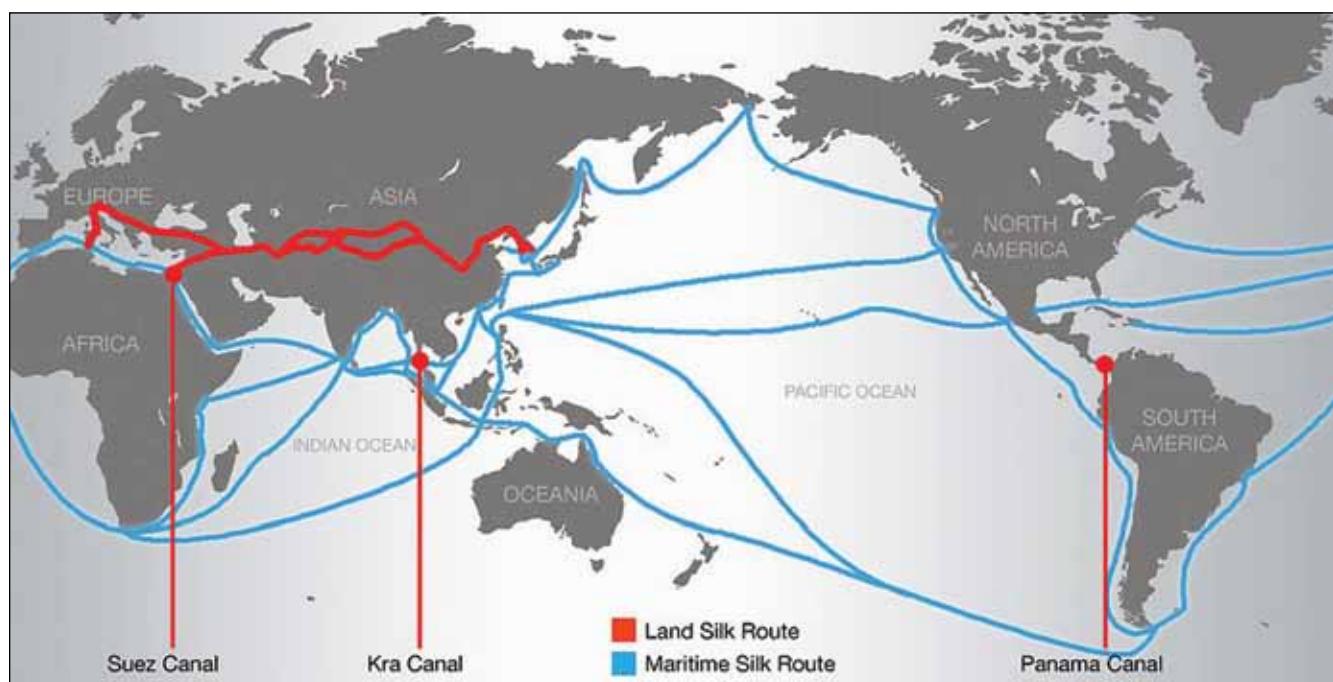
as George Soros, prevented the implementation of the Kra Canal project during the final decades of the 20th Century and the early 21st Century. But now the world is experiencing a global revolutionary transformation, and the British Empire, including its puppet Bush and Obama regimes in Washington, is facing dissolution. A new paradigm has emerged, centered in China, bringing Russia, India, Southeast Asia, and potentially the entire world into its development orientation, the “win-win” perspective of Chinese President Xi Jinping’s New Silk Road perspective, known as the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI).



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Lyndon LaRouche responding to a question from the floor on Oct. 27, 1983 at the Development of the Pacific and Indian Ocean Basins conference in Bangkok, Thailand. Pakdee Tanapura is seated on the right.

FIGURE 1



In South and Southeast Asia, China's "21st Century Maritime Silk Road" concept (see **Figure 1**), introduced by President Xi in 2013 while speaking to the Indonesian Parliament, has already brought the nations along the South China Sea, the Malacca Strait, the Andaman Sea, the Bay of Bengal, the Indian Ocean, the Arabian Sea, and through the Suez Canal to the Mediterranean, into an entirely new economic and political geometry based on rapid infrastructure development.

