

peace policy, Tobias Faku of the Schiller Institute in Germany then presented Lyndon LaRouche's [Oasis Plan](#) as a way to create the foundation for economic development and peace in Southwest Asia. He quoted former South African Minister of International Relations and Cooperation Dr. Naledi Pandor, who had said two days earlier at a meeting of the [International Peace Coalition](#): "I believe we should have the spirit of [Nelson] Mandela that freedom is possible, that the Palestinian people will enjoy sovereignty, justice and freedom, and that the Oasis Plan offers an opportunity for us to think of the world in a different way." Faku described how the amount of usable fresh water in Israel and Palestine can be doubled by building nuclear power plants for seawater desalination.

Zepp-LaRouche then closed the round of presentations. She began with an overview of the global crisis areas, and described the current "tectonic change in the world situation" based on the efforts of the Global South to overcome 500 years of colonialism. The current attempts to tackle the migration problem by locking out refugees are not a solution; rather, the collective West must cooperate with the Global South

to overcome the causes of flight. To achieve this, 2-3 billion new productive jobs would have to be created worldwide:

All this is possible because we are human beings and not animals. And we can therefore consider our best cultural contributions, which every nation and every culture has produced, as the basis for a dialogue in which we support the best tendencies in each other's cultures and make this a dialogue that will then, with absolute certainty, result in a new Renaissance for humanity.

Around of discussion followed, in which the speakers answered questions from the seminar participants who had joined the conference via the internet. It became clear that Afghans are very disappointed with the West's behavior toward the country. The confiscation of the country's foreign exchange reserves is making reconstruction more difficult, and now that the Taliban has eradicated most of the opium poppy cultivation in the country, infrastructure must be expanded to modernize agriculture—but the West does not support this.

Afghanistan's Transformation through Regional Connectivity

by Stephan Ossenkopp

Feb. 25—Stephan Ossenkopp, deputy chairman of BüSo and candidate in the Feb. 23 German federal election, addressed the Feb. 16 BüSo seminar "Peace through Development in Afghanistan and the Middle East." His presentation was titled "Afghanistan's Transformation through Regional Connectivity."

As part of a Schiller Institute delegation in Kabul, Afghanistan, he spoke on this same topic at a Nov. 6-8, 2023 conference, sponsored by the Ibn-e-Sina Research and Development Organization, titled "Operation Ibn Sina: The Coming Afghan Economic Miracle." The following is a tran-



Stephan Ossenkopp

script, translated and edited by EIR, of his Feb. 16 presentation. Subheads have been added.

First of all, I would like to introduce myself: Stephan Ossenkopp. I am a direct candidate for the Civil Rights Movement Solidarity (BüSo) in the Pankow district, and my observation is that the topic of Afghanistan only plays a marginal role in the German federal election campaign, if at all, and then only perhaps as a security policy issue. But given the fact that the German Bundeswehr was in Afghanistan for 20 years as part of NATO missions, the country of Afghanistan deserves

much more space in the election campaign and in German political discussions in general. We spent billions of euros and promised to develop the country in some way so that it would be better off afterwards than before. But that is something you can't say today. Instead of tackling this issue productively, the country is being banned, under an absolute taboo, and any contact with the government agencies there is an absolute no-go.

Of course, things can't stay like this. There are many German-Afghans living here in Germany; many, many thousands. We also have some here today who will speak; they are well integrated, well networked, as well as being well integrated and networked worldwide. And they all want their country to be developed. So, there is incredible potential that we must exploit, instead of lumping everything together in this discussion of security and refugees and deportations, etc.

The much better discussion in this context would be one about the economic development of Afghanistan as the only functional and humanistically justifiable way of preventing further refugee movements. That would also be a more appropriate way of dealing with our 20-year occupation of Afghanistan. And that is why we at BüSo have decided to invite Afghanistan experts to provide information about the country and to show options for how to think about a solution differently.

