

China's "Belt and Road": The Recreation of the Ancient Silk Road

China's "Belt and Road" Forum For International Cooperation": An Overview

By [Carla Stea](#)

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*May 16, 2017, immediately following China's highlight "Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation," **President Xi Jinping** signed multiple agreements with the Presidents of the participant nations, a broad spectrum of the globe, ranging from Central Asia's Uzbekistan through Turkey and as far West as Italy – and beyond. The agreements included cooperative arrangements for trade, infrastructure development, tariff reductions, to mention merely a few announced cooperative arrangements.*

This modern recreation of the Ancient Silk Road essentially traversed the route Marco Polo traveled centuries ago, and today includes arrangements for building highways, seaports and other infrastructure crucial for opening up trade throughout Central Asia and connecting that vast area through Central Europe into Western Europe – and beyond – as far as Latin America and Africa. The project will implement the construction of infrastructure crucial to facilitate modern trade, investment and economic-development, and will include other facilities indispensable for international commerce.

Latin America is notably represented by Chile's **President Michelle Bachelet**, whose enthusiastic participation in the forum is celebrated. China's investments in Africa have been one of China's priorities for more than a decade and were another feature of the forum. President Xi Jinping signed friendship agreements with numerous participants, including the President of Indonesia, and his meeting with Myanmar's **Aung San Suu Kyi** was significant for their agreements for the two countries' cooperation and partnership. Also included was **Christine Lagarde** representing the International Monetary Fund, and the Director of the World Bank, United Nations Secretary-General **Antonio Gutierrez**, who delivered a moving speech enumerating the vast challenges facing the world at this moment, and the President of the United Nations General Assembly, **Peter Thompson**, who emphasized the compatibility of China's Belt and Road Forum with the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which includes 17 goals prioritizing poverty eliminating and gender equality.



These multiple economic partnerships, essentially spanning the globe, are the foundation for the "interconnected, inclusive, innovated world, advocated by China, and based on the concept of "win-win" cooperation that China is sponsoring and fervently encouraging, partnerships antithetical to the zero-sum approach on which North-South relations were hither based, and which amounted to the exploitation and plundering of the people and resources of the developing world. This "zero-sum" approach actually constituted the

“development of underdevelopment,” denounced by the great economist **Andre Gunder Frank** and numerous others.

There have been criticisms of some of China’s projects already being implemented in Latin America, with some experts alleging that this new infrastructure will benefit both China’s oligarchs together with Latin America’s oligarchs, and are in reality not focused upon reaching the multitudes of the very poor in Latin America, and improving the economic conditions of their lives. There have been complaints by some countries in Africa where Chinese investment is already being implemented, that these large infrastructure development projects employ only Chinese workers, without creating jobs for the African workers in whose countries these projects are based.

The international press was assisted by Chinese student volunteers who were gracious, extraordinarily patient and remarkably skilled in technological know-how. However, the press was not permitted direct access to the actual conference participants, so it was not possible to assess whether the most sensitive, controversial and crucial contradictions confronting the world at this moment in history were ever addressed. It is, however, highly probable that the Belt and Road Forum neglected – or avoided – confronting the paramount contradiction that threatens the survival of the human species at any moment: at no point did the Forum confront the fact that a huge proportion of the budgets of some participating countries, including the US, the UK is being diverted into trillions of dollars of investment into development of advanced nuclear weapons, resources that should, in a sane world, be invested into human development, instead of into the potential destruction of all life on earth.

There is hackneyed saying that “in politics there are no friends, only interests.” In reality, in today’s imperiled world, there are no actual enemies, only those created to rationalize the greed for profit maximization by myopic oligarchs who profit from the military-industrial complex, which slaughters populations and pulverizes nations, demolishing this very “interconnected, inclusive” world that China’s Belt and Road “ is attempting to create. This neglect of the indispensable connection between disarmament and development is a fatal weakness , which may lead to the outbreak of World War.

***Carla Stea** is Global Research’s Correspondent at UN headquarters, currently in Beijing for the Belt and Road Forum.*

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About the author:

Author and Geopolitical analyst Carla Stea is Global Research's Correspondent at United Nations

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