

# Investors shine on solar mega-project

By ILYA RZHEVSKIY  
Epoch Times Staff

The world's most ambitious renewable energy project ever conceived, the Desertec Project, may soon be underway in North Africa.

Once a pipe dream of European scientists and engineers, the Desertec Project aims to establish 16,835 square km of renewable thermal solar power plants in the Sahara Desert of North Africa, along with a super-grid of high voltage transmission lines to supply countries in Europe and Africa with electricity.

The project has finally gained the financial support of a consortium of major companies and organizations such as Deutsche Bank AG, Siemens AG, Trans-Mediterranean Renewable Energy Cooperation, The Club of Rome, and many others. Its goal is to supply continental Europe with up to 15 percent of its total energy needs.

The cost associated with building the Desertec solar power plants and transmission lines through 2050 is estimated at around 400 billion Euros (CA\$649 billion).

A project of such gigantic scope and expense has drummed up both excitement and criticism from experts.

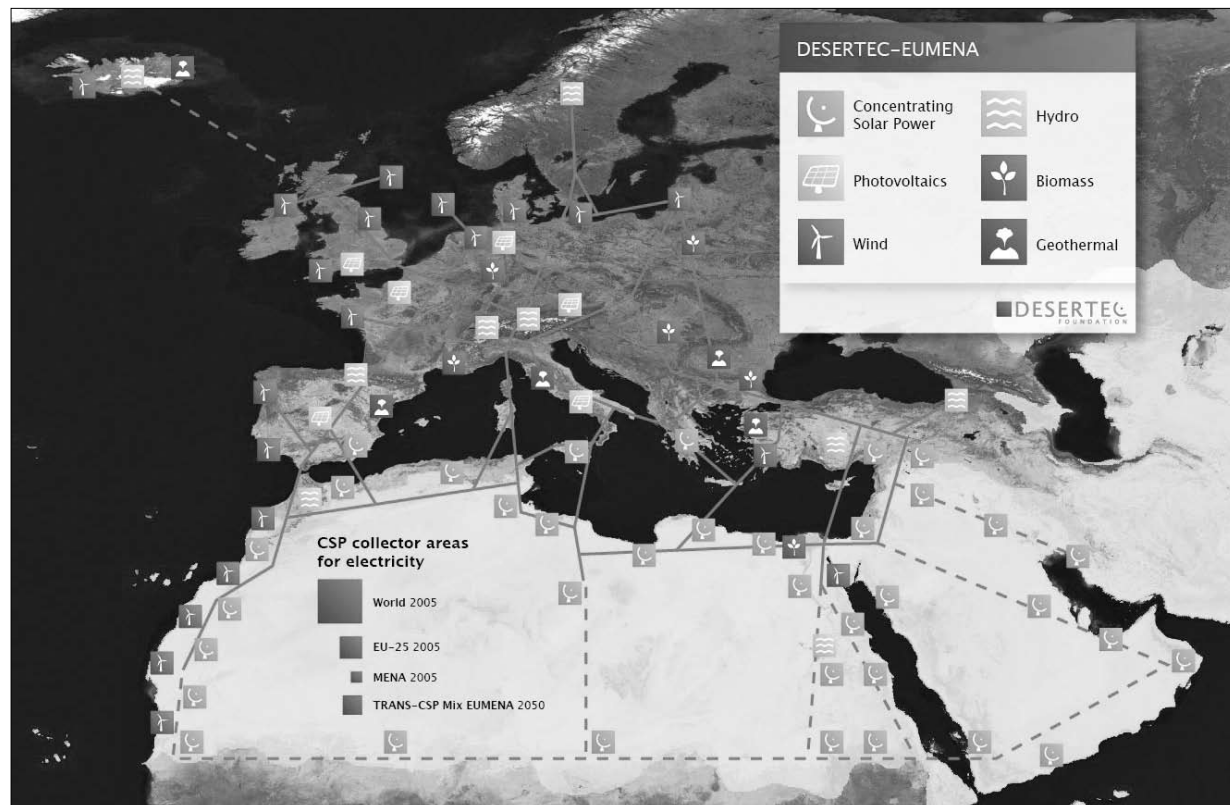
The Desertec Project will bring renewable energy to the mainstream by creating clean, CO<sub>2</sub>-free and stable energy generated from the sun alone. Leaving fossil fuel behind, Desertec is a great leap in technology, creativity, and engineering.