Infrastructure, the Basic Framework

Above all, I would like to speak about the topic of "connectivity and Afghanistan." Connectivity means building infrastructure as the framework for every further step in industrialization and for every step of mechanized agriculture. Of course, this involves roads, railways, urban infrastructure; of course, it also involves waterways, pipelines, power lines and much more.



Jawad Niksad



Jawad Niksad

FIGURE 1
Scenes from the Ibn-e-Sina conference in Kabul, November 2023 attended by experts, including from the Schiller Institute. Above, an agriculture workshop. Left, a roundtable of transport and infrastructure experts, and experts from educational institutions (the author is second from left). Below, a workshop on credit, industry and jobs.



Jawad Niksad

But I would like to focus here on national and supra-regional transport infrastructure, especially railway projects. Because these will accelerate Afghanistan's connection to its neighboring countries and can therefore dramatically boost the import and export of goods. At the same time, this will potentially create special economic zones, regional agricultural centers and more and more training places for skilled workers in agriculture and industry in the interior of the country, which is, of course, extremely important for attracting new engineers, skilled workers and construction workers. This will be the basis for producing high-quality products both for household consumption in Afghanistan and for international trade.

The Trans-Afghan Railway

The first and, in my opinion, almost the most important major railway project is the so-called Trans-Afghan Railway. It has been discussed for a long time, but just at the end of last year, 2024, there was a large meeting of experts and specialists in the Uzbek capital of Tashkent, and there they also discussed economic cooperation with neighboring countries. The Uzbek Transport Minister, Mr. Makhkamov, said that he wants to push ahead with the Trans-Afghan Railway Corridor project so that the groundbreaking ceremony can take place this year. It will take five years to build, and I will show you a map of the project in a moment.

These (Figure 1) are six impressions from an Ibn Sina conference in November 2023, which was attended by experts, including us from the Schiller Institute, and I am also here in the middle. This is a roundtable—a roundtable of transport and infrastructure experts, people from NGOs, and educational institutions were there. I just want to demonstrate that we are definitely already working on this Ibn Sina project.

Here (Figure 2) we see Afghanistan. You can see where the city of Termez is, where the railway begins—that is in the south of Uzbekistan—and then this railway

FIGURE 2
Trans-Afghan Railway Corridor



Railcop.pk

The Trans-Afghan Railway Corridor project, which may break ground this year. When built, it will reduce shipping time from Termez in south Uzbekistan to Pakistan from 35 days to just 3 to 5 days.

line is routed through Mazar-i-Sharif to Kabul, and then on to Peshawar in Pakistan. This is the so-called Trans-Afghan Railway Corridor. Goods can then be transported from Uzbekistan to Pakistan via Afghan territory, and the transport time can be reduced from the current 35 days to just 3-5 days. This of course means that the cost of standard containers can drop massively and the volume of freight can increase massively, estimated at over 10 million tons per year.

This is a 650 km railway project that runs from Termez via Mazar-i-Sharif to the Pakistani border, and can then be connected in Pakistan to one of the prestige projects of the New Silk Road, the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), namely the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, which then leads to the coast of Pakistan and enables goods to be transported from landlocked Afghanistan, Uzbekistan or Kazakhstan, which is also landlocked, to the ports on the Arabian Sea.

In any case, this Trans-Afghan Railway will lead to completely new relationships between Central Asia, Afghanistan, Pakistan, but also Iran and China—Iran to the west of Afghanistan and China to the east of Afghanistan. For example, Iran has had a strategy called “Looking East” for 20 years. They also want to use this to promote cooperation with Afghanistan and, for example, invest in the mining sector. But countries like Turkmenistan in northwestern Afghanistan have also started building gas pipelines as part of this infrastructure initiative.

