

President Xi Calls for Cooperation Around the Common Aims of Mankind

by William Jones

March 30—This year’s annual Boao Forum, held on the Chinese island of Hainan March 28-29, went far beyond its traditional Asian focus, to present the Chinese government’s global perspective for development, known in China as the “One Belt, One Road” program. At the forum, President Xi Jinping laid out the perspective for Asia with the development of his two proposed Silk Road projects, the Silk Road Economic Belt through Central Asia to Europe and the 21st Maritime Silk Road through Southeast Asia and to the Indian Ocean and beyond. In addition, the government presented a detailed “action plan” of infrastructure projects featuring high-speed rail, power plants, and ports along development corridors.

Billed as the Asian equivalent of the Davos Forum, which is held annually by the financial elites in Davos, Switzerland, the Boao Forum attracts some of the same “high rollers” as does Davos, but has a somewhat different character, as it focuses more on the needs of the Asian countries themselves, rather than the equity interests of the London-New York financial crowd, which is the case at Davos. This year, with the roll-out of China’s much-awaited “One Belt, One Road” program, and the launching of the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, the forum, under the theme “Asia’s New Future: Toward a Community of Common Destiny,” attracted 48 world leaders, more than any previous such events.

Reflecting on the Past, Looking to the Future

President Xi’s keynote presentation on March 28 presented an overview of the last 70 years in the Asia-Pacific region. The anniversary of the end of World War II and of the founding of the United Nations this year represented “an historic juncture to reflect on the past and look to the future,” he said. These events ended, in principle, the rule of colonial power. Although the death of President Franklin Roosevelt and the onset of the Cold War did not allow for this to immediately occur, it did ultimately lead to national independence and to the

establishment of the 1955 Bandung Conference of Asian and African nations, which put forward the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence, which still hold sway among these nations.

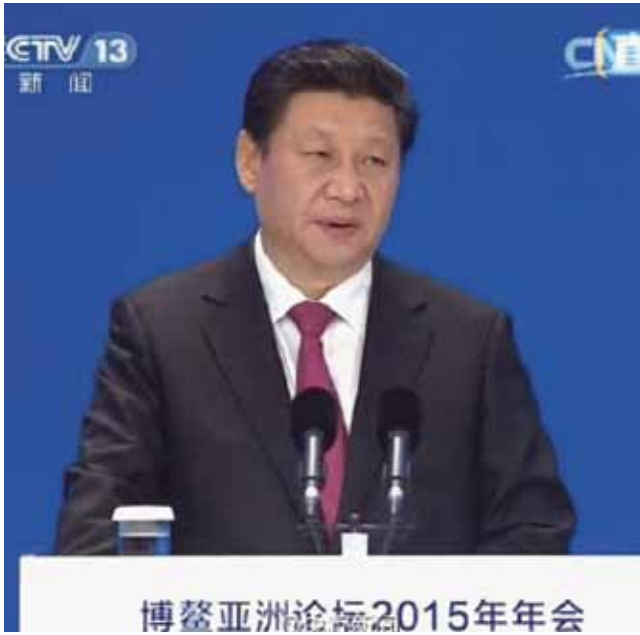
These principles are: mutual respect for each other’s territorial integrity and sovereignty; mutual non-aggression; mutual non-interference in each other’s internal affairs; equality and cooperation for mutual benefit; and peaceful coexistence—something like an Asian version of Europe’s 1648 Peace of Westphalian notion of enhancing the “benefit of the other.” While the Asian version of the Five Principles has its origin in a Confucian tradition, they are in complete coherence with the Cusa-Leibniz tradition of the Westphalia accords, which ended more than a century of warfare in Europe.

This Confucian tradition informs much of the thought of the Chinese President. In his Boao speech, he again referred to this ancient tradition: “Mencius, the great philosopher in ancient China, said, ‘Things are born to be different.’ Civilizations are only unique, and no one is superior to the other.” In this spirit, Xi called on the conference participants to organize a “conference of dialogue among Asian civilizations.”

A New Paradigm

This was not, however, a call for some sort of “Asian model,” but rather to bring the world back onto the path of economic development. “Asia belongs to the world,” Xi said. “For Asia to move toward a community of common destiny and embrace a new future, it has to follow the world trend and seek progress and development in tandem with that of the world.”

“We have only one planet,” Xi said, “and countries share one world. To do well, Asia and the world could not do without each other. Facing the fast-changing international and regional landscapes, we must see the whole picture, follow the trend of our times, and jointly build a regional order that is more favorable to Asia and the world. We should, through efforts towards such a



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President Xi Jinping at the Boao Forum

community for Asia, promote a community of common interest for all mankind.”

Xi’s attitude contrasts sharply with the strident U.S. perspective, developed by the U.S. neo-conservatives in their 1997 Project for a New American Century (PNAC) and implemented under the George W. Bush regime with the devastating consequences that we see today in the Middle East and Northern Africa, among other places. In the PNAC perspective, the United States is characterized as the “world’s pre-eminent power,” and the policy of the United States is simply to maintain that pre-eminence. This Bush policy has also been rammed through tooth-and-nail by the Democratic regime of President Obama. This de facto imperialist outlook is clearly expressed in the U.S. proposal for a Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP).

