

The Schiller Institute's proposed great projects for Africa

by Jacques Cheminade

Mr. Cheminade delivered the following keynote speech to the conference of the Schiller Institute on July 11 in Paris. He is a leading member of the institute and a former presidential candidate in France. The speech has been translated from French.

We are at a moment in history when Africa is being subjected to violence, poverty, and death. Africa is truly a victim of triage, a racist triage which excludes and eliminates whoever is politically and economically weakest. Everybody knows it, most of them say it, and no one—or nearly no one—does anything that might be needed to take up the challenge.

I am happy to be here with you to attempt to do it, with a delegation of the National Constitutional Conference of Nigeria and the former President of Uganda, Mr. Binaisa, and with you all.

First of all, the Schiller Institute wishes to open up a forum for debate, where each person might contribute whatever unites us and not what separates us, whatever unites us in order to wage war against death and indifference. This debate has no meaning unless it leads to action; in that sense, it is a search for the common good between francophone Africans and anglophone Africans, between Islam and Christianity, to the ancient light of the animism of the *griots* [African poet/musicians] and the oracles; as well as a search for the common good between Africans and non-Africans—or rather, among Africans in the larger sense, since, through our origins, we are all indebted to Africa.

In this dialogue for action, I am certain that we will show ourselves to be patriots and world citizens at the same time—as the German poet Friedrich Schiller, who gave his name to our institute, put it—in that, the more we are patriots, the more we will be world citizens. And let me tell you that I am happy about this “paradox” of having anglophone Africans here in Paris, addressing a majority of francophone Africans, along with me, a Frenchman from Argentina, to launch this dialogue.

We are breaking with accepted ideas, implanted by an imperialism that has always sought to divide and conquer; we are breaking with the “rules of the game,” with a closed system, the cage in which they seek to shut us up. Our agreed point of departure is, thus, to not speak either the language

or the speech of London, Washington, Paris, or Moscow—or anywhere—but that of the search for truth, without afterthoughts, with two principal foundations:

- Respect for the right to life, and to live in dignity, of each human being;
- The necessity of providing each human being the means, that is, the right to have work, to technology and science, the right to know and to act in the world to make it a better place.

For us here, contrary to the dominant ideology, which is an ideology of death, the poor and the downtrodden of today are not a burden, but a huge opportunity for the future of humanity. That is where we begin, with this respect for what is human within man, that is, his love for his neighbor and his desire to put his stamp on that love within society and the economy.

Five things we reject

This leads us to five rejections:

1) Rejection of racism, colonialism, and financial neo-colonialism. In former times, that would have seemed a commonplace for any honest man; today, alas, we hear more and more often in the West, and even elsewhere, about a recolonization effort—truly slavery. We reject this denial of humanity to certain people among us, for we understand it as an aggression against that which is best within ourselves.

2) Rejection of the institutions that promote this economic recolonization, rejection of the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, and all the institutions associated with them. Their austerity and triage policy on behalf of the financial cancer which is eating away at the world has already led to the deaths of millions of human beings. Our commitment is to stop this financial genocide, whose consequences would be the worst of this century—this genocide which we must stop, for it will be worse, if we do not stop it, than that perpetrated by Hitler and Stalin!

We have two expressions of this genocide right before our very eyes, both equally intolerable:

- A veritable effort to cause the disintegration of countries and people, in which financial austerity destroys public health, research, and education, and seeks to impose “triage” against the peoples of the South.

- A technological apartheid, which, under military or ecological pretexts, withholds from the countries and peoples of the South technologies needed for development—nuclear, chemical, or biological—at the same time that it does not hesitate to dump on them the wastes of those very industries installed in the North.

3) Rejection of the ideology which justifies this triage, and which breaks down into two forms:

- A “hard” ideology, direct racism, which holds forth and acts in a way that would have been unthinkable only 30 years ago;

- A “soft” ideology, the indirect racism, which aims to render its victims consensual: that is, constant manipulation through the media and the hypocritical use of human rights and democracy, defiling these beautiful words in order to abolish independence.

4) Rejection of the on-the-ground intermediaries, in Africa itself, of this policy—rejection of a local oligarchy and comprador milieu, which, whether military or not, put their own countries through a periodic culling. These are the servants who, at the head of their country or in the United Nations, carry out the policy of their financial masters, the colonialists—the British especially, but the French and others, too.