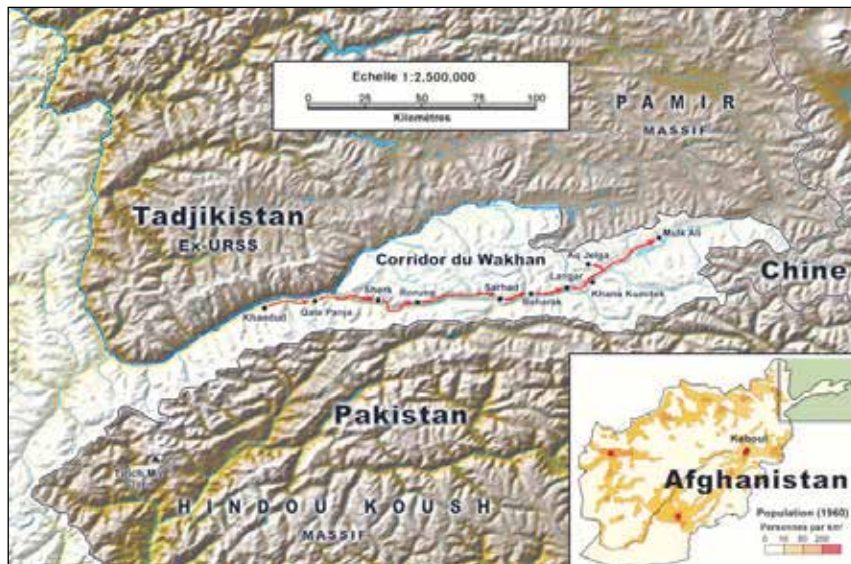
The Wakhan Corridor

Interestingly, we only found out at the end of January that (Figure 3) field studies are being pushed forward for an economic corridor along the so-called Wakhan Road, which is the 20 to 60 km wide and 300 km long corridor in eastern Afghanistan. Now, following field studies, construction work has begun on this new transit route, and here too the transit costs for goods are being massively reduced. The press reported that the price of a container of pine nuts—a product for which Afghanistan is particularly well-known due to its quality—when exported to China will fall from 65,000 dollars by air to 5,000 dollars by land. Of course, a whole range of other Afghan products can also be exported to China, the largest market in the world, but also goods from other countries that reach China via transit through Afghanistan. And goods can, of course, also be exported in the opposite direction from China to Afghanistan through the same land corridor, at much more favorable conditions. This project is very important.

The Afghan Ring Railway

Then you can see here (Figure 4) a medium blue or lapis lazuli blue route. This is the very important and very central ring road, a four-lane road around the country. But here they want to push ahead with the construction of the largest domestic railway network. This has been discussed for several years. It affects many projects—the Wakhan Corridor, the Trans-Afghan Rail Corridor, but this is the ring railway network. The government in Kabul is currently pushing for its implementation.

