

# Egypt Seminar Takes Up LaRouche, Silk Road

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Ideas work.

Especially in periods of systemic crisis, when entire historical orders crumble, it is not money, or military power, which determines the course of history, but ideas. Thus, it is extremely important, that in the current crisis, great ideas, like that of the Eurasian Land-Bridge (or New Silk Road), be debated openly among intellectual circles in countries throughout the world.

Port Said, Egypt, was the venue for a high-level conference on April 15-17, on "The New Silk Road and Its Impact on Egyptian Interests." Sponsored by the Center for Asian Studies of the Faculty of Economics and Political Science at Cairo University, the seminar explored various aspects of the great infrastructure design for rebuilding the historic silk routes across Asia into Europe, with modern technologies. As the title of the conference indicates, the papers presented also went beyond the Asia-Europe relationship, to examine the extension of the transportation networks and development corridors into the Arab world, Iran, Turkey, and Africa, through Egypt. Among the select group of attendees at the seminar, was the Governor of Port Said.

The conference papers, which are to be published in a book in Arabic, covered the main geographic and political aspects of the Eurasian Land-Bridge project. "Russia and The Silk Road: Opportunities and Challenges," was the title of the presentation by Dr. Nourhan Al-Shaikh, who went through Russia's view of the development of the New Silk Road. She started with a reference to *EIR*'s founder, Lyndon LaRouche. "In January 1997, prominent American economist Lyndon LaRouche lauded the project. . . . He stated that it would restore life and activity to the world economy, in the same manner as President Franklin Roosevelt did, following the Great Depression, to save the American economy. However, LaRouche emphasized that China would not be able to carry out this giant project alone, and called upon the United States to support this project. This means that the U.S. should adopt, supervise, and sponsor this project," Dr. Nourhan said.

A speech by Mithab Ayoub, on "Chinese Policy for the Eurasian Land-Bridge," developed further the political dimensions of regional cooperation around the project, reviewing the formation of what *EIR* had dubbed the "Survivors' Club," of China, Russia, India, and other Asian countries,

committed to surviving the world financial collapse through cooperative economic efforts, transcending bilateral agreements. The speaker presented China's policy of economic cooperation with its neighbors, and reviewed the historic visit of Chinese President Jiang Zemin to Russia, as well as the proposal by then-Prime Minister Yevgeni Primakov of Russia, for a "strategic triangle" among Russia, India, and China. He also raised the question, whether the United States would join the effort.

Another contribution, from Ridda Mohammad Hillal, on "Turkey's Policy Toward the Silk Road," presented the extension of the Eurasian Land-Bridge into Turkey, a country, he said, which the LaRouches had visited, and where they were highly respected. Hillal outlined rail expansion in Saudi Arabia, Iran, Egypt, Syria, and Jordan.

## The British vs. the American System

In addressing "Europe and the New Silk Road," another speaker, Sidqi Abdin, contrasted two approaches to European infrastructure development. The project outlined in 1989-90 by LaRouche, known as the Productive Triangle, was presented as superior to other, strictly western European approaches, in that LaRouche's design would have positive impact on the whole world economy, whereas the isolated proposals emerging in Europe every now and then, including the Jacques Delors "White Paper" for enhancing intra-West European transport, did not take into due consideration, the impact of the New Silk Road.

"In recent years," Abdin said, "the discussions about reviving the old Silk Road have been increasing. In this context there was the Chinese strong appeal, and also the call made by American economist Lyndon LaRouche." His project was very ambitious, Abdin said. "Such a giant project would be very difficult to accomplish if political, and at least, financial support were not provided by all the countries through which it will pass. It also requires support from the international organizations and the major powers such as the U.S., Japan, and the European Union."

Abdin detailed the diverse routes that the Silk Road would take, to connect Asia to Europe. "Therefore," he said, "it is obvious that the routes of the New Silk Road start in the Far East and end in Europe, and vice-versa. This means, that the two continents of Europe and Asia will be connected as one landmass through a network of routes, the which has prompted some people to say that 'the day will come when there will be a direct route from Rotterdam, Holland to Jakarta, Indonesia.' This means that movement from the far west of the European continent, to the far east of Asia, will take hours by land routes and not air." This, he said, "is what motivated an economist such as LaRouche, to describe the New Silk Road project as a locomotive, which could achieve world-wide development, especially because it passes through major population and technology centers." Here the speaker explained the concept of "development corridors"

along the routes, which comprise a “land-belt extending 100-150 kilometers.”