5) Rejection of seeing the memory of Africa and its dynamism abolished.

The memory, that is, of both its elders and the objects of its culture, its archeology—today looted—and its dynamism, that is, its youth, for the moment excluded from political participation. Duty to memory and right to have work and participation should be wedded together here. I would like to pay homage to two friends who have blazed this trail:

The one, whom I did not know, but who is for me a great friend to read, is Cheik Anta Diop, whom I would like to evoke here, translating into the Wolof language Einstein’s theory of general relativity.

The other, whom I did know as a friend through the long conversations I’ve had with him, Kotto Essomé, whom I wish to evoke here in the search for the lost identity of his continent, with the beautiful series of articles published in *Science et Vie* beginning in July 1978, telling us: “Among the demons, the art of diversion consists in fashioning demons through a visual illusion. In order to exorcise them all, Africa must take recourse to this trinity: that which brings together the inferno of self-consciousness, the sun of demystification, and the wheel of return.”

So, those are the five things we reject; from there, we formulate a threefold positive program. In order to roll back the present order of things, which is absolutely unacceptable, three projects must be undertaken:

1) The logic of great projects

We must give back to Africa the right of development and progress, which is the first of the human rights. To do



Jacques Cheminade: “I am happy about this ‘paradox’ of having anglophone Africans here in Paris, addressing a majority of francophone Africans, along with me, a Frenchman from Argentina, to launch this dialogue.”

this, the European countries must change their own policies, both vis-à-vis the East on their own continent, and vis-à-vis the South, that is, Africa.

For the present financial logic, of contraction and death, we must substitute a logic of great works and great projects.

Let me show you, with a few illustrations, what it is we must move toward together, in order that our rights be acknowledged.

a) A new West-East/North-South Marshall Plan, starting from Europe, and going east as far as China, south as far as South Africa.

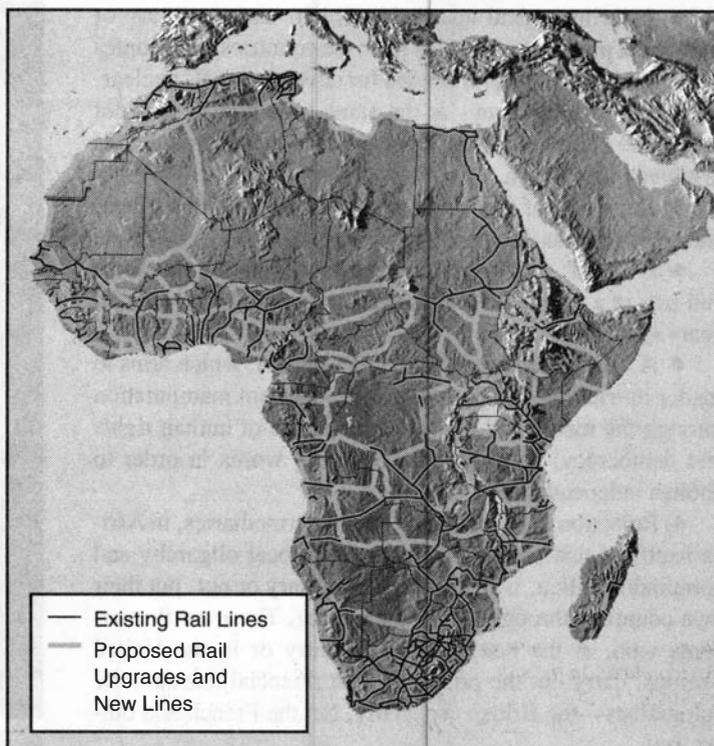
This means constructing basic infrastructure, per square kilometer and per capita, to permit a new “takeoff” by mobilizing the reservoirs of human creativity, today abandoned or held back. This means building bridges, ports, highways, high-speed railways, emancipation from slavery, creating the conditions for development, reviving hope. It does not mean presenting a project “all done,” turnkeys in hand, but replacing the current financial dictatorship with the possibility for development, for the people who are involved to take into their own hands.

This means nothing less than overturning the order of things.

An outline of this exists, in a latent state, in the Delors plan for great European projects. But this is limited to western Europe, and no financing was anticipated.

