

EDITORIAL

SCHILLER INSTITUTE REPORT

The New Silk Road Becomes the World Land-Bridge VOLUME II

A Shared Future for Humanity

Introduction by Helga Zepp-LaRouche

June 20—The Executive Intelligence Review is pleased to present here the introduction to the new volume, which is expected to be published by the end of this month.

The “Spirit of the New Silk Road” has changed the world for the better much more thoroughly than the trans-Atlantic sector has even remotely understood until now. Since Chinese President Xi Jinping placed the New Silk Road on the agenda in September 2013 in Kazakhstan, optimism on an unprecedented scale has swept over the developing countries in particular, a sense that poverty and underdevelopment can be overcome in the foreseeable future thanks to Chinese investments in infrastructure, industry, and agriculture. Geopolitically-oriented circles in the West have not understood that China is implementing a new model of international policy, which tackles the deficit which the legacy of colonialism and imperialism has bequeathed up to this day: the absolute lack of development. And because China is thus addressing the existential needs of billions of people, that policy is likely to be the greatest revolution in the history of mankind.

In the nearly four years that have elapsed since the release of the first 374-page comprehensive study, *The New Silk Road Becomes the World Land-Bridge* in December 2014, numerous projects that were conceptualized in that report have been carried out. Others, such as the Transaqua Project for the revitalization of Lake Chad and the development of a waterway system for 12 African countries, have been agreed upon by the governments involved and feasibility studies are being drawn up. Since then, the World Land-Bridge report has been published in English, Chinese, Arabic, and

German, and a Korean version will soon be available.

China’s Belt and Road Initiative has become the largest infrastructure program in human history. The “Belt and Road Forum” in May 2017 brought together 29 heads of state and government and more than 1,200 representatives from more than 140 nations, including this author (see articles on Schiller Institute activities later in this report). Hundreds of conferences and seminars on this subject have been held around the world, and more and more countries see that their economic opportunities lie in becoming a hub for the New Silk Road and the “Maritime Silk Road for the 21st Century.” However, it is not only the enormous economic perspectives derived from economic cooperation on a win-win basis that have fundamentally changed the overall strategic situation, but also and above all Xi Jinping’s idea of a “community of shared future for mankind.”

What most people in the West can no longer even imagine, is that in Xi Jinping, a statesman has assumed the political leadership of the most populous nation in the world, who is also a profound philosopher. In his opening remarks to the welcoming banquet of this year’s annual conference of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), Xi invoked the spirit of Confucius, who was born in Shandong Province, the site of the summit. Shandong was the birthplace of Confucianism, an integral part of Chinese civilization, he said, and that a just cause should be pursued for the common good, for the harmony, unity, and shared community of all nations. The future of the SCO, Xi implied, should be inspired by the spirit of Confucius! In Europe, one would have to go back at least as far as Adenauer and de Gaulle, Bismarck, and vom Stein to find a statesman

who has based his policy on humanist philosophers.

With the Silk Road initiative and the idea of a community of shared future for mankind, Xi Jinping has developed a totally new model for relations among the nations of the world, which supersedes the previous geopolitical rivalries of the blocs with the higher idea of one single mankind, whose sovereign states cooperate with one another to their mutual benefit. As Xi Jinping explained in his October 18, 2017 report to the 19th National Congress of the Communist Party of China, he is pursuing the vision of initiating developments that allow for the peaceful coexistence of all sovereign nations on Earth and a happy life for all peoples by 2050.

Largely unnoticed or disregarded by the Euro-centric or America-centric view of the mainstream media, is the fact that entirely new strategic orientations are developing in Asia as a result of this grand design, and that Asian countries are in the process of overcoming past historical antagonisms and are instead working out a new type of cooperation. Numerous countries, which were played against each other until recently in geopolitical scenarios, now see a much more promising perspective in a strategic realignment of cooperation for mutual benefit and for a higher idea of the common development of all of mankind.

The historical breakthrough that President Trump and Chairman Kim Jung-un were able to achieve in Singapore on June 12, involving an agreement on full nuclear disarmament in return for security guarantees—which China wants to help provide, as well as on the lifting of sanctions and a commitment to North Korea's economic development, would have been unthinkable without the “Spirit of the New Silk Road” that has triggered throughout Asia an optimistic mindset that genuine changes for the better are indeed possible. Trump's announcement that he would end the provocative joint military maneuvers with South Korea is an important step on the road to a peace treaty between the two Koreas. Laying the ground for this development, there was intensive cooperation among South Korea, China, Russia, India, and the United States, which could become a model for solving regional conflicts.

