

# The Suez and Nicaragua Canals Reshape the World Ocean

by Dennis Small

Aug. 10—On Aug. 6, 2015, Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi, at a ceremony in Ismailia, Egypt, inaugurated the New Suez Canal, one of the most significant global infrastructure projects undertaken and completed on the planet in the last 100 years, and an enterprise brought to fruition in a stunning one year from inception to completion. President el-Sisi proudly proclaimed that “Egypt is a great country and has a civilization of 7,000 years,” adding that the New Suez Canal is “Egypt’s new gift for humanity.”

Gen. el-Sisi chose to open the celebration in military uniform, traveling on the 150-year-old Presidential yacht *El-Mahroussa*, which was the first ship to cross the original Suez Canal when it was opened in 1869.

And by his side was a nine-year-old cancer patient, Omar Salah, who had expressed his dream of meeting Egypt’s president and attending the inauguration of the New Suez Canal. President el-Sisi told the gathered multitude that “the Egyptian state is determined . . . to achieve the aspirations of its sons.”

It is hard to know how many of those present were reminded of the refrain, well-known to most Americans, “Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to breathe free,” from the Emma Lazarus poem engraved on the pedestal of the Statue of Liberty. That statue now sits in New York Harbor, but it was originally designed by French sculptor Frédéric-Auguste Bartholdi in 1869 for the then-newly-inaugurated Suez Canal.



Xinhua/MENA

*Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi, joined by a young Egyptian boy, at the ceremony opening the New Suez Canal August 6.*

### A Strategic Victory

Many prominent world leaders were present in Ismailia on Aug. 6, including French President François Hollande, Russian Prime Minister Dmitri Medvedev, Greek Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras, German Vice Chancellor Sigmar Gabriel, and heads of government and cabinet-level officials from dozens of other nations—not including the United States. President Barack Obama only saw fit to send the American ambassador in Cairo, a boorish diplomatic insult from the Administration that had tried to sink Egypt into chaos and warfare, by putting in power and supporting the pro-terrorist Muslim Brotherhood government of Mohamed Morsi, who nearly destroyed the country during his 2012-2013 reign.

Obama, at London’s behest, had tried to turn Egypt

into another Libya, as part of their broader drive for thermonuclear confrontation with Russia and China. Instead, they were surprised and stymied by the 2013 popular revolution which overthrew Morsi and put Gen. el-Sisi in power. That set the clock back significantly in their race for global warfare.

And then the el-Sisi government proceeded to announce, launch, and execute the construction of the New Suez Canal at breakneck speed, completing in exactly one year what the government itself had originally posed as a three-year project. By demanding that the job be done in one year, el-Sisi unleashed a mission-oriented sense of creativity and “can do” optimism in the Egyptian population which made the seemingly impossible, achievable.

As one of the Egyptian engineers working on the project, Ali el-Kholy, put it in an interview included in an Aug. 4 *Nile TV* documentary on the project: “This canal is not just for us or for our children. It’s for all coming generations. We will die, but it shall live on for hundreds of years, for our children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren.”

Not surprisingly, the full \$8.4 billion cost of the New Suez Canal project was financed entirely with domestic resources, mobilized with national bonds sold only to Egyptian citizens *in one week*.

Speeding up the timetable also meant that the British Empire and their Obama stooge didn’t even have time to realize what was happening and regroup, before the project was completed. As Lyndon LaRouche commented Aug. 7:

“Egypt was under attack, a massive attack; and that massive attack forced Egypt to accelerate the development of the two stages that were intended on this thing. And that was what forced them to pre-empt the situation by accelerating the rate of creation. In other words, they took what would be three years and reduced it to one; and by doing that, they crushed the options of the enemy.”

LaRouche pointed to the significance of these developments:

“What’s happened with the new canal way by Egypt, has now changed the whole planet. There are no longer several oceans: There’s now one ocean. And the Atlantic Ocean and the Pacific Ocean are all opened up to the same thing.”

“The canal in Egypt has opened up the world,” La-



John Grigaitis

*The Egyptian government staged the grand march from Verdi's Aida in honor of opening the New Suez Canal. Here, a performance of the opera by the Michigan Opera Theatre in May 2013.*

Rouche continued, “so that you no longer have an Atlantic nation as opposed to an Asian nation. Everything’s going to change suddenly as a result of what happened . . . a successful accomplishment of changing the whole character of maritime trade throughout the whole planet. Because the whole planet is now open, with the Nicaraguan thing [the Nicaragua Grand Inter-Oceanic Canal] added in there, and this; it’s all one thing now.”

