

State of Mankind

How much do you know?

Excerpts from

How the Specter of Communism Is Ruling Our World

(134)

One Belt, One Road Takes Center Stage

In 2013, the CCP officially introduced the plan for its Silk Road Economic Belt and Twenty-First-Century Maritime Silk Road, or One Belt, One Road (OBOR) for short. The plan is for the Chinese regime to invest billions and trillions of dollars to build critical infrastructure, such as bridges, railroads, ports, and energy generation in dozens of countries. OBOR is the biggest planned investment project in history.

One Belt refers to the Silk Road Economic Belt, which consists of three land-based components: from China through Central Asia and Russia to Europe and the Baltic Sea; from northwestern China through Central Asia and West Asia to the Persian Gulf and the Mediterranean; and from southwestern China through the Indochina peninsula to the Indian Ocean.

One Road refers to the Twenty-First-Century Maritime Silk Road, which is a two-pronged effort: The first route goes from the ports in China to the South China Sea, through the Strait of Malacca and on to Europe via the Indian Ocean; the second heads to the southern Pacific Ocean.

The One Belt on land consists of six economic corridors: the China-Mongolia-Russia Economic Corridor (CMREC), the New Eurasian Land Bridge (NELB), the China-Central and West Asia Economic Corridor (CCWAEC), the China-Indochina Peninsula Economic Corridor (CICPEC), the China Pakistan-Economic Corridor (CPEC), and the Bangladesh-China-India-Myanmar Economic Corridor (BCIMEC).

The New Eurasian Land Bridge will be based on rail links between China and Europe, called China Railway Express. Transportation from China to Europe by sea takes over thirty days, compared with just over ten days by rail. The China Railway Express began operation in 2011 and has been an important component in OBOR.

The China Pakistan-Economic Corridor (CPEC) is a joint plan by the two governments. It includes a highway connecting Kashgar in Xinjiang Province with the Gwadar Port in Pakistan, on the Indian Ocean. China gained the right to operate the port in 2013. Being Pakistan's gateway to the Persian Gulf and Arabian

Sea, the Gwadar Port occupies a critical strategic location. It connects to the Strait of Hormuz, through which 40 percent of the world's crude oil passes to reach the Arabian Sea.

The general framework of the One Road by sea is to build a number of strategic ports and gain control over the sea transportation. In financially robust countries, Chinese companies enter into equity participation or joint ventures. With financially weaker countries, China invests large amounts of money locally and attempts to obtain the rights to operate the ports.

In 2013 alone, Chinese enterprises received the rights to operate at least seventeen ports or terminals. China Merchants Port Holdings Company Limited bought 49 percent equity from Terminal Link SAS in France. With this purchase, it obtained the operating rights to fifteen terminals in eight countries on four continents.[5]

These ports and terminals include the ports of Antwerp and Zeebrugge in Belgium; the Suez Canal Terminal in Egypt; Kumport in Istanbul, Turkey; the Port of Piraeus in Greece; Pasir Panjang Port in Singapore; the largest port in the Netherlands (Euromax Terminal Rotterdam, which is called “the gate of Europe”); the second-phase terminal at Khalifa Port in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates; the Port of Vado in Italy's Liguria

region; Kuantan Port in the Strait of Malacca, Malaysia; the Port of Djibouti in eastern Africa; and the Panama Canal.

In addition to investment, the Communist Party also uses the debt traps created by OBOR to obtain control of strategic locations. Sri Lanka could not pay its debt to Chinese companies, so in 2017, it signed a ninety-nine-year lease with Chinese company for use of the Hambantota Port.

The CCP launched its Digital Silk Road in 2018 with the intention of reshaping the future development of internet infrastructure. The Digital Silk Road is considered an advanced stage in the OBOR project and is its newest development. It mainly includes building fiber optic infrastructure, digital information services, international telecommunications, and e-commerce.

Many countries involved in OBOR do not have a complete credit system. The CCP aims to introduce its systems of e-commerce and electronic payment services, such as Alipay, to these countries, while totally shutting out Western competition. The Great Firewall, which filters internet traffic in China, is being exported to the countries of the Belt and Road, as are the systems of mass surveillance already adopted by the CCP for use within China.

The extent of the CCP's strategic reach can be seen from its investment in global infrastructure. According to a November 2018 report by The New York Times, the CCP has constructed or is constructing over forty pipelines and other oil and gas infrastructure, over two hundred bridges, roads and railways, almost two hundred power plants for nuclear power, natural gas, coal, and renewables, and a series of major dams. It has invested in 112 countries, most of which belong to the OBOR initiative. The CCP has spread its tendrils around the globe.[6]

As OBOR took shape, the CCP's efforts to supplant the United States on the world stage swelled. It aggressively promoted the yuan as an international currency, as well as its own credit system. Chinese-made telecommunications networks (including 5G) are being pushed as the future in many countries, as are Chinese-built high-speed rail lines. The aim is to eventually establish a set of standards controlled by the CCP and independent of the current Western standards.

