

addition to the railroads, there will be high-capacity electric power lines, oil and gas pipelines, water supply systems, etc. (Figure 3).

By establishing such infrastructure, the most essential precondition for every kind of industry, mining, and urban construction activity within the corridors will be created. It is easy to figure out, that any region in the corridor will be no more than 50 kilometers away from the main infrastructural arteries in the corridor.

Having presented the two most important proposals concerning the Second Eurasian Continental Land-Bridge or the New Silk Road, one can conclude that there are certain advantages to the second concept, compared to the first. First, it ends in the east with the Chinese ports free from ice all year round, unlike the Trans-Siberian line, which ends at the Russian port of Nakhodka, where water freezes about four months per year.

The second advantage is that it reduces the distance between the Atlantic and the Pacific Ocean, 2,000-5,000 kilometers.

Third, it passes through more than 30 countries and connects regions that are highly independent.

Fourth, it has the possibility to connect it to the rail networks in countries such as Pakistan, India, and Bangladesh.

In addition, there is a plan to connect the network with Southeast Asian countries. At present, China is establishing a new railroad from the Chinese city of Ruili to Myanmar, and from there to Thailand. Then, to Laos, Cambodia, and Vietnam eastward, and to Malaysia and Singapore southward, which line can be extended in the future to Indonesia. That is to say, at a certain point in the future, a railroad from Rotterdam in Europe to Jakarta could exist. Not only, but according to Mr. LaRouche's proposal, it is possible to extend the first Eurasian Land-Bridge at its end at Nakhodka, northeastward to the remotest parts of the Asian continent, across the Russian territories to cross the Bering Strait, through a tunnel to the American state of Alaska, and thence, to North and South America. That is to say, this railroad network could cover the globe.

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### III. Major Achievements

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Up to now, there are two main achievements in the Second Eurasian Land-Bridge, as proposed by China. The first breakthrough came from China, the initiator of the project, and resulted in the connection of the Chinese railroad network in the far northwestern part of the country at Xinjiang province, with its counterpart in Kazakstan, which is already connected to railroad networks in other Central Asian Republics.

The second major breakthrough came from Iran, the major supporter of the Chinese initiative, and resulted in filling another gap on the Second Eurasian Land-Bridge, through what is known as the Mashhad-Sarkhas-Tajan railroad, which, for the first time, linked the Iranian rail networks with those of

Central Asian Republics. This rail line extends for about 300 kilometers (about 165 km in Iran and the rest in Turkmenistan). Bridging this gap led to the reduction of time needed for transportation between China and Turkey, by ten days.

In conclusion, one might say that continental land-bridges are extremely important, due to the fact that they offer substantial reductions in distance and delivery time, when compared to sea transportation.

It seems that mankind is moving from the era of the river economy to the era of coastal economy, and finally now to the era of the land-bridge economy. Many expect that the 21st Century will be the century of continental land-bridges.

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Dr. Hamdy Abdul Rahman

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## Egypt, Africa and the Eurasian Land-Bridge

*Dr. Rahman is a member of the Faculty of Economics and Political Science, Cairo University.*

Let me first thank the Center for Strategic Studies here in Khartoum, and the Schiller Institute, and Mr. LaRouche, personally, and his team, for giving me this opportunity to address this distinguished panel. But let me first make a confession. I am replacing Prof. Mohammed Selim [director of the Center for Asian Studies at Cairo University], who was keen to attend this seminar personally, but was not able to come to Sudan, because he had a strong commitment at Cairo University at the same time. So, I will share some of his ideas, and try to develop some of my ideas, and if I be mistaken, it is my responsibility, and not Professor Selim's.

The second confession, is that I am a student of political science, I am not a civil engineer, dealing with railway issues and infrastructure, but this is relevant, in my opinion, because I think the crash program for infrastructure in Africa needs political vision and political realization. I remember, ten years ago, I was invited to participate in a seminar in Banjul, the capital city of Gambia. It was my first visit to any part of Africa south of Egypt at that time. I had to take a plane from Cairo to Zurich, and from Zurich to Geneva, and from Geneva to Dakar, and from Dakar to Banjul. It was amazing at that time, going to Africa, through Europe.