The economic modernization pledged by the United States, Russia, and China, which will make North Korea “prosperous and wealthy,” corresponds to the intention discussed at the inter-Korean summit between President Moon Jae-in and Chairman Kim Jong-un in

April, and prior to that, at the Eastern Economic Forum in Vladivostok in September 2017. Both Koreas are to be included in the integration of the Belt and Road Initiative and the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU), including the connection of a future trans-Korean railway to the Trans-Siberian Railway and to China's transportation network.

Another good example of this is the policy change in Japan and India. The Obama Administration's “Asia Pivot” was aimed at lining up countries in the Pacific region—Australia, Japan, New Zealand, and India—under the banner of an “Indo-Pacific” policy, against China and above all against the dynamic of the New Silk Road. The United States and the European Union (EU) played the India card in particular, arguing that the “world's largest democracy” (India) should cooperate with the democratic West against the authoritarian China. However, following a two-day summit between President Xi Jinping and Prime Minister Narendra Modi in April of this year, the two most populous states in the world, recalibrated their relations positively to each other. Speaking at the Shangri-La Dialogue in Singapore on June 1, Modi appealed to the world to rise above divisions and rivalries, and to opt instead to work together. He referred to the deep conceptions of Vedanta philosophy, going back to the Vedas and Upanishads of ancient India, namely, the idea of the “essential oneness of all,” and the idea that every individual soul is that Being in full, and not part of that Being.

On the special relationship to China, Prime Minister Modi stressed that “No other relationship of India has as many layers as our relations with China. Our cooperation is expanding, trade is growing. . . . I firmly believe that Asia, and the world, will have a better future when India and China work together in trust and confidence, sensitive to each other's interests.”

Modi concluded: “This world is at a crossroad. There are temptations of the worst lessons of history. But, there is also a path of wisdom. It summons us to a higher purpose: to rise above a narrow view of our interests and recognize that each of us can serve our interests better when we work together as equals in the larger good of all nations. I am here to urge all to take that path.”

What is also missing from the radar screen of Western media and politicians is the change in policy in Japan. In the past, Japan was largely an integral part of the “Washington Consensus.” But in recent years,

Prime Minister Shinzo Abe has expanded his relations with Russia in a number of ways, while the perspective of joint economic development of the four South Kuril Islands claimed by Japan and of the improvement of bilateral relations has raised the possibility that a peace treaty could be signed between the two countries before Abe leaves office. At the same time, Japan's skepticism toward China and the Belt and Road Initiative has given way to a positive attitude. After Abe sent Toshihiro Nikai, the Secretary General of the ruling Liberal Democratic Party, as his personal envoy to the May 2017 Belt and Road Forum, Japan shifted to full cooperation with the New Silk Road policy as of June 2017. Moreover, Abe was also the first head of government to visit the newly elected Donald Trump in Trump Tower on November 17, 2016, and then on February 10, 2017 in Washington, and after that at Mar-a-Lago and that at a time when the trans-Atlantic neo-liberals were still in a state of shock over Trump's election victory.

Perhaps the most important question for the future of the world is what relationship the United States will seek toward a rising China, in order to avoid the notorious Thucydides trap. The Chinese Ambassador to the United States Cui Tiankai said in a speech in New York that there have been 16 cases in history in which an ascending power surpassed the hitherto dominant power—in 12 of those cases, it led to war, and in 4 cases, the rising power overtook the previously leading power. China, of course, does not want to go to war, the Ambassador said, and it also does not want to overtake the United States as the world superpower, but it does seek win-win cooperation on a partnership basis. To that purpose, Xi Jinping has developed a new model for relations among major powers based on the principles of absolute respect for the sovereignty of others, of non-interference in each other's internal affairs, and respect for each other's political and social system.

From this standpoint, it is most fortunate that President Trump and President Xi, from the very first visit of the latter to Mar-a-Lago in April 2017 established an exceptionally friendly relationship with one another. Xi returned the invitation to Trump's private residence with a "state visit plus" for Trump during his state visit to China in November 8-10, 2017. He also reserved the Forbidden City for an entire day for a personal tour for the U.S. President and First Lady Melania Trump. Despite all the tensions with China over differences of opinion as to how to overcome the trade deficit, Trump

has repeatedly called Xi, my good friend. But it is above all the historic breakthrough with North Korea that would have simply been unthinkable without the relationship between Donald Trump and Xi Jinping.

However, while the populations of North and South Korea are enthusiastically viewing the common future now opening up, and while a completely new optimistic spirit is spreading throughout Asia, Africa, Latin America, and many countries in Eastern and Southern Europe, the mainstream media and many think-tanks and politicians are reacting to these fantastic strategic changes with such a negative attitude than one could assume that they are in a different universe. The rather special *Der Spiegel* journalist Roland Nelles described the day of the summit in Singapore as "bizarre" and the meeting of the two Presidents as "weird," which does less justice to the occasion than it affords a certain insight into Mr. Nelles' intellectual life.