FIGURE 3
The Wakhan Corridor



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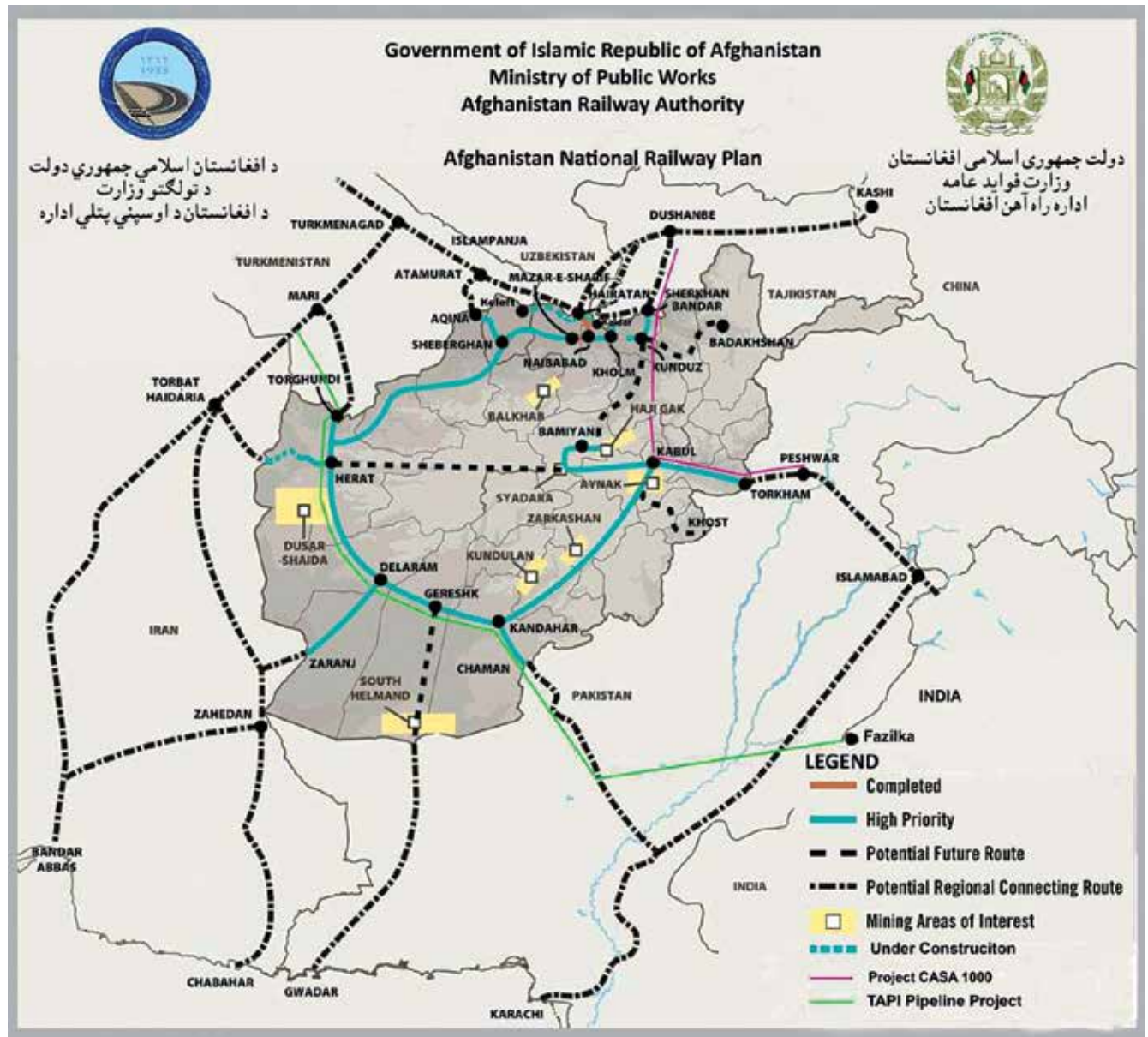
The Wakhan Corridor in northeastern Afghanistan connects the country to China.

It is strange that the previous governments supported by the West also held numerous conferences and produced many working papers on these topics, but there was never actually a groundbreaking ceremony, let alone the completion of these projects. That is changing now, and that is where the opportunities lie for German industry and German exports to participate in the development of these projects, either directly in Afghanistan, or via third countries—e.g. China, Uzbekistan—and thus achieve a win-win situation, a double benefit.

So, now this railway project is planned that runs along this ring road, from Mazar-i-Sharif, which is in the north, then it goes west to Herat, and from there, there is a connection to Iran. Then there is another route that goes south, to Kandahar, which makes a further connection to Pakistan possible. The project is to be implemented in two phases: phase one is 657 kilometers and phase two is about 811 kilometers.

