

Panel II

How the Belt and Road Initiative Is Changing Africa: The Only Human Solution to the Refugee Crisis

HUSSEIN ASKARY

Opening Remarks

Hussein Askary, Southwest Asia Coordinator for the Schiller Institute, introduced Panel II of the Schiller Institute conference on June 20.

Thank you very much, Claudio. I'm pleased and honored to be opening this esteemed and very interesting panel.

My name is Hussein Askary; I am an Iraqi Swedish citizen. I'm the Southwest Asia Coordinator for the Schiller Institute. I've been working with the Schiller Institute for the last 23 years. I'm also the co-author of the Schiller Institute Special Report, *Extending the New Silk Road to West Asia and Africa*, which was released in November 2017 at a conference here, in this same place. This report, of which we have copies—everybody should get copies—is a wonderful expression of the optimism that has been sparked by Africa's joining the New Paradigm, defined by the Belt and Road Initiative of 2013



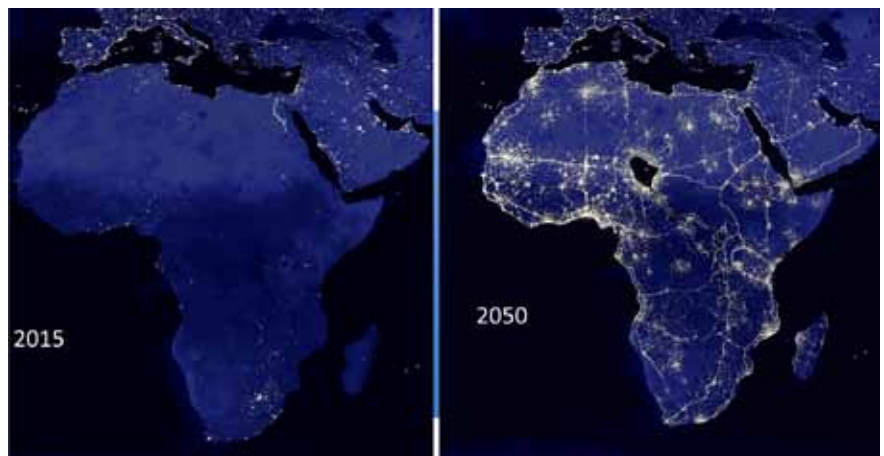
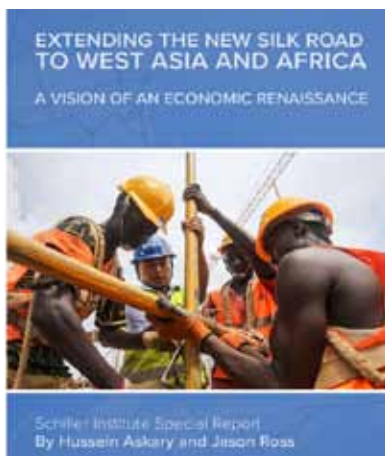
Hussein Askary

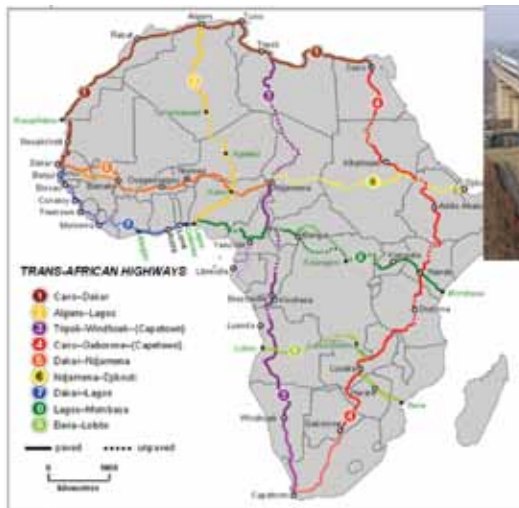
presented by China, and by the BRICS nations' Fortaleza Declaration of 2014.

Most African nations are working intensively now on real development plans with China and the other nations of the BRICS and their friends. This report is also a road map for the bright future that is awaiting the coming generations of Africans and the people of Southwest Asia, the so-called "Middle East." Middle East is the wrong term—it's called Southwest Asia.

Africa Is a Wonderful Continent

This is Africa by night. We have a true image of Africa by night, taken by NASA satellites, and you see a continent shrouded in darkness, because there is simply no electricity. The image of Africa in 2050 is an image drawn from my instructions, by our friend and member, Chance McGee, of how we envision Africa to





Trans-African High-Speed Rail Network.

this is the lesson we are learning from China's involvement in Africa.

I'm not going to describe this report in detail, because I did so last year, and people should just get a copy of the report. Some of the projects described in this report are already completed, some are under construction or being seriously negotiated. As some of our honorable speakers will testify, enormous progress is taking place. At least one nation in

look by night in 2050.

