

Developing Relations Between Greece and China, and the Belt & Road

by Leonidas Chrysanthopoulos, Ambassador A.H.

Leonidas Chrysanthopoulos served Greece as a career diplomat, was Ambassador to several nations, and was the Secretary General of the Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation Organization. We present here his edited remarks as prepared for presentation on Nov. 16, 2019 at the Schiller Institute Conference, “The Future of Humanity as a Creative Species in the Universe” in Bad Soden, Germany.



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Leonidas Chrysanthopoulos

This is our first annual conference without Lyndon LaRouche. He is missed, but his spirit is with us. Of all his many and inspiring writings, I was most impressed by his knowledge of Classical Ancient Greek thought, philosophy and tragedy, and his effort to use those as a basis of solving the current problems of humanity.

Prometheus, Europe, and Lyndon LaRouche

Allow me to quote him on his “Three Views of Prometheus” from the article, “Prometheus and Europe,” published in 1999:

The various, reasonably well-informed, but conflicting appreciations of the Classical Greek image of the figure Prometheus, may be assorted among three moral classifications. This leads us toward a still more profound conception, one of great importance for understanding the crisis of extended European civilization worldwide, today....

The first of the three contrasted views of Prometheus is a morally repulsive one.... It is fairly summed up as judging Prometheus as, either guilty of the crime of hubris against all the pagan gods, or, as a tragic figure fallen victim to his own error of tactical indiscretion, of breaking the “club rules” of the oligarchical game.

The second view of Prometheus ... is the view of Prometheus as, perhaps a tragic figure shaking his angry fist, expressing thus a supposedly noble spirit of revolt, by the oppressed against the bad gods....

The third view, which is introduced by Aeschylus’s *Prometheus Bound*, defines the tyrant Zeus, not the hero Prometheus as the tragic figure of the drama. Zeus is that tyrant and crooked judge whose bestly defiance of the immortal Prometheus brought doom, upon not only Zeus, but all of the gods of

Olympus....

Lacking the two lost parts of the trilogy, we must place greater responsibility, upon other evidence, in our searches into the meaning of the continuing deep relationship between the Prometheus image and the political history of European Civilization.

Such was the wisdom of Lyndon LaRouche.

We also remain indebted to Lyndon for his positive statements on the Greek debt that gave courage to the people of my country as I had told him in our conversations.

Greece’s Current Economic Situation

The Maritime Silk Road connecting China with Europe also involves Greece. However, before going into the details of Greek involvement, the current economic situation of that country should be examined. Greece, after ten years of austerity measures imposed by the EU and its international lenders, continues to remain in a situation of economic catastrophe, despite positive noise and numbers coming from the EU about growth rates etc.

The essence is that these positive numbers have not

become reality, have not reached the people, while Greece has lost its sovereignty and its economic policy will be made in Brussels for the next 100 years. Public debt as percentage of GDP has increased from 124% in 2010 to 185% and continues growing. Pensions were never increased after they were decreased by 60% and the health system remains collapsed while over-taxation prevails. Death rates continue to augment. In 2013 they were 70.830, in 2017 they reached 124.000, while the suicide rate has increased by 45%. There is no end in sight to resolve the crisis for the people of Greece that has been imposed by erroneous policies of the EU and the IMF.

Greece is under the economic occupation of Germany and the EU, while at the same time it has recently signed a framework of agreements with the USA, the most important being the updated Mutual Defense Cooperation Agreement which was signed in Athens last month. It will enable the two countries to expand bilateral military activities at Larissa, Stefanovikio, Alexandroupolis and sustain increased activity at Naval Support Activity Souda Bay in Crete.

This agreement is not very popular with the Greek people who cannot see who the enemy is. For the United States this agreement makes Greece another U.S. military base, allowing it to better control the East Mediterranean and the Middle East.

