

# The Belt and Road Initiative is Opening up New Horizons



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THE NEOLIBERAL INTERNATIONAL ORDER dictated to the world by the Atlantic System has come to an end. The world is now in search of a new and more egalitarian international order based on mutual benefit and respect for national sovereignty. The last three decades have not only witnessed a shift of the center of weight of production from the West to the East, but also the rise of a Developing World in Eurasia accompanied by struggles in the economic as well as political and armed spheres. The once “Oppressed Nations” are now in the process of constructing a developing alternative to the Atlantic System in all spheres of life. The economic struggle is led by the People’s Republic of China, while an armed struggle is continuing in West Asia with Syria, Turkey, Russia and Iran at the forefront, and all this is reflected politically in the increasing centrifugal forces against the Atlantic System in Europe as well.

### **The Nation-States are the Main Building Blocks of the Developing World**

The construction of an alternative system representing the common future of humanity requires a thoughtful design of international relations, through which each country can efficiently benefit from international cooperation. The Belt and Road Initiative first put forth by China in 2013 and now underway with its implementation provides a suit-

able ground for achieving this aim. The success of this initiative in creating a new globe on which all countries, which the belt embraces and the road connects, can interact in a cooperative and constructive manner will mark a historical turning point. In history, the 21<sup>st</sup> century might even be partitioned into “before the Belt-Road” and “after the Belt-Road”. The very design and implementation of such a historical project itself doubtlessly requires an intense interaction and cooperation between the countries involved, perhaps even more intense than the interaction and cooperation it aims to create.

The ancient continental as well as maritime Silk Road linking the East with the West was mainly an Asian project, as also is the modern Belt and Road Initiative. The centralized and long-lasting feudal empires of the East furnished the then existing culture with elements reflecting a public and sharing spirit within their own historical context. They brought about a dignified stance among the people in the territories they reigned. The silk routes enhanced both economic and cultural welfare through the interaction and cooperation they induced. All this doubtlessly belongs to the common legacy of human civilization today. Turning this valuable legacy into a current social and economic power, which opens up the way to the construction of a common future of humanity, can only be achieved through the “nation-states”, which form the main building blocks of the Developing World in our era.

**"The new kind of globalization aims at globalizing cooperation, and not to create a single global market in the absence of national borders."**

The Developed World of the Atlantic System is much more monolithic than is the Developing World of Eurasia. The Eurasian countries span over a very broad spectrum concerning both the levels and contents of their nation-building as well as economic development processes. Thus, the priorities these countries are faced with are strongly diversified. In fact, this is the main reason of the lack of a ready-made, one-size-fits-all recipe for economic development and social progress in these countries. That is precisely why each country is to find "its own way" fitting its "own characteristics" for development and progress strategies. The key to the success of the Belt and Road Initiative is the ability to harmonize the priorities and strategies of different countries, thereby rendering the economic and social consequences of the Initiative widely acceptable to the societies in those countries.

### **"Inclusiveness" Requires a New Kind of "Openness"**

Markets are myopic in the sense that they can only internalize short-term interests of the parties involved. Development strategies, however, are to be farsighted. Thus, their implementation cannot be left entirely to the workings of the market. On the other hand, the current level of the production forces renders the usage of markets indispensable. Hence, the gist of economic development lies in aligning the workings of the markets with strategic targets. The need to ensure the sustainability of development, nevertheless, makes it necessary to also take into account the limitations the market forces

impose upon the strategic goals. In the last analysis, however, it is the market forces that are to be made subject to the strategic development goals rather than leaving the formation of a development strategy to the spontaneity of the market forces.

Economic growth is just one quantitative aspect of economic development. Two countries may have similar growth rates with quite different impacts upon their productive powers. It is the qualitative content of growth reflected in productive power, which matters in the medium and long run. A sustainable economic development involves a continual adjustment and readjustment process between the production forces and the relations of production. Thus, an optimal route of development has to be designed, planned and endowed with suitable economic means of implementation. This aim cannot be achieved on an economic stage, which is turned into a playground of market forces.

Optimal routes of development of different countries are to be diversified. For example, the adoption of an advanced technology in some industry requires having reached a threshold level in manufacturing in that area. Full openness to market forces is destined to keep a country in a passive recipient's position in sectors below that threshold level. Interaction, no matter how strong, cannot automatically lead to the internalization of advanced technologies in such sectors. In industries and agricultural sectors that are regarded to possess a strategic importance for either national security or economic and social development, the formation of special protection, incentive design and support policies will be needed.

Under the "globalization" model dictated to the world by the Atlantic System, "openness" was to be provided to the flow of capital and goods under the sheer domination of market forces. As the nation-states of the Developing World were considered to be the main obstacles to such a "free flow",



the whole effort was focused on the liquidation of the nation-states in order to open up the way to “free circulation” of capital and goods.

“Openness” is one of the most crucial notions that has to be “redefined” for the success of the Belt and Road Initiative. To strengthen interaction and cooperation, countries should, of course, be “open” to cooperation. Under the Belt and Road Initiative, to the contrary of the Atlantic approach, “openness” is to be brought about by “voluntary participation” based on “mutual gain”. Being “openminded” rather than promoting “openness” will naturally help “open up” the way to more interaction and cooperation. However, it is not just the wishes, but the means that bring about the consequences. Thus, the success of the Belt and Road Initiative strongly depends upon the introduction of effective means to align openness with the development strategies of the countries involved, thereby increasing their willingness to interact. The new kind of globalization aims at globalizing cooperation, and not to create a single global market in the absence of national borders.

Finance is the lifeblood of production. In other words, finance is there to serve the needs of produc-

tion. Thus, the way it circulates should accord with a smooth and qualitatively well-balanced growth in production. In case finance starts to dominate and shape production, however, it becomes a parasitic activity not promoting production, but forming an obstacle to improving production.