LaRouche summarized the strategic impact: “Reorganize the world! We have an excellent thing that just happened in Egypt. . . . They have opened up the possibility of development of the whole world, in various categories.”

## The World Ocean

Economic development *per se* is a *casus belli* as far as the British are concerned, both because it provides nations and peoples with an alternative to their dying system, but more fundamentally, because it is rooted in, and fosters, a concept of man as a creative species, a concept which threatens the British Empire’s very existence: it is the ultimate weapon to win the war against the British Empire’s war drive.

All the more so when development occurs in a location such as the Suez Canal. The British and French had owned the original Suez Canal until it was nationalized by Egypt in 1956, with the backing of U.S. President Dwight Eisenhower. The British thereby lost control of one of the key international maritime “chokepoints,” as British geopolitics likes to describe such geographic-

FIGURE 1

## The Suez, Kra and Nicaragua Canals and the World Land-Bridge



EIRNS

*When added to the global system of transport corridors, land and sea, which are underway with the Chinese New Silk Road, Maritime Silk Road, and the World Land-Bridge projects, these three canals will create a whole new level of global connectivity: basically, there will now be one world ocean, one continent.*

economic locations.

The New Suez Canal, as impressive as it is, is not a stand-alone project. Along with the Nicaragua Grand Inter-Oceanic Canal, scheduled for completion before 2020, and the Kra Canal in Thailand, long-designed and on the books, but which is still only under consideration, it will completely transform man's economic relationship to the world ocean. Conceived in conjunction with the World Land- Bridge (see **Figure 1**), whose high-speed rail lines will similarly link the continents into a single land-mass, humanity's relationship with the entire biosphere will be redefined: Man's planet Earth will truly become "One Ocean, One Continent," within the domain of the Solar and Galactic principles shaping its development.

The just-completed New Suez Canal project involved deepening and widening the existing canal along 37 kilometers of its total length of 193 km, as well as constructing an entirely new, parallel canal along 35 kilometers of the route. These 72 kilometers

of new projects now allow two-way traffic along most of the route, shortening transit time from 18 hours to 11 hours on average, and doubling the number of ships that are able to cross through the canal, from 49 to 97 per day. The New Suez Canal can handle super-large cargo ships, with a maximum loaded weight of 240,000 DWT (deadweight tons). This is large enough to handle the very largest of today's container ships, and all but the ultra-large oil tankers and dry bulk carriers.

The New Suez Canal vastly shortens shipping distances and times to Europe from the booming Asian markets of China, India, etc., especially if the Greek port of Piraeus is expanded to become a principal port for much of these European imports and exports, with deep-water facilities and high-speed rail links extending into Europe. This is a major infrastructure project which the Chinese are avidly pursuing with the Greek government.

The Canal expansion is only the first stage of a much broader development project that the Egyptian govern-

ment has undertaken, which includes: major expansion of Port Said and Port Suez; building a technology center in Ismailia; land reclamation; building industrial parks; constructing a half-dozen rail and road tunnels under the canal; major city building; and so on.

The BRICS nations, especially China and Russia, are playing a major role in these projects. In an interview with *Al-Ahram* during his visit for the inauguration of the Canal, Russian Prime Minister Dmitri Medvedev emphasized that “creating a Russian industrial zone in the Suez Canal could be the first step in this project. Nuclear power engineering is a strategic area of Russian-Egyptian cooperation. I’m not overstating it. Russia is willing to help Egypt become a regional leader in the nuclear industry.”

## Grand Strategy

The Nicaragua Grand Inter-Oceanic Canal, which will be built by the Nicaraguan government and the Chinese company HKND, is a great infrastructure project on an even larger scale than the New Suez Canal. Some 510 million cubic meters of earth were excavated for the New Suez Canal; the Nicaraguan project will move some 5 *billion* cubic meters—ten times more! The Nicaraguan Canal will connect the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans by cutting through the isthmus of Central America—another one of those historic British geopolitical chokepoints. It will complement the current Panama Canal, which has been open since 1914, but is now woefully inadequate for both the size of modern ships and the volume of international trade.