Just now, on February 8, a week ago, it was reported in the regional newspapers that a feasibility study for the Herat-Kandahar railway line is to begin. The Minister of Public Works in charge signed five contracts worth 264 million Afghanis with representatives of five domestic and foreign companies, and after detailed planning, the work is to be completed within eight months—then the construction of this railway can begin. It is reported that the Islamic Emirates are actually aiming to build a large railway network in or-

FIGURE 4
The Afghan Ring Railway



Afghan Railway Office

Afghan Ring Railway (medium blue) now among priorities after decades of occupation.

der to improve regional accessibility and increase regional transit and transfer through the country.

Breaking the Taboos

Is anyone now asking how all this is supposed to happen, when there are no diplomatic relations with the Taliban, and there are sanctions? That is all true, and these are all hurdles on the way to normalizing relations. But the government in Kabul is by no means

completely isolated; on the contrary, it is becoming less and less so.

For example, the Russian Federation has removed the Taliban from the list of terrorist groups, and Kazakhstan has done the same. The President of Kazakhstan, Kassym-Jomart Tokayev, said that the presence of the Taliban government in Kabul is a fact that cannot be argued away. In June 2024, an Afghan delegation also took part for the first time in the St. Petersburg

International Economic Forum, a huge economic conference in Russia.

In September of the previous year, 2023, there was also an accreditation of a Chinese ambassador in Kabul, and shortly afterwards, in October 2023, a delegation from Kabul took part in the Silk Road Forum in Beijing.

There is actually no reason why Germany should not bridge this hurdle and at least establish the first diplomatic contacts with Kabul. The expansion of the road infrastructure is also an important export opportunity for Germany, or a chance to sign memoranda of cooperation.

Of course, Afghanistan is one of the poorest countries due to its long-standing wars, occupation and sanctions, and its isolation. And it is, as I said, landlocked, and this 2,200 km long two-lane ring road is one of the main traffic arteries. But a large part of the road network in Afghanistan can be modernized, it can be expanded. It is certainly a major undertaking to connect remote towns and villages, rural areas, but this is extremely important in order to attract companies to the regions, build agricultural infrastructure, etc.

Of course there were Western conferences that had Afghanistan as a topic. In Doha, for example, there were several UN conferences, but they all actually fizzled out, because they only managed to bring in a Taliban delegation there in June 2024, and that was immediately met with a great outcry from British and American, and other Western NGOs. Of course, that is not a solution.

The basis for Afghanistan's independent national economy can now be created. It is extremely important that foreign investors and technology companies deliver technological goods, etc. there. And that is an extremely important undertaking for Germany, which is already in its third year of recession. Precisely because Afghanistan is very interconnected in the region, that should definitely be an issue, including for the election campaign here.

I think that if you look at the country beyond the news blackout and the taboo, there is actually a lot of good news about what is happening there. And I hope that with these railway projects that I have just presented, I have perhaps been able to shed some light on the matter.

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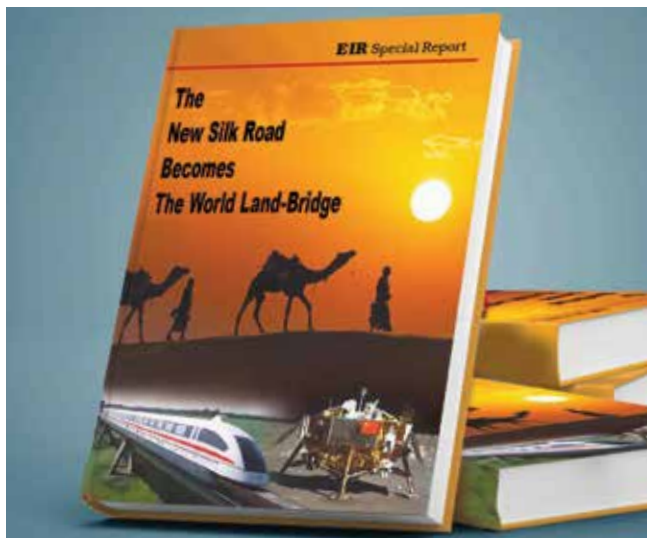
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