One Belt, One Road Has a Global Reach

In the early stage of the One Belt, One Road initiative, the CCP focused on countries neighboring China, reaching as far as Europe. Very quickly, the CCP expanded its reach to Africa, Latin America, and even the Arctic Ocean, covering the entire world. The Maritime Silk Road originally consisted of just two routes. A

third route, the Silk Road on Ice, or the Polar Silk Road, was added to connect to Europe via the Arctic Ocean. Prior to OBOR, the CCP had already invested heavily in Africa and Latin America. These countries are now part of the major structure of OBOR, which has enabled the CCP to more rapidly expand its financial and military reach in Africa and Latin America.

The primary goal of OBOR is to export China's excess capacity by building up basic infrastructure such as railways and highways in other countries. These countries are rich in resources and energy. By helping them build infrastructure, the CCP accomplishes two secondary goals. One is to open routes to ship domestic products to Europe at low cost; the other is to secure the strategic resources of countries that participate in OBOR. The CCP's intention is to increase its own exports, not to help the countries along the Belt and Road to establish their own manufacturing industries — the CCP would not relinquish Chinese manufacturing.

The real ambition behind OBOR is to use economic means as a vanguard to establish control over the financial and political lifelines of other countries and turn them into the CCP's colonies in its globalist strategy. Byproducts of participation in OBOR schemes include importation of all the pernicious aspects of communism: corruption, debt, and totalitarian repression. The

project is a deceptive trap that will not bring lasting economic prosperity to its participants.

Many countries have become alarmed and are either stopping or re-evaluating the OBOR project. The CCP has conceded that it should be more transparent and make adjustments to the heavily criticized debt traps. Nevertheless, the CCP's plans can't be underestimated. While Western enterprises operate on profit-seeking principles and won't tough it out in turbulent host countries for more than a few years, the CCP's calculus extends into the next century. It can tolerate operations in turbulent international environments for the long term without regard for immediate losses.

What the CCP wants are pro-communist governments that will support it in the United Nations. The CCP wants to become the leader of Asia, Africa, and Latin America, to struggle with the free world, and to replace America as the world's number one power. The CCP is willing to foot any human costs necessary to achieve this goal. For instance, the Party can force the Chinese people to pay for costs that privately owned Western enterprises could never handle. In this war to conquer the world, it is not about how powerful the CCP is on paper, but that the CCP has at its disposal the resources of hundreds of millions of Chinese people irrespective of their lives or their deaths. They are its sacrificial pawns.

Former White House Chief Strategist Steve Bannon offered a unique interpretation of the OBOR project. He credits the Chinese Belt and Road initiative as having successfully integrated the Mackinder-Mahan-Spykman theses of how to dominate the world.

Andrew Sheng, of the Asia Global Institute, summed up Bannon's views:

Sir Halford Mackinder was an influential British geographer/historian who argued in 1904 that 'Whoever rules the Heartland (central Asia) commands the World-Island (Eurasia); whoever rules the World-Island commands the World.' His American contemporary, Alfred Mahan was a naval historian who shaped the U.S. strategy to dominate sea power, extending the British maritime empire logic of controlling the sea lanes, choke points and canals by policing global trade. In contrast, Nicholas John Spykman argued that the Rimland (the coastal lands encircling Asia) is more important than the Heartland, thus: 'Who controls the Rimland rules EuroAsia; who rules EuroAsia controls the destinies of the world.' [7]

Bannon's assessments reflect the Western world's growing vigilance against the CCP's ambitions contained in the OBOR project.

In fact, the CCP's ambition is not limited to the scope of OBOR. The initiative is not merely focused on obtaining the rights to land routes, sea lanes, and major ports. The CCP wants to take advantage of loopholes, wherever they may be around the world. Many countries in Asia, Africa, and Latin America are newly independent states created by decolonization. These regions experienced a power vacuum, inviting the CCP to gain footholds. The newly independent countries that once comprised the Soviet Union and its Eastern European satellites had weak sovereign control and were also easy pickings for the CCP regime. Other turbulent countries, which Western investors tend to stay away from, naturally fell into the CCP's trap. Small countries, island countries, and underdeveloped countries occupying strategic locations are all in the CCP's crosshairs.

Even some states once firmly in the Western democratic camp have drifted into the CCP's orbit after suffering from weak economies and high debt. Geopolitically, the CCP is gradually surrounding the United States by controlling the economy of other countries. The aim is to have American influence marginalized and eventually removed from those countries, by which time the CCP will have established a separate world order centered on communist tyranny. This is not a new approach. It has its roots in the old CCP strategy of occupying the countryside

to surround the cities, which led it to victory in the Chinese Civil War.

From Chapter Eighteen

The Chinese Communist Party's Global Ambitions