But missing from this geometry has been the hub represented by the potential of the Kra Canal. Now that potential is very close to realization, as the entire Asian region is breaking away from British/American constraints, and acting in its own interests to facilitate "win-win" development for all parties. At the same time, leading political forces in Thailand are now in a position to launch the project.

Strategic Heritage of Thailand

This week, a book has been released in Thailand, in the Thai language, titled in English *Kra Canal: Strategic Heritage of Thailand*, published by the Lexnova Consultant Company Limited in Bangkok. EIR's associate in Thailand, Pakdee Tanapura, a Member of the

Board of Directors and the International Director of the International Executive Committee for the Study of the Kra Canal Project, is one of its principal authors. Also contributing to the book are:

- General Thawatchai Samutsakorn, a Member of the National Reform Council, a government advisory body which has prepared policy proposals for the interim government under former General Prayut Chan-o-cha, and is preparing a new Constitution for the nation;
- General Pradit Boonkerd, a Board Member of General Prem Tinsulanonda's Foundation (General Prem is Chairman of the Privy Council);
- Admiral Suphakorn Kunnadilok, former Commander of the Royal Thai Navy's fleets;
- Dr. Surin Dulwatanachit, deputy chairman of the Thai-Chinese Cultural and Economic Association.

This very high-powered group has come together at a propitious moment. First, there is a new King in Thailand, as Crown Prince Vajiralongkorn officially took the throne on Dec. 1 following the death in October of his father, King Bhumibol, who had been King for 70 years. Several leading members of the new Privy Council for King Vajiralongkorn, including its President, Prem Tinsulanonda, are promoting the Kra Canal project, and all indications are that the King is also in favor.

FIGURE 2



The Thai Navy must pass through the Singapore choke point of the Malacca Strait to defend its coastline on the Andaman Sea.

Although the interim government of Prime Minister Prayut has indicated that it will not proceed with the Canal project during his term in office, the Royal support could change that perspective. In any case, an election is expected next year.

The first printing of the new book on the Kra Canal produced 10,000 copies, and already 6,500 have been purchased, of which 5,000 are being distributed to leading institutions and individuals around the country.

Even more important for the future of the Kra Canal, the British/American imperial policy of dividing Asia into blocs—based on a group of American allies (primarily the Philippines, Japan, South Korea, and Australia)—which served the Obama policy of encircling China militarily and economically, is crumbling in the face of China’s Silk Road development policies. The Philippines, under its new President Rodrigo Duterte, has completely rejected any idea of participation in a military confrontation with China, and is calling on China and Russia to help restore the decaying Philippine economy and to aid in its war on drugs. Japan’s Prime Minister Shinzo Abe has joined with Russia’s President Vladimir Putin in a massive joint development perspective for the Russian Far East, while setting a course for resolving territorial issues left over from World War II. And South Korea’s President Park Geun-hye, who deserted her original Eurasia Initiative in

favor of Obama’s demand to deploy THAAD missiles in her country—a direct provocation against China and Russia—is now under impeachment and likely to be removed from office.

And, over the past few years, Thailand, once the primary military base for America’s bloody and self-destructive war in Indochina, has come to look to China for the infrastructure development which it never got from the United States. Not only is China building a rail connection from the Laos border to Bangkok and to the major ports southeast of Bangkok, but a Chinese firm has now completed a feasibility study of the Kra Canal.

Benefits

The website www.kracanal-maritimessilkroad.com/en/, run by the Thai-Chinese Cultural and Economic Association, presents the extensive benefits the Kra Canal will provide to the world. For Thailand itself, the southern provinces are the poorest in the nation, and are plagued by a terrorist threat fed by Saudi Wahhabi networks among the Muslim population there (See Figure 2). The Canal, and the ports and industrial parks at either end of it, will provide jobs and prosperity for the area, helping to unite the nation.