The current “Panamax” (maximum size of a ship that can pass through the Panama Canal) is about 5,000 TEU (twenty-foot equivalent units—the international standard used to measure container ship capacity). The largest container ships in the world are now 19,000 TEU and more. Even with the expansion of the Panama Canal that is now underway with the addition of two

TABLE 1

### Comparison of Panama, Suez, Kra, and Nicaragua Canals

	Current Panama Canal	Expanded Panama Canal	Original Suez Canal	New Suez Canal	Kra Canal	Nicaragua Canal
<b>Date in Service</b>	(1914)	(2016)	(1869)	(2015)	proposed	(2019)
<b>Length</b> (km)	77	77	193	193	103	278
<b>Maximum size</b> (TEU)	5,000	13,000	14,000	20,000	25,000	25,000
<b>Maximum size</b> (thousand DWT)	65	180	200	280	400	400
<b>Ships/day</b>	30	60	49	97	(NA)	25
<b>Transit time</b> (hours)	8-10	8-10	18	11	8	30
<b>Estimated cost</b> (billions \$)	(NA)	5.3	(NA)	8.4	20	50
<b>Excavation/dredging</b> (millions m3)	140	120	273	510	4,000	5,000

Sources: EIR, HKND, pancanal.com, suezcanal.gov.eg

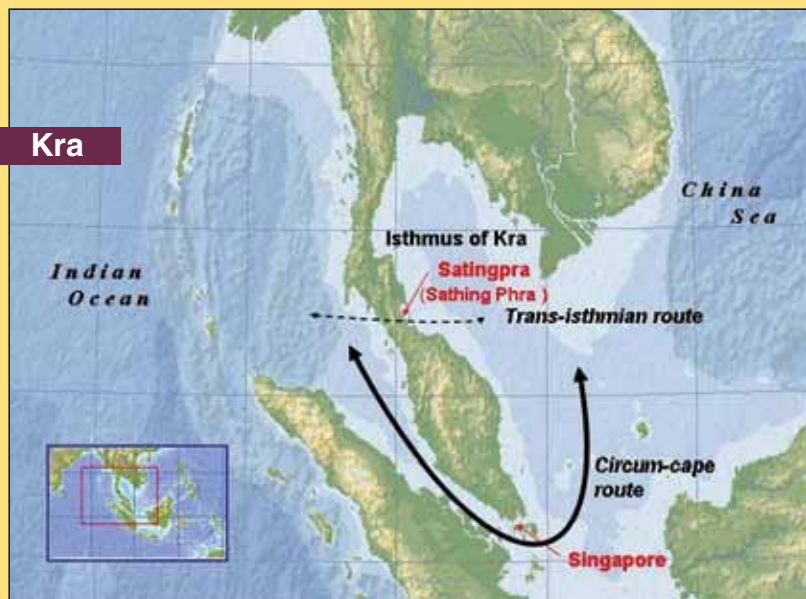
new, larger locks (scheduled for completion in 2016), the Panama Canal will only be able to handle 13,000-TEU ships. The Nicaragua Grand Inter-Oceanic Canal will dwarf that, handling ships twice that size, of up to 25,000 TEU, along its 278 kilometer route (see **Table 1**).

Exemplary of the physical-economic impact this will have is the case of Brazil’s huge (and growing) iron ore exports to China. At the end of 2014, the Brazilian government announced that it plans to increase its output of iron ore by 50% over the next five years, and has therefore placed orders with various Chinese and South Korean shipbuilders for 35 new cargo ships with a maximum capacity of some 400,000 deadweight tons (DWT) each—way more than current cargo ships can handle. These ships will be too large to go through the expanded Panama Canal, and even the New Suez Canal. But they can be handled by the Nicaragua Grand Inter-Oceanic Canal. That westward route from Brazil, through the Nicaragua Canal, to China is about 10% shorter than the eastward maritime route currently taken from Brazil, across the Atlantic, around South Africa’s Cape of Good Hope, to China.

But not all is clear sailing with the Nicaragua Grand Inter-Oceanic Canal. The British Empire has made it abundantly clear that it will do everything possible to make sure that this project never materializes, including mobilizing its environmentalist and indigenist shock troops, as well as financial and other forms of irregular warfare. A recent issue of the London *Econo-*



FIGURE 2



*mist* magazine described the Nicaraguan Canal as “surely one of the world’s most improbable infrastructure projects, a pharaonic enterprise.” The magazine then promised that “environmentalists will try to block it every step of the way.”

It was thus of great strategic significance that Nicaraguan Vice President Moisés Omar Halleslevens participated in the ceremony inaugurating the New Suez Canal on Aug. 6; that he there met with Egyptian President el-Sisi; and that he received Egypt’s strong support for the Nicaraguan project, including plans for the two countries’ respective canal commissions to meet on a regular basis.

### Egypt Did It, and So Will We!

The spokesman for the Nicaraguan Canal Commission, engineer Telémaco Talavera, spoke to *EIR* on Aug. 7, the day after the New Suez Canal was inaugurated, to express his congratulations and optimism. His basic message was: Egypt did it, and so will we!