Two years ago, I was invited to participate in a conference in Durban, South Africa, and the picture was different: I took the plane directly from Cairo to Durban, by Egypt Air. So, there is room for hope for Africa. I do believe in hope, and in the potentiality of Africans to make radical changes, and to face the crisis we are living through, and create new potential.



*Dr. Hamdy Abdul Rahman*

My presentation will emphasize how to link the Eurasian Land-Bridge and Africa, not only Africa, but to connect Africa, Europe, and Asia, via Egypt. So, I will concentrate on the Egyptian project, to make such a link. But, let me first emphasize the role of infrastructure in achieving any real development process; this is very important: Railways, especially, play a crucial, fundamental role not only in the process of development itself, but also as a prerequisite for initiating any development plan.

### **Two Major Rail Projects**

Examples are many, not only today, but throughout history. The Ottoman Sultan Abdul Hamid II thought to build a railway to enhance his empire. This is the Baghdad Railway, but for many reasons, he was not able to complete his plan, and to make it effective. Nowadays, as my colleague said, we have two railway projects in Egypt: the old one, which is the trans-Asian railway, which started in the 1960s, under the supervision of the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific Ocean. This railway project links Istanbul with Singapore. It is not completed yet. The missing link between Iran and Pakistan is around 600 kilometers, and the one between Bangladesh and Myanmar is around 1,400 km. That means the missing parts are 2,000 km.

The second, which is well known, is the Eurasian Land-Bridge, the new Silk Road, which started in the 1990s, a link between Asia and Europe.

Egypt started to build a railway from the delta at Ismailiya and Verden up to Rafah in Sinai, at the border. It is planned to extend this project to link the Arab Mashreq, with the new Silk Road. So, this is very important to discuss the Egyptian

plan, what has been completed, and what is on the way.

Let me first divide my presentation into four main parts: The first deals with the impact of the Eurasian Land-Bridge on the Egyptian interest, not only the Egyptian interest, but on the Middle East and the whole area generally. The second part deals with the Egyptian project to build the Orient Express railway. The third is the potential link between the Orient Express project and the Eurasian Land-Bridge, and the impact of the peace process in the Middle East on the implementation of that project. The last part deals with Africa: how to link Africa with the Eurasian Land-Bridge and Europe, through North Africa, and Egypt will be the center for such a connection.

Regarding the first part, what is impact? Can we identify any impact of the Eurasian Land-Bridge on the Egyptian or the Middle Eastern interest in general? Yes, we can find some areas of influence. The first will be an impact on overall world trade. Once you have a link between different areas, that means facilitating economic and trade relations between countries. In this respect, we can find a great impact on the Egyptian interest after the implementation of the Eurasian Land-Bridge, especially the navigation on the Suez Canal. The second area of impact will be on the strategic position of Egypt. As we used to learn and teach political science, the geographic position determines the strategic significance of any country. Now, after the revolution in communications and technology, there is less importance attached to geographical location. But after the completion of the Eurasian Land-Bridge, Egypt will become a center for this kind of connection between Central Asia, Africa, North Africa, and even Europe. So, I think this will encourage Egypt to play a role and to continue in its plan to make a link between its own project, the Orient Express railway, and the Eurasian Land-Bridge. So, it is clear that the Eurasian road will help Egypt to regain its strategic importance as a link between Asia, Europe, and Africa.

The third area of impact will be on Egypt in particular, and Central Asia. It is known that there is no direct contact between Egypt and Central Asia; whether we are talking about a land-bridge or maritime link, we don't have this. This is considered one of the major obstacles to enhance trade relations between Egypt and Central Asia. Once this connection be completed, this obstacle will be removed.

### **Linking Up To the Port Said Project**

But, one of the most important impacts on Egypt, is the impact on the project Egypt is now working on, on the eastern part of the Suez Canal. The Egyptian government is currently implementing a development project at the eastern part of Port Said, which consists of building a key transit port, and a free industrial zone. This is a very important project in the scheme of development in Egypt nowadays. So, this is very important to talk about: how to link this project with the Eurasian Land-Bridge, because if you have this link, that means, at the same time, you facilitate transportation from this new

industrial area to the Mashreq, Jordan, Palestine, even the Persian Gulf and Central Asia. So, it is very important to undertake this plan, to connect the Orient Express project with the Eurasian Land-Bridge.