By 2030, Southwest Asia and Africa will have jointly contributed the greatest population growth, of all world regions, reaching an estimated 1.9 billion by 2030, with an amazing median age of only 23 years. By 2050, the bulk of the world's population growth will take place in Africa. Of an additional 2.4 billion people projected to be born between 2015 and 2050, 1.3 billion will be added in Africa. While people who have been brainwashed by British propaganda believe this is a catastrophe, and a problem, we believe this is a fantastic challenge and a great opportunity.

And I think this is the same view that China holds of Africa. If we listen to speeches by President Xi Jinping in the China-Africa summits, he sees Africa as a great opportunity. What is required, as Helga Zepp-LaRouche said this morning, is that to get to the New Paradigm, for Europe to join the New Paradigm, it's not only that they will participate in building railways in Africa—we have to change our view of humans, and our attitudes, for example, towards Africa! Because Africa, in European minds and in the United States, is associated with problems, because that's the only thing being reported. So instead, we have to get a change in the mind of the European policymakers, and in the population in the United States, that Africa is not a problem: Africa is a great challenge, but it is a great opportunity. I think

Africa, Ethiopia, is now nicknamed a “double-digit growth nation.” And many others will soon join the club.

There are no limits to what can be achieved on this wonderful continent, and therefore, our level of ambition and visions, and our plans, have to be at the same level as the challenge itself. This is a map of the trans-African high-speed railway we envision. This plan has existed in the African Union for many, many years, but it is represented as highways that have never been built. But now the rail is being developed piece by piece.

Like the Djibouti-Addis Ababa railway that was completed in 2017, with the help of China, we have the Mombasa-Nairobi railway, which was also completed last year. These projects are breaking all previous records—on construction, speed, efficiency, and cost. So these are some of the projects.

The plan that the African Union has been dreaming

Mombasa-Nairobi Railway and East African Master Plan



of and planning for, is now being implemented on the ground. The proverbial shovel is already in the ground. This is not something that is going to happen sometime in the future.

Our panel, titled “How the Belt and Road Initiative Is Changing Africa: The Only Human Solution to the Refugee Crisis,” could not come together at a more crucial time than this. As the old paradigm unfortunately continues to wreak havoc in many nations, such as in Syria and Yemen, the consequences of at least forty years of misguided and intentionally destructive policies imposed on these nations are still being felt through widespread poverty, epidemics, food shortages, and lack of basic services, and also in the mass refugee crisis.

I Was a Refugee, Myself

I was myself a refugee, and suffered enormously with my family when we had to flee Iraq in 1991, from the Kurdish city of Sulaymaniyah in Iraq, as a consequence of the Gulf War—Desert Storm—which Colonel Scholz was talking about [see Panel 1], launched by George Bush, Sr. We had to walk, my family and I, for six days and nights, in the very harsh mountain climate; it was raining and even snowing in some cases. We had nothing with us, except small bags of dried fruit, until we reached the Iranian border, and then we ended up in huge tent camps in Iran.

When we reached these refugee camps, it was a terrible situation for morale. The physical conditions were terrible, but we managed to dust off our clothes and rise—my family and I, my sisters, especially—and we started working with the international aid organizations, the Red Cross and Doctors Without Borders. One year later, I managed to come to Norway. I was the featured person in a 1994 documentary film in Norway about the refugee crisis. It was a documentary series, called “Sightseeing in Reality: One of the Lucky Ones,” referring to me. I was 23 years old at the time.

As Helga said today, you know, when you look at refugees, they’re not objects on the TV screen. When you look at refugees, they are real human beings—many of them have aspirations, they have a mission in their lives, and they’re not just a number.

Two years later, after I reached Norway in 1992, I



Refugees fleeing in 1991 during Operation Desert Storm from Sulaymaniyah, Iraq, through a very harsh mountain climate, to a camp in Iran.

met the Schiller Institute in Oslo. So I have a firsthand sense of what it means to suffer as a refugee, and to leave everything behind and risk your life to get to where you believe is a safer place, or where you can live with dignity.

However, I was convinced that the solution to all the many refugee crises was not by relieving the symptoms, by simply providing aid to the refugees—which should be done, anyway, you should help refugees—but by dealing with the causes of all these crises at the core. That could and will only be dealt with, through creating a new and just world economic order, and political order.

So, it was all very natural for me to join the Schiller Institute in 1994, and dedicate my time and energy to contribute to creating this new paradigm, with Helga and Lyndon LaRouche and all the wonderful people I have met and worked with all these years.

So, whether you are a refugee, a native, a citizen, a resident of Europe or the United States or anywhere, you should join the Schiller Institute: Because this is the only way, as I have experienced, to make a change in the world that has an impact on every living being on the planet.

So, now, with the World Land-Bridge we are many. We have whole nations also joining the New Paradigm, and we can all see that the prospect for a prosperous and beautiful future for all nations is within reach. Therefore, I urge every one of you, that in the midst of the worst suffering, we always have to have our eyes, not on the mud under our feet, but directed toward the bright stars above.

Thank you very much.