"The time now is perfect to start this initiative, as climate protection has become an urgent issue and our economies need new impulses," said Alexander Mohanty, a spokesman from Munich RE, a large German insurance company spearheading this project.

But critics say that a project this costly—and using current solar technology that may not have reached maximum efficiency—should be approached with caution.

Swedish energy giant Vattenfall AB, which has extensive operations in Germany, is not supporting this undertaking.

"It costs too much money," said



Sketch of possible infrastructure for a sustainable supply of power to Europe, the Middle East and North Africa (EU-MENA). COURTESY OF DESERTEC FOUNDATION

Vattenfall CEO Lars Josefsson, in a Financial Times interview. "Besides that, the transmission costs are too high. I don't think it's realistic."

"Europe should create its electricity in Europe," he concluded.

As an alternative, Josefsson believes in building more coal-powered generating plants that have newer CCS technology aimed at lowering CO<sub>2</sub> emissions.

Some experts also fear that if such a large portion of European electricity production is outsourced to Africa, it would create a political dependency on North African countries, some of which have unstable political environments.

The creation of centralized solar energy plants in Africa also raises its vulnerability for terrorist attacks. If someone attacks the transmission lines, much of Europe could be without electricity.

Solar thermal power plants use the method of harvesting solar energy called concentrating solar

power (CSP). It works very similar to burning a paper with the sun's rays through a magnifying glass. A thermal solar power plant works with the same principle by arranging a set of magnifying glasses and mirrors that produce a very powerful sunbeam. This sunbeam heats up water, turning it into steam that rotates turbines to produce electricity. The electricity is then carried via high-voltage transmission lines to users.

At nighttime, the power generated during the day is stored in special salt-like batteries, which enables the turbines to be running through the night, creating a 24-hour generation system.

The CSP method should not be confused with photovoltaic energy, which doesn't heat up water, but directly produces electricity and stores it in batteries.

CSP plants are generally cleaner, cheaper, and have lower maintenance costs compared to photovol-

taic energy generation. Photovoltaic energy, on the other hand, is not centrally dependent, meaning that panels could be purchased by any individual and placed on a rooftop, allowing greater flexibility.

Smaller CSP projects have already achieved some success. In the Mojave Desert of California, there are a total of 9 solar thermal plants that have been built and used since the 1980s. Spain, India, Mexico, and South Africa are also set to build such plants in the near future.

If the Desertec Project is successful, it would not only benefit Europe, but also North African countries. It would supply them with very cheap energy, create jobs and provide an opportunity to export goods via trade.

"The project is sending a strong signal that investments in renewable energies don't just make ecological sense, they make economic sense as well," Financial Times said.

# Iraqis rejoice as U.S. troops leave Baghdad

BAGHDAD (Reuters)—U.S. troops pulled out of Baghdad on Monday, triggering jubilation among Iraqis hopeful that foreign military occupation is ending six years after the invasion to depose Saddam Hussein.

Iraqi soldiers paraded through the streets in their American-made vehicles draped with Iraqi flags and flowers, chanting, dancing and calling the pullout a "victory."

One drove a motorcycle with party streamers on it; another, a Humvee with a garland of plastic roses on the grill.

US combat troops were to pull out of Iraq's urban centres by midnight on Tuesday under a bilateral security pact that also requires all troops to leave the country by 2012.

All had left the capital by Monday afternoon, Major-General in Staff, Abboud Qanbar, head of Iraqi security forces in Baghdad, told Reuters.

Another Iraqi official who would not be named said some units in cities outside Baghdad would leave at the last minute. Pentagon spokesman Bryan Whitman said 30 bases remained to be handed

over. There are still some 130,000 US troops in Iraq.