In fact, the Silk Road, when it is completed, connected to the Egyptian railway, will have positive results on the Port Said project, because it will facilitate carrying goods and commodities from the free zone to the Arab Mashreq and Central Asia.

Now I turn to the second point: How is the Egyptian project to connect with the Eurasian Land-Bridge? We have a project now under construction, called the Orient Express. It is a railway extending from the Verden city in the north delta, Ismailiya, and across the Suez Canal, via a bridge, which then goes north for 50 km, then turns east parallel to the Mediterranean coast, to reach the city of Rafah, near the border. The estimated cost of this project is about \$400 million. Of course, this is a very crucial and important plan for making a link, but I think we face problems. Because, once Egypt completes this plan, then the question is, how to connect it, because the railway will stop at Rafah, at the border. So, you have to make a connection. We have two options: The first option, is a land-bridge which would go through Palestine and Israel, or, a sea route to Aqaba. If you carry the train from Nuweiba to Aqaba, it is very costly; whether you are building a tunnel or carrying it by ship, it is costly.

The first track is more realistic and applicable than the second, because it has been implemented. Yes, we have historical experience: It was implemented at the beginning of the 20th Century, when the Orient Express extended from Aleppo, Syria, to Haifa, Palestine, and via Sinai to Ismailiya in Egypt. This line was shut down, as we know, with the advent of the Arab-Israeli conflict. The implementation of this railway depends on the peace process in the region. I think there is a clear intention to revive the ancient idea of the Orient Express, as it extended its rail line to Rafah. How can we explain the Egyptian intention to extend the railway to Rafah? They must believe that, one day, there will be a solution to the conflict in the Middle East.

## Other Projects

In this regard, there are other projects in the Middle East: There is a Syrian-Turkish project. On April 29, 1999, the two countries signed an agreement to build a new rail link between them. The agreement explicitly pointed to the Eurasian Land-Bridge and Damascus, Syria, which will be the center of many railways which link Europe, Central Asia, and Iran in the north, and Jordan and Saudi Arabia in the south. The two sides agreed to revive Al Hijaz, which was built by the Germans for the Ottoman Empire in parallel to the Baghdad railways. The Hijaz railway extended for 2,000 km, linking Istanbul and Al Medina in Saudi Arabia, via Damascus. And in the same direction, Jordan agreed with Syria in June 1999, to reopen Al Hizaj railway, to link the Syrian and Lebanese coasts

with Jordanian and Saudi cities. So, this is very important to discuss.

This is according to the Egyptian role and plan to make a link.

## A Matter of Life or Death for Africa

Let me turn now to what is difficult for me, Africa: how to make a plan for Africa as a whole, to connect Africa inter-continently, and via Egypt or Morocco, in the north, to Europe and Asia. We discussed yesterday the situation in Africa, and how the time is ripe to save Africa, from the crisis of survival. So, this is very important to be aware of; this debate is not a luxury, this is a matter of life or death for Africa. We have to take this seriously. Africa is living through a structural crisis. Africa was one of the most marginalized areas of the world during the years of the Cold War, and even after the changes that took place since the end of the Cold War, it resulted in only the further marginalization of Africa. While Africa was marching toward independence—I am quoting Ali Mesrouwi here—others have walked on the Moon. So, Africa has been deprived for many years and is still suffering.

All economic models that were implemented in Africa have failed to achieve their stated goals. The development policies that were carried out by Africans, with their ideological stance, paved the way for policies of structural adjustment. So, I believe in African responsibility for this. However, it should be known that adjustment programs are not a magical cure. Many of the countries that applied these programs are faced with economic depression, political instability, and civil conflicts. This also applies to crime and AIDS. The adjustment programs have been criticized on different levels. I won't go into detail, because I think all of us accept these ideas.

We have many challenges in Africa nowadays, but we need a prescription to save Africa. How to save Africa? Not by slogans, we have to stop slogans. Yes, I have been raised with such slogans like Pan-Africanism, African unity, African solidarity, but what has happened? We need to realize this: No more slogans, no more socialism or liberalism—whatever. All these are slogans. We have to tackle real issues, the importance of *real development* schemes, infrastructure. What is the plan to save Africa?

