
IV. The Great Projects of the LaRouches

China's Maritime Silk Road Puts Kra Canal Back on the Global Agenda

by Mike Billington

Sept. 18—The potential for the building of a canal across the Kra Isthmus in southern Thailand (called either the Kra Canal or the Thai Canal) has taken a huge step forward as a result of a highly successful conference in Bangkok on Sept. 11, titled: “Technology for Sustainable Paths to Thailand’s Future—Thai Canal: Comprehensive Study of Alternative Logistics Systems for the Maritime Silk Road.”

This is the culmination of over 35 years of organizing, involving scientific and political institutions, primarily led by Pakdee Tanapura, the current head of the Kra Canal Study Team, within Thailand, and by the LaRouche-affiliated political movements around the world. The conference demonstrated significant support for the project from within Thailand (although the government has not as yet officially adopted it) and from nations across Eurasia.

The major difference today, relative to any time over past decades, is the emergence of the the One Belt One Road (OBOR) Initiative under Chinese leadership, which is bringing together dozens of nations from nearly every part of the world, in a joint effort to create a new paradigm for the future of Mankind based on cooperation in building large-scale infrastructure projects to facilitate agro-industrial development. Prof. Zhou Dawei from Peking University, one of the speakers at the conference, told the audi-



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Gen. Saiyud Kerdphol, former Supreme Commander of the Thai Armed Forces, addressing the 1984 EIR Bangkok conference. From the left, Pakdee Tanapura; Dr. Zainuddin Bahari of Malaysia's Institute for Strategic and Economic Studies; Dr. Norio Yamamoto of Japan; and Dr. Svasti Srisukh, former Thai secretary general of the Office of Atomic Energy for Peace. On the right, K.L. Dalal, former Indian Ambassador to Thailand; and Dr. H. Roesian Abdulgam, advisor to Indonesian President Suharto.

ence: “We strongly believe that under the OBOR initiative, if we give more importance to the Kra Isthmus Canal project, we will definitely be part of a great change in humankind’s history.”



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Lyndon LaRouche speaking at the Development of the Pacific and Indian Oceans Basin conference in Bangkok, Thailand, Oct. 27, 1983. Pakdee Tanapura is on the right.

The idea for such a canal has been imagined since the 18th Century. More recently, the idea was brought forward as one of the “Great Projects” proposed by Lyndon LaRouche and his Fusion Energy Foundation in the early 1980s, in collaboration with Masaki Nakajima, the visionary head of the Mitsubishi Global Infrastructure Fund (GIF) in Japan. In addition to the Kra Canal, the proposed projects included:

- The greening of the African and Arab deserts

- The transfer of water from the Congo River to replenish Lake Chad in Central Africa
- A bridge over the Bering Strait
- Creating a lake in the Qattara Depression in Egypt
- A New Silk Road from China through Central Asia to Europe and Africa.

All of these projects, and many more, are now being implemented, in one stage or another, under the concept of the OBOR, the New Silk Road.

Working with the Thai government, the LaRouche organization and the GIF co-sponsored two conferences in Bangkok in 1983 and 1984, called, respectively, “The Development of the Pacific and Indian Ocean Basins,” and “The Kra Canal and the Industrialization of Thailand.”

Drawing on a feasibility study published in 1973 by the TAMS engineering firm and the Lawrence Livermore National Laboratories in the United States, the 1983 and 1984 conferences featured LaRouche, Pakdee Tanapura, representatives of TAMS, Lawrence Livermore, and the GIF, and representatives from many of the nations in the region.

In his presentations there, Lyndon LaRouche’s focus was that the Kra Canal was not needed just to expedite shipping, but that southern Thailand must function as a hub for the rapid development of the Indian-Pacific Oceans region, recognizing that Asia would rapidly become the productive motor for reversing the decline of the world economy following the assassination of John Kennedy, and the United States being drawn into colonial warfare in Indochina, on behalf of the British empire.

Among the prominent Thai speakers was Gen. Saiyud Kerdphol, the former Supreme Commander, who noted that: “We must recognize that economic, political and social development all contribute to security, but that security, in itself, is not development.”

Gen. Saiyud is still today an active promoter of the Kra Canal, and sent a long message to this month’s conference, in which he called for the building of the Canal to be declared a “Royal Project,” in order to circumvent political and related obstruction.

Unlike in the 1980s, the new King of Thailand, Maha Vajiralongkorn, is said to support the Kra Canal project, and several leaders of the Privy Council, including its current President (and a former Prime Minister) Prem Tinsulanonda, are strong supporters. The new King will



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International conference on the Thai (Kra) Canal, Bangkok, Sept. 11.

soon be officially crowned, after the cremation ceremony for his father King Bhumibol in October.

Such Royal support could well be enough to convince Prime Minister Prayut Chan-ocha to endorse the project. Prayut’s military regime has thus far successfully prevented any recurrence of the chaos and near civil war that existed before his takeover in 2014, but he has maintained that the Kra Canal would have to wait for the next administration, to be elected some time in the next few years. Prayut has, however, worked closely with China and was one of the five leaders invited to China for the BRICS Summit earlier this month, as part of what Xi Jinping called the “BRICS Plus.” On the sidelines of that event, the final agreement for China to build the first high speed railroad in Thailand was signed, and is to begin construction in October.