Addressing military leaders in Baghdad, Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki said: "Our sovereignty has started and [...] we should move forward to build a modern state and enjoy [the] security which has been achieved."

Many Iraqis were elated even though they feared militants might use the withdrawal as an opportunity to step up attacks.

"The American forces' withdrawal is something awaited by every Iraqi: male, female, young and old. I consider June 30 to be like a wedding," said Ahmed Hameed, 38, near an ice cream bar in Baghdad's upmarket Karrada district.

"This is proof Iraqis are capable of controlling security inside Iraq," added the recent returnee from exile in Egypt.

The government has declared June 30 a national holiday, "National Sovereignty Day."

A spate of bombings in recent days, including two of the deadliest for more than a year that killed 150 people between them, have raised fears militants will try to step up the pace of attacks.

Yet few Iraqis see that as reason for the Americans to stay.

"It is a big joy to see them leaving," said Abu Hassan, 60, a shop owner. "There might be some more attacks because of struggles between the different parties, but Iraqis are controlling security now. It's up to our forces now."

At a ceremony outside central Baghdad's old defense ministry building, the last Baghdad location to be handed over by US forces, a military band played while soldiers and army college students paraded through a square festooned with Iraqi flags.

"Baghdad is safe, Iraq is safe. We are moving to sovereignty in secure steps," Qanbar said at the ceremony, which unusually was not cordoned off, despite the presence of the commander of U.S. forces in Baghdad, Major-General Daniel Bolger.

U.S. troops will remain at two giant bases near Baghdad airport that are defined as non-urban, in case the Iraqis need to draw on their firepower.

"They'll ask us for help whenever they need something but they've got a lot of capability. This is their country. It only makes sense they

should secure their own cities," Bolger said.

Ultimately, Iraq's future depends not on U.S. firepower but on efforts to reconcile fractious ethnic and sectarian groups.

In an interview with Reuters on Monday, the new US ambassador to Iraq, Chris Hill, said the U.S. did not seek a long term military presence in Iraq, contrary to the fears of some Iraqi political groups, only a long term diplomatic presence.

"But at the end of the day the Iraqis are going to have to work out the political problems themselves," he said.

More than six years of U.S. occupation and the orgy of sectarian violence it unleashed have left most Iraqis feeling at best ambivalent about US forces.

Many complain their lives have improved little since then, with daily struggles caused by power cuts and water shortages.

"They did a good job getting rid of that tyrant, Saddam, and we thank them for that, but it's really time for them to leave," said Talib Rasheed, 70, sitting outside in one of Baghdad's leafier suburbs. "Maybe they could leave us some electricity?"

## GLOBAL Q & A

'How important is money in people's lives?'

Perhaps it's a sign of the times. Around the world, from Rio to Russia, money seems to be most important in people's lives. This was the consensus answer found by Epoch Times' global reporters who this week asked, "How much emphasis do you think people in your country place on money compared to other parts of their lives?"



St. Petersburg, Russia  
Olga Pushkareva, 34,  
Landscape Architect

Money in Russia is not very important, but everybody wants it ... and yet would never say it.



Wellington, New Zealand  
Zowie Heywood, 26, Fashion Designer

I think our country in particular has a huge emphasis on money, and I think it's a real shame. I don't think that the world should revolve so dependently, as far as our happiness goes, on finances. I think that it's so much more important that our well being is taken care of, and that we are happy within what we are doing with ourselves, as opposed to how much money we are making.



Athens, Greece  
Dulcimar Ferreira Roriz,  
55, Tourist Industry

maximum emphasis—  
in my country — on  
People live for work and make  
money in order to feed the family  
and pay for necessities.



Wauwatosa, Wisconsin, USA  
Bruce Rautmann, 43, Wine Wholesaler

Personally I look to buy more local  
and from independent places ...  
Right now the trend in the USA is to  
save money and be more frugal.