For Asia, the Canal will become the hub for rapidly expanding trade and cooperation between India and China, between Japan and Korea, and between Africa and Southwest Asia on the one side, and with all of East Asia on the other. For the world as a whole, the growing centrality of Asian trade and development in the world economy means that the benefits of the Kra Canal will be universal.

International Support

In the 1980s, the primary international support for the Kra Canal project came from Japan’s Mitsubishi Global Infrastructure Fund, and that institution is still actively supporting the project. But China has emerged as a great power since that time, and Xi Jinping’s “Belt and Road Initiative” is already transforming the world. China has shown considerable interest in the Kra Canal project as a potential hub of the “21st Century Maritime Silk Road.”

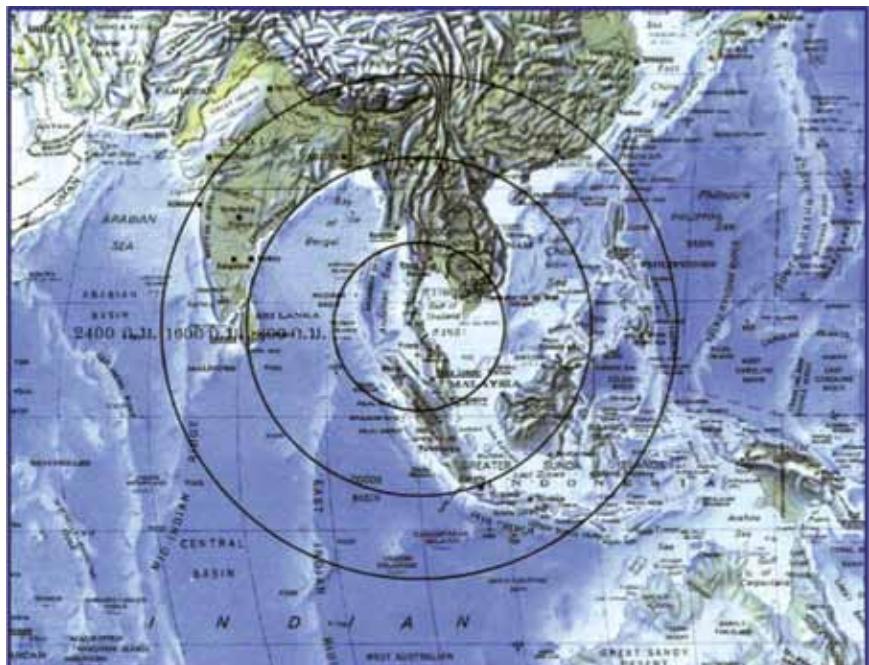
Daisuke Kotegawa, a former Japanese Ministry of

Finance official and former Japanese Executive Director at the IMF—now at the Canon Institute in Tokyo—is a strong supporter of the project. Mr. Kotegawa points out that the project would be equally beneficial to Japan and China (as well as others), and it would thus be of mutual interest for the two nations to join forces, with Thailand, in funding and building the Canal. This would, at the same time, help build trust between the two giant economies of Asia, towards overcoming the still festering tensions between them as a result of the legacy of war. The Asian Development Bank (ADB), whose President is Japanese and whose Vice-President is Chinese, is already participating in joint projects with the new Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) established under Xi Jinping in China. If Thailand were to call on both banks to participate in funding this project, it would help tremendously in the process of building trust and peace through development, throughout Asia (See **Figure 3**).

Until now, Washington has played the British role in Asia, offering no encouragement—let alone support—for the Kra Canal, nor for any other major infrastructure projects in Asia. But that may well be about to change. The West is in a process of turmoil and revolution, with no more dramatic change than the defeat of the Barack Obama/Hillary Clinton war policies in the U.S. Presidential election. Under George W. Bush and Obama, the United States had descended into perpetual warfare across Southwest Asia, while carrying out a massive military buildup on both the Russian and Chinese borders. Obama called the provocative buildup against China, his “pivot to Asia.”