I think Mr. LaRouche gave us a plan, it's a very good plan, we have to talk about it, find a way to implement it. There is no other way to save Africa except for real development, not this kind of distorted development we have witnessed since independence. So that we can connect, regarding the railways, Africa (see **Figures 1 and 2**). We have this north-south axis from Cairo to the Cape. What is very funny, is that this was a colonial idea, the Cairo-Cape connection was a British idea, to achieve colonial purposes. But now, we are talking about making this connection for the sake of Africa and the Africans. This is the difference between the current proposal and the colonial proposal. So it is easy now to connect Cairo via

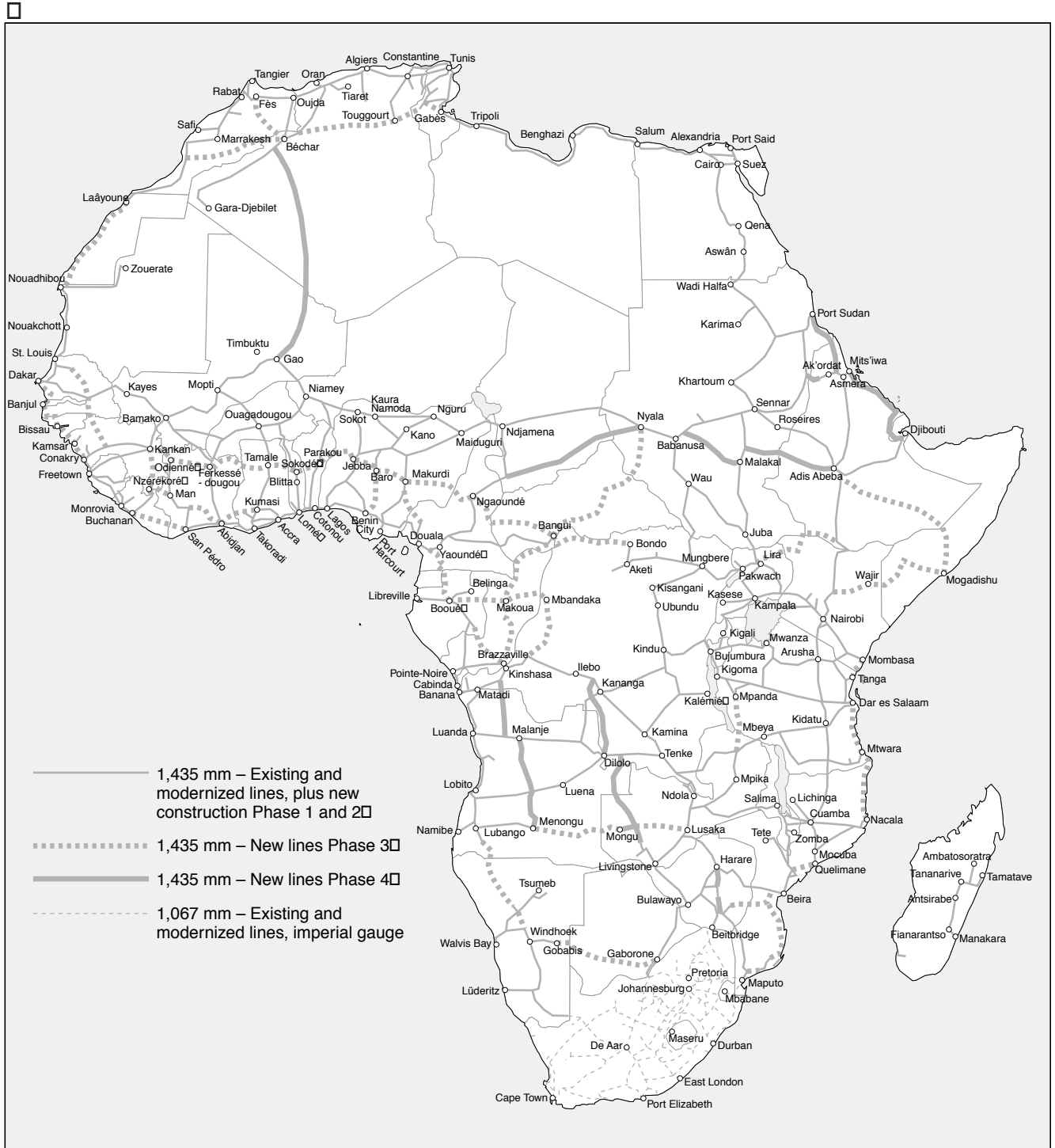
FIGURE 1D  
**The State of African Railways in 1990**



Sources: Fusion Energy Foundation, *The Industrialization of Africa*, Wiesbaden: Campaigner Publications, 1980; *The Times Atlas of the World*, New York: Times Books, 1990.