FIGURE 1

Africa, existing and proposed rail lines



Africa's basic transcontinental rail lines must finally be built. Entire sections of the Cape to Cairo railroad have collapsed due to regional wars and disrepair. The east-west trunk line from Dakar, Senegal to Djibouti was never built. New transcontinental routes must be added and all lines upgraded.

On the contrary, we must organize loans at long-term, low-cost interest: that is the development plan that Lyndon LaRouche, who inspired our institute, has worked on for a long time, such that through them, a physical economy may be reestablished, with respect for man's creative powers, replacing today's financial economy. Africa, in this context, must be the region of the world which develops the most rapidly, because it is there, that the greatest latent reserves of progress are found.

b) This plan is an extension of a concept that Mr. LaRouche developed for the Middle East, between the Israelis and the Palestinians: that of peace through mutual economic development, through a common design, in the common interest, allowing them to overcome otherwise insurmountable differences.

This must be our inspiration, but made real—not like things are today in the Middle East, where peace is left in agony for lack of financing, for lack of generosity from the developed countries. The residents of Gaza or Jericho are only seeing a drop in their living standard; how could they truly love peace?

Hence, in order to achieve peace, we need to put in place the "logic" of a new Marshall Plan—long-term, low-interest credits, taking the place of the present system of high interest rates and zero or negative growth in the physical economy. We must clear the field by putting into bankruptcy the financial forces that oppose it. We must, at the same time, whether in the Middle East or Africa, improve people's daily living

conditions—transport, schooling, sewage, access to water—and create a mass effect great enough for takeoff conditions to be met.

c) As an example, let's look at what that would give us for Africa, with existing railways and proposed ones (**Figure 1**).

The emancipation from slavery presupposes three great works of rail connections by high-speed train:

- An east-west route, Dakar-Djibouti, never completed, but under planning since 1880-85.
- A north-south route, Algeria-Tunisia-Ivory Coast.
- Circumferential railroads, constructed following the Mediterranean and Atlantic coastlines.

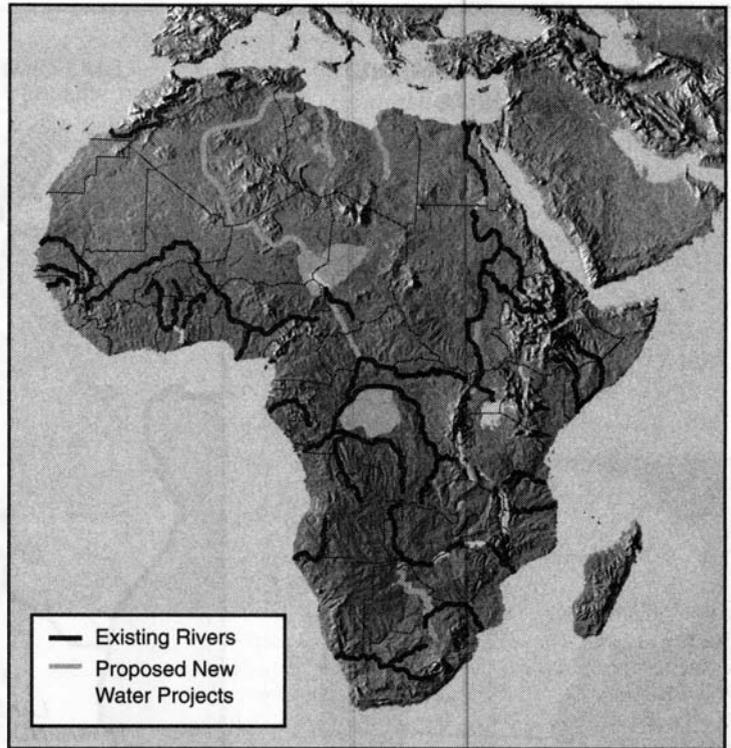
In fact, conceptually, this means substituting the existing system from inland to the coast, corresponding to the slave-trading and resource-looting routes, with a coast-to-inland system, the emancipation route, and an interior-interior network, the grand pan-African communication route for which we can be grateful to our precursors, Nkrumah, Lumumba, Um Nyobé, or even Ben Barka.

d) Waterways and inland lakes to green the deserts and transform this African "continent of lost water" into a garden (**Figure 2**).