The Conference

Japan’s *Nikkei Asian Review* reported on the conference on Sept. 11, under the title: “European Business Joins in Pushing \$28 bn Thai Canal” and led with the speech of Rolf-Dieter Daniel, president of the European Association for Business and Commerce, the umbrella group of European chambers of commerce in Thailand. Daniel told the conference: “We believe the project should have a very high priority for the government,” and, if approved, would be one of the most ambitious and transformational infrastructure projects ever contemplated in Asia. “As the canal offers tremendous advantages for freight traffic between Eastern Asia, Japan, and China and the West, India and Europe, we are sure that international shipping is willing to pay appropriate charges.”

Peking University’s Prof. Zhou Dawei, quoted above, also said that the Thai Canal “would make Thai-



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Strategic location of the proposed Thai Canal.

land a true transport hub in the world,” and that it contributed to the One Belt One Road “in reviving the famous ancient trade routes that link Asia, Africa, and Europe,” according to the Malaysian news agency Bernama. Zhou compared the Kra Canal with global mega-projects such as the Three Gorges Dam in China and the Channel Tunnel linking Britain and France. “If we are lucky enough, we expect that in the near future, the Thai Canal will also appear on this amazing list,” he said.

Also attending the conference were 30 residents of the southern Thai region where the Canal will be built. They were there to refute those who claim the local community would oppose the mega-project. Gen. Pongthep Tesprateep, the Chairman of the Thai Canal Association, told the *Bangkok Post* that they had already gathered over 200,000 signatures in support from academics, associations, and citizens in the region along the proposed Canal route. Pakdee Tanapura noted that ports and industrial parks to be built on either end of the Canal will provide a huge number of jobs for local residents, in an area which has been plagued by Muslim-Buddhist conflicts and terrorist activity for many years. Social instability is not a reason to question the project, just the opposite—it is the necessary basis to build peace through opportunity and development.

Chuan Phukaoluan, chief adviser to the governor of

Krabi (a province on the Indian Ocean side of the Kra Isthmus) said the Canal will trigger a demand for and expansion of higher education in engineering and vocational training in the region: “This could lift the level of education and the skill of laborers in the South.”

Great Projects Under Way

The explosive process of development generated by the New Silk Road in the former colonial nations in Asia, Africa, the Middle East, and Ibero-America, is breathtaking, after several centuries of colonial and post-colonial rule in which the western powers declared to these nations that big infrastructure projects and modern industry were not “appropriate” to their level of development.

Now we see railroads being built across Africa and Asia, not only to get the raw materials from the mines to the ports for export, but railroads connecting the continent’s major cities and capitals. Discussions are underway for a transoceanic railroad in South America. Massive water diversion is taking place in China, in Africa, and potentially in the Middle East, to end droughts and floods, creating new agricultural lands and the basis for new cities. Nuclear power plants are being built in nations for the first time.

These are the projects carefully developed by institutions under Lyndon LaRouche’s direction over the past

45 years. Read the review of LaRouche’s programmatic proposals since his 1975 plan for an International Development Bank, including extensive development proposals for India, Africa, Ibero-America, and the Indian and Pacific Oceans Basin—all pointing to his New Silk Road concept after the fall of the Soviet Union. You can see such a review at: <https://larouche.org/new-economic-order>.

Not only the Kra Canal, but nearly all these projects are now coming to fruition or are in preparation. And yet the United States is playing no part, and receiving no benefit from this world-historic transformation. No representatives of the United States attended the Kra Canal conference this month, despite invitations sent to the U.S. Embassy in Bangkok.

President Trump has made it clear that he recognizes the urgency of America’s engagement with the New Silk Road, and of American cooperation with Russia and China in bringing peace through development to the world—including emphatically to the de-

caying United States economy. This is the reason for the ongoing coup attempt against him. The more rapidly he and the American people fully adopt and efficiently make known their support for the LaRouche Great Projects approach, the sooner we can end the dark era of perpetual warfare, and realize a new paradigm of peace and development.



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Participants at the Sept. 11 conference on the “Thai Canal: Comprehensive Study of Alternative Logistics Systems for the Maritime Silk Road.”

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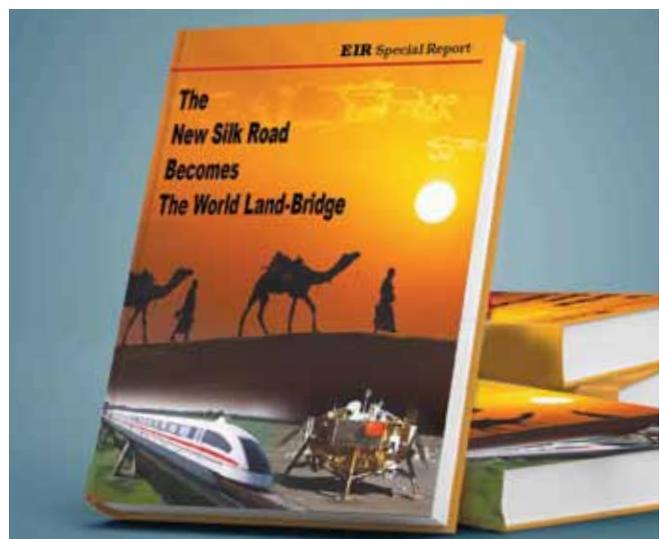
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