Greece Upgrades Relations with Russia, China

In order to differentiate its foreign policy from German and U.S. policies, Greece decided to improve relations with Russia with the official visit of the Greek Foreign Minister to Moscow on November 6. Relations between the two countries were at their lowest ever in the summer of last year when diplomats in Athens and Moscow were expelled. Greece expelled first, the reason being that Moscow was providing funds to Greek organizations that were against the bilateral agree-



The European Central Bank in Frankfurt am Main, Germany.

ment between Athens and Skopje, a reason that was deemed by many as ridiculous. The visit had positive results, relations improved, and a consultation protocol was signed for the period 2020-2022. Greece will also try to improve relations between Russia and the EU.

Enhancing relations with China was part of Greece's foreign policy from 2005, even before the economic collapse. In November 2008 talks between Greece and China resulted in a contract between COSCO and the Piraeus Port Authority (PPA) that gave the former 35 years as oper-

ators of two piers in the port. In 2016 the Greek Government sold 51% of its shares in PPA to COSCO, thus making the Chinese Company the owner and operator of all three piers of the container terminal, but also of the ferry port, the cruise ship port, the car terminal and the ship repair facilities.

COSCO succeeded in increasing the annual container turnover from 685.000 in 2010, to 5 million Twenty-Foot Equivalent Units (TEUs) last year. The



Greece's orientation toward China's new paradigm can be seen in its partnership in the development of Piraeus Port. Here, in January 2015, Chinese COSCO officials celebrate expansion of a pier at the Port, with former Prime Minister Antonis Samaras (second from left).

activities of COSCO in Piraeus constitute the most important activity to date of China's One Belt, One Road approach in Europe.

In March 2017, Greece was given prospective membership to the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank and became a full non-regional member this August. The bank addresses infrastructure needs in Asia. In April of this year Greece joined the cooperation initiative between China and the Central and Eastern European Countries. This is an initiative founded in 2012 in Budapest aiming to push for cooperation between the 17+1 countries and to promote the Belt and Road Initiative. Eighteen Members of the EU are participating.

The European Commission and other hard-core countries of the EU are not looking favorably at this

lopsided deals that benefit Beijing and leave its clients mired in debt.

Greece Joins New Silk Road in MOU with China

Unaffected by U.S. pressure, Greece proceeded to safeguard its national interests and increase investment opportunities. The Prime Minister of Greece, Kyriakos Mitsotakis, attended the China International Import Exposition in Shanghai at the beginning of this month which was immediately followed by the state visit of the Chinese President Xi Jinping to Greece. The visit was very successful. Sixteen agreements were signed and a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) was issued which in its paragraph 9 stated:



The Chinese company COSCO is upgrading Piraeus into the largest port in the Mediterranean region.

The two sides will implement the MOU on Cooperation within the framework of the Silk Road Economic Belt and 21st Century Maritime Silk Road Initiative, through cooperation projects such as the port of Piraeus and implementing the 2020-2022 cooperation plans in key areas. . . .

The two sides will strengthen customs cooperation on trade facilitation and security, both bilaterally and in the framework of the China-Europe Land-Sea Express Line.

initiative, neither at the Chinese influence in Greece. This also demonstrates the uncoordinated policies of the EU. It should be reminded here that during the negotiations of the first half of 2015 between Greece and the Troika, to solve the debt crisis of Greece, Berlin intervened and prevented Beijing from buying Greek T-Bills of 1.4 billion euros, which might have solved many issues. In 2017, at the UN, Greece vetoed an EU condemnation of China's human rights record.

The U.S. is also not favorable toward the closer relations of Greece with China. During his October visit to Athens, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said: "... I raised our concern about Chinese investments in technology and infrastructure," and criticized China for allegedly using economic means to coerce countries into

In various statements, the Chinese President underlined the fact that China and Greece see each other as natural allies in developing the Belt Road.

China is also participating in the Greek initiative of the "Forum of Ancient Civilizations" that was inaugurated in Athens in April 2017 to promote knowledge of the ancient cultures of the Belt and Road civilizations.

In conclusion, the implementation and follow-up of the agreements signed between the two sides will determine the amount of investments that will reach Greece and its people; and if Piraeus can move from 5th in Europe in container movements to become the biggest port in Europe. Nevertheless, Greece's important role in developing the Belt and Road is guaranteed.