This means exploiting all latent resources of water, to bring water from where it is dispersed or evaporates to where it is needed for irrigation and energy production. The "development arteries" must therefore be conceived around dams or nuclear plants, while avoiding, at all cost, the large, phara-

FIGURE 2

Africa, rivers and proposed waterways



Existing rivers, and proposed new lakes and waterways. Damming part of the Zaire (Congo) River, the second largest river in volume in the world, would create a Central African lake. In the sub-Sahara region, Lake Chad must be expanded by diverting north some of the flow of the Ubangi River. Lake Chad could give rise to a trans-Sahara canal to the Mediterranean.

onic projects in which the human contribution counts for nothing.

2) The Lake Chad project

Along with this logic of great projects, we must create “regional lungs.” For example: a Lake Chad project (Figure 3), around which hundreds or thousands of smaller projects could arise. Here, we begin with the interests of the populations and the region, favoring medium- and long-term profit, and not short-term projects, or immediate profit.

Lake Chad today extends across 2,000-3,000 km², whereas, in 1970, it covered 22,000. It has, since then, lost 90% of its area.

This means revitalizing this lung of water in central Africa.

The importance of the site is essential from four standpoints:

- *Geographic*: This is the geometric center of the continent;
- *Cultural*: This is the crossroad of civilizations;
- *Climatic*: This is the central African lung of water (the convergence zone between the dry air mass from the Sahara and the humid tropical air);
- *Commercial*: This is the center of North-South and East-West trade.

The current situation cannot continue. We must make the lake a symbol of a new Africa, with the larger objective of rolling back the Sahara.

First stage: revitalizing the lake. The tributary flows from the Chari-Logone are insufficient. Therefore, it is necessary to pump water from the Ubangi and Zaire rivers, and to transport it via pressurized conduits over 200 km, to feed the Ubangi, which will, in turn, feed the Saharan pan (reservoir dams upstream from Bangui).

The objective is to return the lake to its depth of 283 meters and stabilize its size at this level.

Second stage: regulating the hydrographic system. Polderization of the lake in order to recover arable land and prevent silting. Since the land surrounding the lake is very rich (ex-maritime), one can thereby turn this region into a virtual “inland Holland.”

Third stage: priming the water cycle, the motor for the ecosystem.

This means reviving the works undertaken before the war by Hippolyte Dessolier, who studied how to produce rain artificially by generating “superheated air,” mirroring what is naturally produced near the summits of the Tibesti, Ennedi, or Air. His aim, for us to take up again, was to “turn back the Sahara,” as he wrote in 1930.

Some will object that this Lake Chad project, as a whole, is not profitable. Sure, it is not financially profitable, in the short term, but it is “profitable” for the people. This is an absolute change in logic which must be imposed.

Figure 4 shows the revitalized Africa which will result from construction of such waterways and railroads, forming an integrated continent, freed from slavery.