One of the major reasons why the center of production shifted from the West to the East within the last three decades was, in fact, that the domination of finance capital - as the main source of profits under the capitalist system - over production of goods and services became stronger than ever in the West, while finance was treated just as the lifeblood of production in the East. In the West, the shaping of the relationship between finance and production was entirely left to market forces, while in the East the state authority entered the scene as a strategic planner along with designing the means needed to implement the plans. While in the West the state had been turned into an apparatus serving the interests of finance capital, the broader national interests played a relatively more weighted role in the East.

For the Belt and Road Initiative to “include” all the countries along the Belt and the Road in an ef-

fective and voluntary manner, “openness” to “market forces” should be harnessed. As such, market forces will be recalibrated to boost economic development. However, the strategic goals will inevitably go unnoticed under any interaction between private enterprises oriented by “profit maximization” only. It is only through interaction between states and state interference by participation, orientation and regulation that the workings of the market can be aligned with the countries’ strategic goals.

It is also true that the optimal level of openness of an economy in harmony with its strategic objectives will rise as the economy develops further in a healthy way. As the gap between the development levels of different countries narrows down, the formula will become more and more that “the more open an economy becomes, the more will it gain from international interaction and cooperation”. The new kind of globalization that the Belt and Road Initiative promises to humanity is something that has to be constructed step by step and cannot be reached immediately in one shot.

### **The Creation of and the Need for Peace and Stability**

It is not only that the Belt and Road Initiative will contribute to peace and stability, but the very construction of the Initiative itself also requires a peaceful and stable environment. It is not accidental that the map of terror, disturbance and conflict manipulation in Eurasia governed by forces from outside mostly parallels the routes of the Initiative. One of the regions where terrorism is mostly condensed is West Asia, particularly the region around Syria. Turkey has been leading an armed struggle simultaneously against several terrorist organizations as PKK-PYD, ISIS and the Fethullah Gulen Organization, the common source of all of them being the Atlantic System. It is engaged in close cooperation

with Russia and Iran regarding the Syrian Issue, which has generated successful outcomes in Turkey’s struggle against terrorism.

The reestablishment of peace and stability in West Asia will greatly facilitate the success of the Belt and Road Initiative. This part of Asia played a major role of the Ancient Silkroad. Its absence today will render the Modern Silkroad one-legged. The construction of peace and stability in Eurasia is at least as important as constructing the infrastructure of the Initiative. They complement each other in that one provides safety and the other prosperity to the ground on which the Eurasian economy as a whole can flourish further.

The 21<sup>st</sup> century terrorism is not an individualistic phenomenon any more, as it was in the 19th century. Terrorism now is rather a global and “industrialized” activity, whose different branches have a common international source. Thus, terrorism against Turkey is terrorism against China, and terrorism against China is terrorism against Turkey. But today under the Belt and Road Initiative, it has become even more so. Defeating terrorism requires also a close international and multi-tier cooperation, ranging from diplomatic, political, ideological to armed forms of struggle.

### **A Vision to Construct the Common Future of Humanity All Together**

The coexistence of different cultures is widely regarded as a source of richness – a vision that can hardly be denied. In case these cultures continue living side by side without any interaction, however, the kind of richness they reflect would not go beyond the richness of an exhibition in a museum. The yardstick of social richness in history of civilizations is the ability to produce something new out of what exists. Thus, the genuine richness of different cultures lies in the potential to create a socially

more advanced common culture by interaction. It is “peace of mind” under which such an interaction will induce the richest flow of ideas and values. The Belt and Road Initiative will not only contribute to peace and stability in general, but it will also pave a social ground on which peace of mind prevails.

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The digitalization of technologies along with scientific and technological progress towards artificial intelligence opens up new horizons for economic and social improvement. The arising question now is whether the benefits and gains accruing from this progress will be shared collectively or lead to concentrating power further in the hands of the largest monopolies history has ever witnessed. At this turning point of history, the Belt and Road Initiative will help solving this problem in favor of the international collective to the extent it succeeds to increase the number of countries endowed with the ability to employ and develop these advanced technologies.

The technological advances our world has been going through recently have the potential of both serving to the economic and social progress in an unprecedented way and being turned into an unprecedented destructive power. It all depends upon the social system under which they will be employed. Although the Belt and Road Initiative is mainly a project on the economic plane, it will undoubtedly be helpful in paving a ground, on which a Eurasian Alternative to the Atlantic System can

be constructed. As the level of development of the productive forces seems to become increasingly incompatible with the capitalist system, history seems to get closer and closer to a turning point as well.

Capitalist relations of production had been born under the feudal system by themselves. They were not designed by anyone. It was the widening of production of goods, which triggered the change in the production relations. Thus, everything that has been written about capitalism, be it by classical or neoclassical economists or by Marxists, was written by observing an already existing system that had reached a certain maturity level. The findings about capitalism were discoveries, rather than inventions. Socialism, on the other hand, was put forth by Marx and Engels as a historical foresight in the 19th century, before it became a reality anywhere on earth. Socialist relations of production do not get born by themselves under the capitalist system. They have to be designed, and the economic and social means to implement and further develop them have to be created. On the economic plane, this amounts to a continual adjustment and readjustment process between the productive forces and the relations of production in each country.

This means that any attempt to go beyond the capitalist system concerning economic and social progress requires the guidance of science and philosophy to be successful. The implementation of the Belt and Road Initiative is based on forming a network between states, between economic and financial institutions and agents, between nations themselves and their various organizations. This historical attempt will stay incomplete in the absence of a close and permanent international cooperation on the side of science with a focus on drawing continual lessons from this huge social and economic experiment to shed light on its roadmap. 🌸