But President-elect Trump has declared an end to regime change wars, and committed the United States to work with Russia in waging a serious war on terrorism. While he has criticized China on trade issues, he is committed to cooperation with China on business matters, as indicated by his meeting with Alibaba’s Jack Ma. Xi Jinping has repeatedly called on the United States to join in the new Silk Road and the AIIB, which Obama flatly rejected, to America’s detriment. Presi-

FIGURE 3



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The Kra Canal as the hub for the Indian and Pacific Ocean basins.

dent Trump has indicated an openness to such cooperation.

The New Paradigm

There is no more important task facing the world today than that of bringing the United States into partnership with Russia and China, both to confront and destroy the terrorist scourge emanating from the British assets in Saudi Arabia, and to cooperate in the New Paradigm of win-win development policies throughout the world, as launched by China under the Belt and Road Initiative.

Lyndon LaRouche, who was the keynote speaker at the Kra Canal conferences in Bangkok in 1983 and 1984, was interviewed in 2014 by *Fortune Times* of Singapore on the Kra Canal. LaRouche said:

Divide the maritime region of East and South Asia into three principal categories: China, a giant; India, a giant; and the maritime connection, throughout Southeast Asia’s maritime regions. Add the impact of such triadic maritime and related connections, to the physical-economic relations to the Americas to the East, and the Middle East’s underbelly and Africa. Then,

the potency of a Kra Canal development appears not only as an eminently feasible feature, but as a strategic political-economic force for the planet.

LaRouche also noted that the primary opposition to the Kra Canal within Asia is Singapore, and that the chief source of resistance from Singapore is entirely global, British-imperial military-strategic interests. But, he added:

The sheer volume of maritime trade between the two great nations of Asia [China and India], and their connections through the South Asia maritime regions, make the Canal probably the most potentially beneficial, and also efficient project for the entire region of the Pacific and Indian Ocean regions, and the co-development of the major regions of Planet Earth as a whole.

As to Singapore, LaRouche added: "Singapore itself, when freed from British strategic imperatives, will benefit far more from the success of the Kra Canal development, than without the development of the Kra!"

In another context, in 2015, LaRouche told his associates:

With the completion of the Kra Canal, on top of the Suez Canal expansion, there will no longer be a separation between the Atlantic and the Pacific economies. China and India will greatly benefit from these two canal projects, along with the smaller nations along the Southeast Asian rim. This must be pushed hard! This will end the British geopolitical games in the Eurasian region. It will change the economic character of the entire world. Australia will be hard-pressed to stay out of this enterprise, and the Australian participation will further erode the British maritime choke-point games that have stymied the true prospects for economic integration and vast increases in trade and development.

A 41-minute video on the Kra Canal, produced in 2013 by the LaRouche Political Action Committee, can be viewed at LPAC.co/KraCanal. The video has had over 23,000 views since its release.

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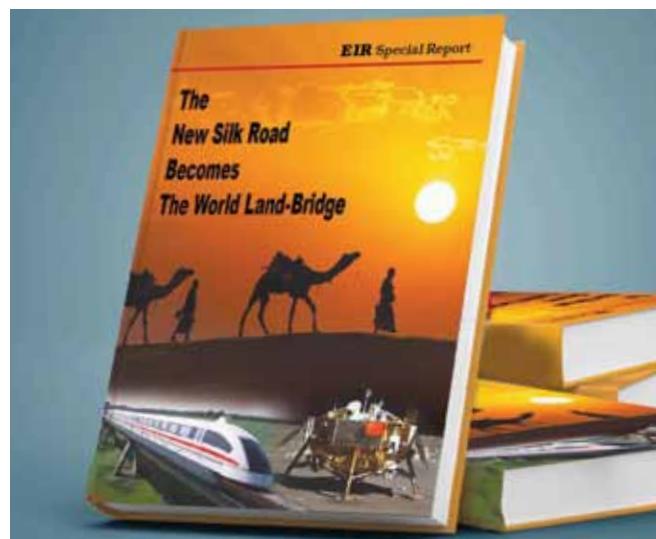
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