FIGURE 3

Lake Chad-Congo Basin, and Jonglei Canal projects

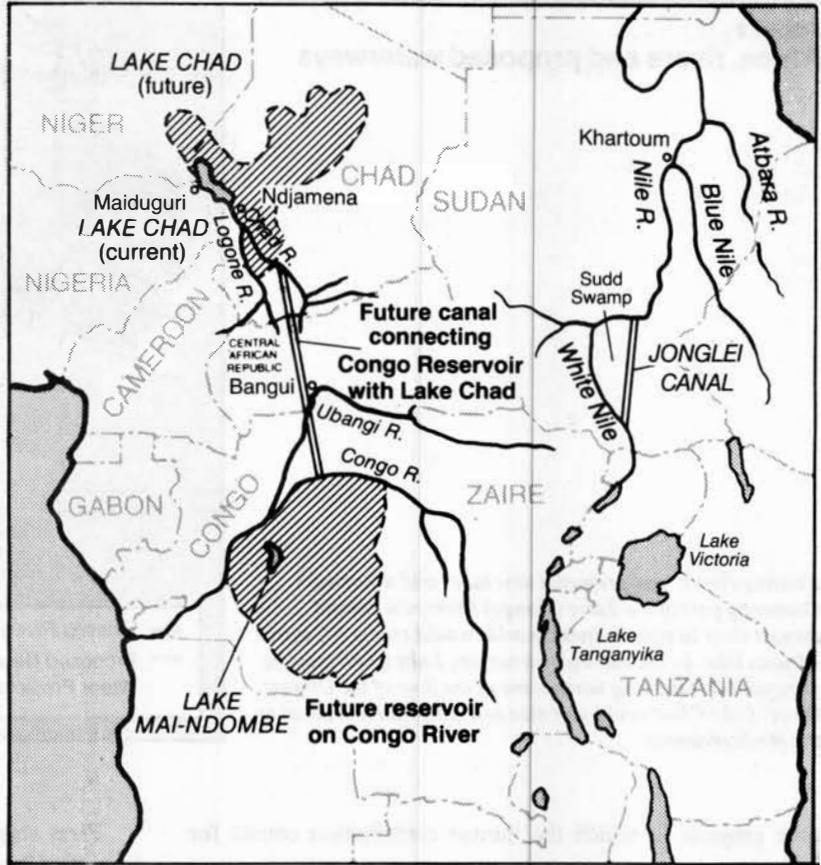
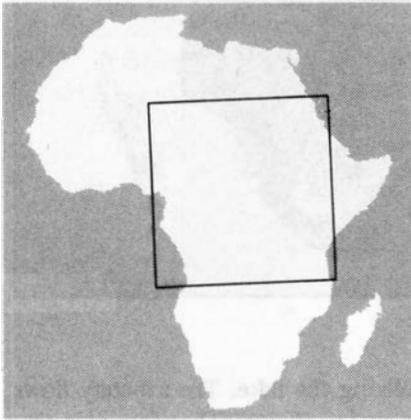
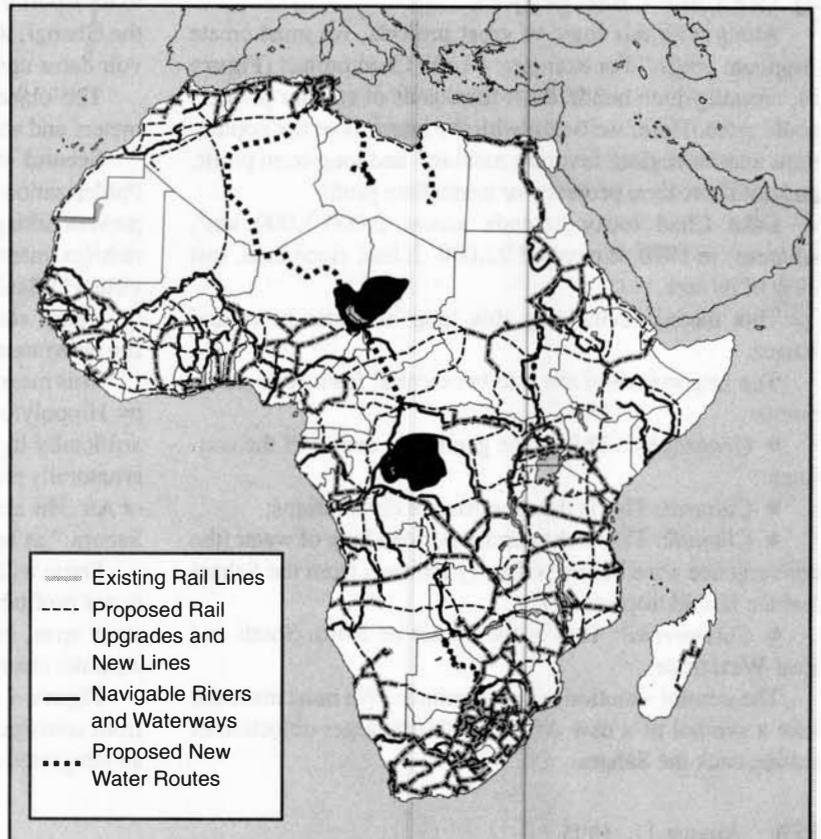


FIGURE 4

Africa, rail and waterway development



The transcontinental rail and priority water projects show the vast potential for this huge continent. Finishing the Jonglei Canal on the White Nile in southern Sudan could add over 5% to the flow of the Nile. All such projects, combined with nuclear-powered development complexes, would be the basis for billions more people.

3) Involving the people with great projects

Conceptualizing the great projects as a whole, as well as the regional projects, such as Lake Chad, is clearly not everything. We must wage a political battle to create the conditions for realizing these projects. Messrs. Binaisa and Ojukwu will speak to you about that. I will simply say two things:

- The great projects cannot come down from on high, and the small projects are, in themselves, not enough. We must involve the people in the great projects and thereby invent a true pedagogy of participation in progress. That is what builds democracy.