In arguing the superiority of LaRouche’s conception, Abdin stressed the impetus provided by it for development of the whole world, and its overthrowing all geopolitical designs. “Contrary to the European proposals, the proposal presented by American economist LaRouche on the Productive Triangle in Europe and its various extensions reaching to the Middle East and North Africa—even though they will mainly benefit the Europeans—he views it as a basis for a renaissance in the world economy, as a model which should be moved to include every region of the Eurasian continent,” he said. He lamented the fact that “LaRouche’s proposal for Europe has not been given enough attention inside Europe itself.”

As were other papers discussed at the seminar, Abdin’s was far from academic. Indeed, it focussed very finely on the factional differences in Europe, around the Silk Road concept. “There are people,” he said, “who say that, inside Europe, there are two irreconcilable attitudes toward the New Silk Road, as China has presented this project. The first one is positive, represented by the German stance. The other is negative, as represented by the British.” He said that this fact “surfaced clearly in the conference which was held in Beijing in May 1996. The positive attitude was most obviously presented by Helga LaRouche, as a German and wife of LaRouche, who, due to her great enthusiasm for the project, has been nicknamed ‘The Silk Road Lady’ by the Chinese. Through the institute, which she heads, she arranged a conference in her country on this subject in 1997 to which 150 international researchers were invited.” The negative attitude, he said, “was represented by the voice of Sir Leon Brittan, who participated in the conference as Deputy EU Commissioner. He talked about free trade and objected to the Chinese development model, and demanded that China should stop using huge investments in the development of infrastructure, and also demanded that China should abandon its protectionist measures and allow the market forces to decide everything.”

## Geopolitics vs. Development

A central feature of the discussion, was the historical conflict between the British geopolitical approach to Eurasia, and the pro-development approach. Abdin explained the attitude expressed by Leon Brittan, by referring to “some people” who know the history of British geopolitics and “its historical opposition to the emergence of a continental power, the which has led to two world wars. They still emphasize that Britain continues to have the same policy.” Abdin cited articles in the British press to support his view. He also hypothesized, that the reason why the efforts of LaRouche remain “as an academic viewpoint which is not binding for the German government,” lies in the fact that Germany and France have supported the British stance. If Europe is not forthcoming, he said, then “the Asians must do it themselves, if they are will-

ing,” and then the question will be, “Is Europe intending to be a freeloader on the New Silk Road?”

Another attack on British geopolitics came from Dr. Abdul-Aziz Shadi, in a speech entitled “The American Stance vis-à-vis the New Silk Road.” Shadi explored the American attitude toward the project, and located his remarks in the context of two traditions in Western and American policy toward Eurasia, and China specifically. “There is another limitation on American policy toward China,” he said, “which is related to the British legacy toward China and its impact on American policy toward the Silk Road. In spite of the emphasis made by people such as Wilhelm Leibniz, on the fact that the expansion of Eurasian land-based trade corridors would greatly contribute to more prosperity for the nations of Eurasia, the traditional British policy—which has many admirers among American policymakers—is to contain Chinese influence and not to allow China to expand economically outside its borders. London has never tried to hide this policy, making it clear that its intent is to destroy the possibility of establishing an infrastructure for Eurasian relations which was proposed by Jacques Delors in 1994. It is widely recognized that there is coordination and reciprocal influence between the U.S. and Britain. In many cases you have people inside American policymaking circles who are influenced by British policy vis-à-vis China,” for example, Zbigniew Brzezinski. “However, this does not mean that they can determine American policy, because American interests in this region are not determined by the historical complexes which control British policy.”

These two foreign policy considerations, Dr. Shadi stressed, have dominated “European politics since the Treaty of Westphalia” in 1648. And in the present context, he said that for the Americans, Caspian Sea oil pipelines represent a parody of the pre-World War I Berlin-Baghdad challenge for the British. Dr. Shadi demonstrated his keen insight into historical and present relations, by noting that there is one difference between British policy and American policy, and that is, that American policy may go along with the idea of building the Silk Road in order to save their collapsing industrial economy, and to establish fruitful relations with eastern Europe. That approach, which the speaker called “American geo-economics,” he said was preferable to British geopolitics.

One message which emerged from the discussions, although not explicitly formulated as such, was that Europe (especially Germany and France) and the United States should rethink their policy toward the New Silk Road project. Another message was that in Egypt, there are serious intellectuals who are dedicating time, energy, and serious concentration, to thrashing out precisely those ideas, championed by LaRouche and *EIR*, which represent the hope for leading not only their own country, but also the entire world out of economic disaster. It is to be hoped that the example set by the Center for Asian Studies at the University of Cairo, will be followed by others.