FIGURE 20

### Projected African Railway Network (Main Lines)



Sources: Fusion Energy Foundation, *The Industrialization of Africa*, Wiesbaden: Campaigner Publications, 1980; *The Times Atlas of the World*, New York: Times Books, 1990.

Sudan, Khartoum, vis-à-vis the Nile, to the Cape of Good Hope. This gives us hope for the future.

## Egypt at the Cross-Roads

Egypt is now a part of Comesa [the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa], which consists of 21 states, which covers the whole area from the north to the south. Sudan is part of Comesa; Egypt, and you have the eastern and southern part of Africa. So, this is the first proposal. This link can have other links, North Africa, and you can link North Africa with Europe via the tunnel of Gibraltar, and then you can have a connection between North Africa and Europe. If the Egyptian plan to build the railway, the Orient Express, connected with the Eurasian Land-Bridge, is carried out, you have already a connection between Asia, Africa, and Europe.

The second axis will be a west-east axis, from Dakar to Djibouti. This is also a colonial idea; it was built during the competition between the French and the British in the 19th Century. The British tried to connect their colonies from the north to the south, from Cairo to the Cape, and then the French thought to break up this connection by going through West Africa, Dakar via the Sahel countries, Chad, then to Djibouti. But, after the Entente Cordiale, after the events of Fashoda, both plans were suspended. Now we have to think rationally to achieve such plans. Now, I have a dream to ride a train from Cairo to Durban, instead of riding a plane from Cairo to Durban. Will this dream come true? Yes, by the will of Africa and Africans, it can be realized.

This is the proposal. I have to confess there are problems, of course, facing the realization of such a plan. One familiar and famous problem, is the problem of gauge. It is a colonial problem, because they built a narrow gauge for economic reasons, because it is cheaper, and not effective. Besides this, for example, on the Egyptian side, they built a gauge different from the gauge on the Sudanese side. So, if you try to make a connection between the Egyptian train and the Sudanese train, you have to make a shift to a different system. I don't know how to overcome this problem. It needs technology, maybe, I'm not able to deal with this issue, but I think we can overcome such a problem.

The second problem which has to be tackled, is, we consider railways not as a means of communication per se, but as a highway for development. So, you need to provide organic communities around these railways. In Africa, you need water. When I travelled from Cairo to Aswan by plane, it was amazing: All I found was desert—sand, yellow color—and only a narrow, tiny part of the country around the Nile is green. So we need water, to make this plan real, and to implement it, we have to provide water. This is a real issue; we have to discuss it, and to make a consensus, and instead of following the Western paradigm—the “war over water,” the “conflict over water”—let us make water a source of peace, not conflict. This is a real issue that we have to put at the heart of our debate here.

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Omer Mohammed Nour

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## The Significance of Rail Links in Africa

*He is the General Manager of Sudan Railways Corp. He addressed the conference on Jan. 16, on “The Significance of Interconnection of Neighboring Countries by Railroad.”*

The main reason for early construction of the means of transport in Africa, especially railways, was to serve colonial policy objectives of domination upon the continent. This situation affected most African countries after their independence. There have been no interconnections between these countries, resulting in many difficulties in the conveyance of both commodities and people between them.



The railways in Africa after independence were characterized by the following:

- Limited railway network compared with other world countries;
- Some African countries have no railways at all;
- Characteristics of different technical specification for the railways in the region;
- They serve only colonial needs, and the continent has no corridors that can serve more than one African state;
- The infrastructure specifications were of a very low standard, thus enabling no room for high-speed and heavy-axle loads;
- Low share in transport market compared with other modes.

Years later, national independent governments exerted hard efforts to maintain railway infrastructure and to develop and upgrade operational efficiency. But, scarce financing handicapped attempts to extend the internal and continental African network.

Promotion of African railways is a prominent economic and geographic endeavor because:

1. Vast African geographic areas necessitate efficient rail transport.
2. High-density population centers are located apart from rural productive areas.
3. There is a need to explore rich natural resources and