- The great projects must be supported by the people: We must give rise to the local institutions for representative mandate and real defense of human rights. These institutions have yet to be found, and you must find them together, among Africans.

For us Europeans, we have the duty to give you the means. This is where the essential role of the African diaspora comes in, people who can constitute, both in Africa and within the European countries, an essential and irreplaceable political instrument to press for this policy. It is necessary to invent a hyphenated diaspora.

To conclude, I must underline that today is the moment to get going. Unacceptable limits have been reached.

As the great German poet Friedrich Schiller says in *William Tell*, when the peasants are revolting against their overlords and take the Rütli Oath:

No, there's a limit to the tyrant's power,
When the oppressed can find no justice, when
The burden grows unbearable—he reaches
With hopeful courage up unto the heavens
And seizes hither his eternal rights,
Which hang above, inalienable
And indestructible as stars themselves. . . .

We are, 35 years after African independence, at one of those moments in history. Moreover, the destructive financial and monetary system under which we live, is itself doomed to disintegrate: We must prepare whatever will succeed it. In order to construct this future, Africa must be without complexes, but should not let itself get carried away by its passions or its rage, even if they are legitimate.

The fraud of technological relativism

The victorious war is conducted with both the heart and reason, wedded together in action. Thus, above all, don't let yourselves say that there are "appropriate" technologies, poorer for the poor people, closer to what you've been told are "your roots," close to "nature."

Instead, listen to what Cheik Anta Diop has to say in his *Introduction to Civilization or Barbarism*:

"Then, some estimate how inappropriate, fundamental-

ly, is the notion, so frequently trotted out, of foreign ideological importations into Africa: It results from a perfect ignorance of the African past. Inasmuch as modern technology and science come from Europe, so, in antiquity, universal knowledge flowed from the Nile Valley to the rest of the world, and in particular into Greece, which will serve as an intermediary link.

"Consequently, no thought, no ideology, by its essence, is foreign to Africa, which was the land of their birth. It is thus in all liberty that Africans must delve into the common intellectual heritage of humanity, letting themselves be guided by nothing more than notions of utility, of efficiency."

Whenever the attitude of Europeans discourages you, listen, from the other side of the Mediterranean, to Abbot Henri Grégoire, in his "On the Literature of the Negroes," written in 1808, where he raises the cry of justice in demonstrating what the "Negroes" (as they were called at that time) have contributed to the world. Today, too, these voices of justice must again be lifted up in Europe.

Here, today, we are a bit like a crowd—the crowd which we represent—which murmurs, hesitates, stammers, shuffles, and occasionally expresses itself the wrong way. For, in the effort to take up again the flame of hope, as this 20th century comes to an end, we are and we will be maladroit, just as all those are, who do something for the first time. But, this clumsiness itself is the gauge of our honesty.

Hence, let us make an effort to go forward, with the immense army of princes, of pharaohs, of downtrodden, of ill-treated, of slaves, of wisemen, and of *griots* who march beside us.

Let us make the effort to go forward, while thinking again about what Cheik Anta Diop said to us in the spring of 1960, that spring of the first hope: "The intellectuals must study the past, not in order to entertain themselves, but to learn its lessons." Lessons of our common past, your past, the past of those who claim, as is just, their property, and who offer in exchange their forgotten part of the human patrimony. Lessons of this Egypt, our common mother, who will give rise to so much in Africa and Greece: Lessons of the grottos of Namibia, where the foreshadowings of Lascaux and Altamira appear. Lessons of the great Dogon cliff, of the Fang faces from the Upper Nile, the Nok faces, those of the Onis of Ifé in the eternal youth, to their brothers at Reims, and to this beauty which belongs to the world.

Let us construct, like the architects of the Mbaris' houses of your history, the houses open to the four winds, always renovated in style, while remaining faithful to the same vision of truth.

Let us seek our sources, without burying ourselves in the roots, and let us attempt, together, to rediscover something that we might be able to transmit to future generations, greater and more beautiful than ourselves.

It is in the darkest hours that hope is born, for evil provokes good to discover and to do good, our task as men.