For the West, it is evidently extremely difficult to grasp the new paradigm, which has developed out of the dynamic of the New Silk Road. Trapped in the old paradigm of geopolitical divisions and competition in the world, they can only see projections of their own intentions through such spectacles. From the standpoint of geopolitics, politics can only be a zero sum game—if one wins, the other must necessarily lose. They view Xi Jinping's concept of win-win cooperation with mistrust, as if it were impossible for a government to not only defend the common good of its own population, but also that of other cooperating nations.

In that respect, at the very latest, the comparison of the fiasco of the G-7 summit in Canada with the tremendous success of the simultaneous summit of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization should have provided the occasion for self-critical questions about the reasons for such a difference. The multifaceted erosion of the EU is not due to any alleged interference by Russian President Vladimir Putin, but to the lack of a policy that gives equal consideration to the interests of all member states. When a certain EU Commissioner, Günther Oettinger, after the election in Italy, threatens that the markets would teach the Italians how to vote, one should not be surprised at the anger of the Italians and other Southern European populations over the effects on them of Germany's "market-compliant democracy."

The mainstream media and most of the Western think-tanks had virtually ignored the groundbreaking dynamic of the New Silk Road for some four years, but

then strangely enough, a few months ago, the Australian secret services, the geopolitically-minded U.S. think-tanks CSIS and CFR, the Soros-financed European Council on Foreign Relations, and the German think-tank MERICS all launched, as if on cue, an attack on China's New Silk Road policy as allegedly imperialistic.

The combination of non-reporting and ideological, manipulative characterizations makes it difficult for ordinary entrepreneurs or citizens to have a clear picture of the historically unprecedented potential that cooperation in this initiative opens up for the European and American economies. The events of the past months and weeks should prompt us to reflect on the now undeniable inherent weaknesses of the neo-liberal model of globalization, and to revive the strengths of the best traditions of the West in our cooperation with China, and to develop a common model for shaping the future.

The world is changing dramatically and the change is happening in Asia. President Xi Jinping, as we mentioned, opened this year's summit of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization in Qingdao with a reference to the thinking of Confucius which should inspire the future of the organization. And indeed, Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi's remarks at the final press conference of the SCO summit reflected the spirit of Confucius: the SCO is building a new world order, he said, based on mutual trust, mutual benefit, equality, respect for the diversity and common development of civilizations. Its intention, he explained, is to transcend such outdated concepts such as the clash of civilizations, the Cold War, and thinking in the geometry of zero-sum games or exclusionary clubs.

The new era must be based on the best traditions of all the cultures involved. In China, Confucius stands for the ideal of self-perfection through life-long learning and ennoblement of the character as a pre-condition for harmonious coexistence in the family, the nation, and among nations. And the notion of the "mandate of

Heaven" implies that the duty of government is to ensure the common good. In Indian culture, this corresponds in principle to the concept of Dharma, the idea that universal laws set the rules for shaping relations on Earth, i.e., that the cosmic order is also valid on Earth. The five principles of the Panscheel Treaty and the concept of Ahimsa are culturally specific, and yet represent ideas that correspond to a positive image of man as the basis for the political order.

For European civilization, which America belongs to, the equivalent is the humanist tradition. An expression of this approach are the ideas of Nicholas of Cusa, the *coincidentia oppositorum*, that is, that human reason is capable of a higher level of thinking, on which the contradictions of the intellect are resolved. Order in the macrocosm is only possible if all the microcosms develop in the best possible way and to their mutual benefit. The 1648 Treaty of Westphalia is built on this foundation, which gave rise to international law, as is the philosophy of Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz and Friedrich Schiller. In Russia, the same basic principle is expressed in the idea of Vladimir Vernadsky, that the significance of the Noösphere is constantly increasing over that of the biosphere, and that therefore the role of creative reason as a physical power increases.

The spirit of a new beginning, the cultural optimism about imminent breakthroughs in fundamental research, and an unprecedented dynamic toward the betterment of mankind's living conditions—all this characterizes the development in Asia, and this optimism has long since "rubbed off" on Latin America and Africa. We in Europe and the United States should recognize and exploit the tremendous potential it will mean for our economies if we join in this win-win cooperation. Provided we count on qualitative innovation as a source of social wealth, collaboration with the New Silk Road is by no means a threat; on the contrary, it offers us the urgently needed chance to re-discover our true identity.