Talavera called Egypt’s canal “a great achievement, not only for Egypt, but in fact for the world ... as the Nicaraguan Canal will also be.” Talavera added that the opening of the New Suez Canal “comes at a good time; many people didn’t think it would be possible to achieve what was done with the Suez Canal in such a short period of time, just as today there are people who don’t

believe in the Nicaraguan Canal, or don't want it to become a reality."

Talavera noted that "the Egyptian President [el-Sisi] said, not only in a private meeting [with the Nicaraguan Vice President], not only at the inauguration of the canal, that he also celebrated Nicaragua's initiative and drive, and he offered all his help for the construction of the Nicaraguan Canal as well."

Talavera added: "We all know that the world's population has grown greatly and that it keeps growing. Exports and imports of products and goods are also growing, and so does the need to shorten distances, to reduce financial costs, to reduce environmental costs. . . . We are prepared to make that dream, that necessity, a reality." He concluded: "We celebrate this great triumph, not only for Egypt, but for the world, as we also celebrate the expansion of the Panama Canal and what will be an extraordinary project for the world, the Nicaraguan Canal, which is underway."

### **The Kra Canal: A 225-Year Wait**

Add into the picture the long-planned Kra Canal in Thailand, which provides a direct shipping route from China and other Asian nations into the Indian Ocean and points west—by-passing the overcrowded Strait of Malacca, yet another British chokepoint—and you begin to get a picture of how these three great projects are already reshaping man's relationship to the world ocean.

Today, some 30% of all world trade uses the Strait of Malacca, which on average sees the passage of 210 ships per day, with a maximum size of 210,000 DWT (deadweight tons).

The Kra Canal would shorten shipping distances between the South China Sea and the Indian Ocean by over 1,000 kilometers, and allow the passage of ships of 400,000 DWT or more. Note that this geographic region of the planet—encompassing China, India, Japan, and the populous nations of Southeast Asia—is home to about *half* of the human race.

The optimal route and configuration for this canal would be a two-lane, sea-level, 103 kilometer route, whose excavation of some four billion cubic meters of earth would be significantly sped up by the use of peaceful nuclear explosives (PNE). It would be capable of handling the world's largest cargo ships, in the same range as the Nicaragua Grand Inter-Oceanic Canal.

Some form of Kra Canal project has been under consideration since the late Eighteenth Century. It was

strongly promoted back in the 1980s by pro-development forces in Japan, centered around the Mitsubishi Research Institute, by interests in China, and by Lyndon LaRouche's international movement. In October 1983, *EIR* and the Fusion Energy Foundation (FEF), both founded by LaRouche, held a conference in Bangkok, co-sponsored by Thailand's Ministry of Transportation and the Global Infrastructure Fund (GIF), part of Japan's Mitsubishi Research Institute, promoting the construction of a sea-level canal across the Isthmus of Kra in southern Thailand.

At that conference, LaRouche remarked: "The prospect of establishing a sea-level waterway through the Isthmus of Thailand ought to be seen not only as an important development of basic economic infrastructure, both for Thailand and the cooperating nations of the region; this proposed canal should also be seen as a keystone, around which might be constructed a healthy and balanced development of needed basic infrastructure in a more general way."

Speaking on Aug. 7, 2015, LaRouche recalled this process, and noted: "Only stupidity by governments and other agencies has prevented these things from being accomplished long, long ago. . . . Look at the waste of time! All these things were ready and available to be done as major projects."

More than 30 years after LaRouche's remarks in Bangkok, with the BRICS and allied nations now moving in that direction, and under conditions of the disintegration of the British Empire's entire trans-Atlantic financial system, that potential can now be realized.

### **For Further Reading**

- "[Egypt Mobilizes To Build the New Suez Canal](#)," by Dean Andromidas and Hussein Askary, *EIR*, Sept. 5, 2014.
- "[Euphoric Egypt Steps Into the 21st Century](#)," by Hussein Askary, *EIR*, March 27, 2015.
- "[Nicaragua's Canal: The Maritime Silk Road Comes to the Americas](#)," by Gretchen Small, *EIR*, January 9, 2015.
- "[Nicaragua Canal: 'Great Project of Physical and Human Transformation](#),'" an interview with Dr. Telémaco Talavera, president of the Agrarian University of Nicaragua and spokesman for the Nicaragua Great Inter-Oceanic-Canal Commission, *EIR*, January 9, 2015.
- "[China and the Coming Revolution in Global Cargo](#)," by Dennis Small, *EIR*, January 9, 2015.