Brisbane, Australia  
Monique Rooney-Brown, 15, Student

You can't really do much without  
money. Money isn't the most important  
thing. No matter how wealthy you  
are, you can't take it with you like into  
wherever you are going after you've  
died—like the heaven. But with money  
comes also a lot of problems in the  
world, like greed and corruption.

# Swedes Still Love the Outdoors Despite Increase in Dangerous Animals

By BARBRO PLOGANDER  
& ARON LAMM  
Epoch Times Staff

Swedes are fond of nature, and many go freely to pick berries and mushrooms in the summer and fall as allowed by their "right to public access," but nowadays some are getting concerned about the issue of dangerous animals.

Sweden has a unique law called "allmansrätten," which translates as "everyman's right," but the proper English term is "right to public access." It states that everyone has a right to move around more or less freely in the countryside as long as one shows care and consideration for people, animals, and the environment.

However, certain potentially dangerous wild animals are growing in number. Wild boars, for instance, are sometimes planted as game and kept as cattle but escape and procreate. In certain places in the south and center of Sweden they are becoming quite common, especially when there are lots of acorns.

A wild boar that feels threatened is dangerous and not something one wants to encounter while taking a walk. Farmers also see in-

creased severe damage to fields and crops, reaching the limit of what is acceptable. There is currently a collaboration between farmers and hunters to solve these problems.

The indigenous brown bear is another animal causing trouble. Some years ago the bear was rare in Sweden, so measures were taken to increase the bear population. It has led to a situation where people in certain areas, especially in the north of Sweden, suddenly run the risk of running into bears. A couple of fatal and near-fatal maulings in recent years gained a lot of media attention, but the risk of getting hurt by the normally shy brown bear is still very low.

The countermeasure against bear attacks, supposedly, is pepper spray. According to Swedish public service radio, SR, 90 percent of all bear attacks in Alaska are averted with the aid of pepper spray.

Swedes picking berries might feel better with pepper spray in their pockets, but the best way to be safe is probably to learn how to behave if you run into a bear. Information on how to handle bear encounters is readily available on the Internet and in other places for Swedes.

# Pope Benedict Wants to Visit Romania

By GINA NEAGU  
Epoch Times Staff

Romanian Ambassador to the Vatican Marius Gabriel Lazarca says that Pope Benedict XVI wants to visit Romania but this is only possible after a visit by Daniel, the current Patriarch of the Romanian Orthodox Church (BOR) to Italy. The BOR must first visit the Vatican and invite the Pope.

It's been just over ten years since a Pope came to Romania. On May 7, 1999, Pope John Paul II began a historic visit to Romania, the first time a Pope had visited a predominantly Orthodox country in a thousand years. Pope John Paul II hoped his visit would move the Western and Eastern

branches of Christianity, separated in 1054, closer together.

A decade later, Pope Benedict XVI has expressed his wish to visit Romania but this is only possible after a visit by Daniel, the current Patriarch of the Romanian Orthodox Church (BOR) to Italy. The BOR must first visit the Vatican and invite the Pope.

The invitation by President Traian Basescu in September 2006 to the sovereign pontiff to visit Romania was approved by the late Patriarch Teoctist. According to custom, the invitation extended by the Romanian Orthodox Church must be renewed

by the new Patriarch Daniel.

"As for when such a visit might take place, it is difficult to say at present; the sure thing is that we can count on the Pope's kindness and on his sincere wish for such a visit to take place," Lazarca stressed.

He pointed out that the affection Pope Benedict XVI has for Romania is based on "the awareness of the suffering seen by the Catholic Church in Romania during the communist times, also fed by the gratitude for the Catholic Church's followers who stayed faithful despite the persecution."

He pointed out that the BOR in-

tervention to the Pontiff was delayed after Daniel took up the Patriarch's role, given that the new Romanian Patriarch did not see ecumenical dialogue as a main priority when he took office.

"It is obvious that Patriarch Daniel's absolute priority is to lay down a program of action for the BOR in Romania and secondly to plan in concert with the other Orthodox churches. The ecumenical dialogue, while undoubtedly important to the current patriarch, who is an expert in this field, is a priority but not as important as the one I first mentioned," Lazarca said.