From that neo-con mind-set, which has become all too prevalent among U.S. China commentators, President Xi, who is moving ahead with China’s “reform and opening up” policy, is depicted generally in the media as a devious, Machiavellian figure. Either these commentators don’t read what he actually says, or, if they do, they simply don’t take him at his word. And yet what he says is readily understandable, and coherent with China’s Confucian tradition.

“What China needs most is a harmonious and stable domestic environment and a peaceful and tranquil international environment,” Xi told the Boao partici-

“Our friends in Africa say that if you want to go fast, walk alone; and if you want to go far, walk together. Our friends in Europe say that a single tree cannot block the chilly wind. And the Chinese people say that when the river is high, the small streams rise . . . All these sayings speak to one same truth, that is, only through win-win cooperation can we make big sustainable achievements that are beneficial to all.”

—President Xi Jinping

pants. “Turbulence or war runs against the fundamental interests of the Chinese people,” he said. “China has suffered from turbulence and war for more than a century since modern times, and the Chinese people would never want to inflict the same tragedy on other countries or peoples. History has taught us that no country that tried to achieve its goal with force ever succeeded.”

We have only to look at the situation in the Middle East to verify the truth of President Xi’s statement.

A Dialogue of Cultures

Xi’s notion is also a concept that can unite peoples from different cultures. “Our friends in Southeast Asia say that the lotus flowers grow taller as the water rises,” Xi noted. “Our friends in Africa say that if you want to go fast, walk alone; and if you want to go far, walk together. Our friends in Europe say that a single tree cannot block the chilly wind. And the Chinese people say that when the river is high, the small streams rise; and when the river has no water, the streams are dry. All these sayings speak to one same truth, that is, only through win-win cooperation can we make big sustainable achievements that are beneficial to all. The old mindset of zero-sum game should give way to a new approach of win-win and all-win cooperation.”

Xi reiterated his call for a new security concept, noting that “no country can have its own security ensured without the security of other countries or the wider world.” He also called for greater cooperation in the area of culture, referencing those great riparian cultures which had developed throughout human history, along the Yellow and Yangtze, the Indus and Ganges, the Tigris and Euphrates, and the Mekong rivers.



China State Council Information Office

China's official schematic for the Silk Road plan.

A 'Silk Road' Architecture Takes Shape

The National Reform and Development Commission, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the Ministry of Commerce of the People's Republic of China laid out in some detail the perspective for implementing the Road and Belt, in a seven-page document entitled "Visions and Actions on Jointly Building Belt and Road."

The framework of the agreement includes linking Asia, Europe, and Africa by high-speed and other rail transportation through China, Central Asia, Russia, and Europe; a link through Central Asia and West Asia to the Persian Gulf and the Mediterranean; and a sea-land corridor linking China with Southeast Asia, South Asia, and the Indian Ocean, on one branch, and through the South China Sea to the South Pacific, on the other. Further transportation corridors will be developed through China-Mongolia-Russia, China-Central Asia-West Asia, and China-Indochina Peninsula. There will also be a China-Pakistan Economic Corridor and a Bangladesh-China-India-Myanmar Economic Corridor.

Economic priorities involve coordinating and enhancing trade and transportation, eliminating obstacles on the borders with regard to customs and multimodal transportation, promoting connectivity of energy infrastructure, enhancing cooperation in oil and gas, hydro-power, and nuclear energy, and collaboration among the nations in developing new industries, setting up science centers and cross-border economic and investment zones.

The "Road and Belt" will be supported through the new financial institutions: the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB), the BRICS New Development

Bank, and the Silk Road Fund. A financial arm will be established in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), and cooperation will be strengthened in the China-ASEAN Interbank Association and SCO Interbank Association. China will also allow companies and financial institutions with good credit ratings to issue renminbi bonds in China for their financing needs. They will also create a regional financial risk early-warn-

ing system, and an exchange and cooperation mechanism for addressing cross-border risks and crises.

This, in turn, will help to nurture and promote the continued "reform and opening up" in China, under conditions of the "new normal," with a 7% rate of growth of the Chinese economy. The internal infrastructural development will include development of the northwest region of China, with Xian as a focal point, and the northeast region, with a focal point in Harbin and corridors going north into Russia and Mongolia. A central corridor will be created from the Yangtze River Delta region to Chongqing and Chengdu in the west, which have become transportation hubs for the Silk Road Economic Belt through Central Asia to Europe. The action plan also envisions accelerating cooperation between the upper and middle reaches of the Yangtze and their counterparts along Russia's Volga River.

The overwhelmingly positive response of the governments of the world to joining the Chinese-proposed AIIB, now numbering 46, in spite of heavy pressure from the United States, shows that the whole world is responding to the perspective laid out by the Chinese President. While the U.S. remains in the straitjacket imposed by the Wall Street-controlled Bush and Obama administrations, the anticipated Presidential campaign of former Maryland Governor Martin O'Malley, who is calling for a return to Glass-Steagall, heralds a new day, as Helga Zepp-LaRouche indicated in her March 28 speech to a Schiller Institute conference in New York. Thus, we may yet again see the emergence of an American Republic dedicated to the common aims of mankind.

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