

# World Forum on China Studies Focuses on China's New Global Role

by William Jones

Nov. 29—The World Forum on China Studies, held on November 20-21, is a biannual event sponsored by the Shanghai Academy of Social Studies, which this year brought together some three hundred of the most prominent Sinologists from China and from around the world. While the forum always encompasses a broad range of topics, from philosophy, to economics, to social studies. This year's gathering was particularly noteworthy in its focus on the Chinese project of the Silk Road Economic Belt and the Maritime Silk Road. The theme for this years conference was “China's Reform—Opportunities For the World.”

The rapid growth of the Chinese economy as the

primary motor of world-wide development over the course of the last decades has thrust it into a major role on the global stage, a role for which there is no clear road-map. And contrary to what neo-conservatives in the West would like people to believe, there is no secret “plot” by China to take over the world. Given the shape of the world as we know it today, no individual nation would willingly take upon itself such a monumental task, particularly not a nation like China, with its long tradition of Confucian harmony. China, also, still has a long way to go to raise up the 300,000,000 of their own people who are still living in poverty.

And yet, this rapidly growing international role of



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*Yu Yunquan, the Deputy Director of the Center for International Communication Studies at China International Publishing Group, addresses the Shanghai World Forum on China Studies.*

China is not, as some blithe spirits might envision, a matter of China simply “integrating” into the “western” economic system as we know it—a system which has long been ripe for the scrap heap. While China has “westernized” in some respects, it represents a distinctly different culture from the Western world, and it is this cultural matrix above all which will determine the road China will take in the global arena. And this, in turn, will have a dramatic effect on the shape of the world as a whole.

This notion was quite clearly summarized at the end of the Forum by Yang Shuang, Deputy Director General of the Publicity Department of the Shanghai Chinese Communist Party. He noted three sources from which China will develop its “China Path”: from traditional Chinese culture, particularly the Confucian tradition; from Marxism; and from the last thirty years’ “reform and opening,” the policy initiated by Deng Xiaoping.

Most profoundly, there is the Confucian tradition. While this has often been depicted as being “anti-modern” (criticized in the wake of the 1911 Revolution) or anti-socialist (repressed during the period of the Cultural Revolution), Confucianism’s underlying presence in Chinese culture over the last 1500 years has been deep and long-lasting. And it has been clearly and decisively revived by the present leadership of China as an active and vital element in the rejuvenation of the Chinese nation.

Intertwined with this millennia-long influence of Confucian culture, is the reality of the Chinese experience with Marxism. While the doctrines of Karl Marx have long since disappeared from the horizon in the debates in the West, Marxism remains to this day a major factor in China’s development, serving still as the basic orientation of the Chinese Communist Party, the key actor in China’s development. In today’s China, that Marxist outlook is expressed in the Chinese doctrines of raising the masses out of poverty and misery, and in the important role that the state plays in providing a directionality for the overall economy, albeit now, in an economy where individual initiative is beginning to play a more important role. Marxism is also a major factor in creating a sense of obligation among the party cadre to work for the benefit of the working masses.

In the developing reality of today’s China, these two elements—Confucianism and Marxism—intertwine in a very interesting manner, as seen, for instance, in the concept of the “peoples livelihood,” a concept made

popular by Dr. Sun Yatsen, the founder of modern China. However, Dr. Sun’s notion can already be found in a variety of forms in the classical Confucian works, characterized particularly by the notion of the “mandate of heaven.”

Finally, among those influences shaping current Chinese policy, there is the experience of Deng Xiaoping’s “reform and opening up.” Yang Shuang noted that next year will be the 30th anniversary of the initiation of the “reform and opening up” initiative. This policy of “opening up” will continue, but at a pace and in a form which will be monitored and regulated by the party and the government. And it will serve to enhance China’s role in contributing to the world at large. “Our commitment comes from our dedication to world civilization,” Yang said. “We are committed to reduce poverty in China and in the world.”

Yang Shuang also noted that there was a crying need for more Chinese scholars to become involved in “China Studies” in order to better explain China to the world. While “China Studies” has been something of a favorite theme in the West since it was initiated by the Jesuits during the Seventeenth Century, it is of relatively new vintage for many Chinese scholars. But with the emergence of China as a major player in the international arena, this has now become an urgent need in order to avoid serious misunderstandings regarding China, its goals, and its intentions.

### **‘Please Don’t Misread China’**

Speaking to the opening banquet of the conference on November 20th, Fu Ying, director of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the National People’s Congress, underlined the importance of the rest of the world coming to understand China. “Please don’t misread China,” she said. This is the 70th anniversary of the end of World War II, she said, and the world is once again experiencing the winds of change.

Fu Ying noted that much of the Western commentary on China was often based on prejudice and arrogance, something that she hoped might be avoided. Our system and our cultures are different, she said, but they are not contradictory. The key element for scholars, both Chinese and Western, is to find the means for explaining to the world, in an understandable way, China’s desires and intentions. “Constructing a completely effective narrative is a need of our times,” she said. “The Chinese narrative must also resolve the huge errors in the understanding abroad of China, utilizing a more

FIGURE 1



*A Chinese schematic of the New Silk Road/One Belt One Road outreach to the world.*

systematic and faultless theory, using a more straightforward and persuasive language, allowing the outside world to better understand and trust us in order to achieve the ‘200 year goal’ of building a more peaceful and stable external environment.” She also urged the foreign scholars to read the works of Chinese scholars more in order to get a better sense of Chinese thinking.

There was also a considerable participation in the conference by scholars from many other countries: from Asia, from Europe, from Africa, from Latin America, and from the United States. There was much enthusiasm over the possibilities opened up by the Silk Road project. Representatives from Peru and Argentina, from Mongolia, South Africa, and Pakistan waxed eloquent in their praise of China’s role in launching the “Belt and Road” perspective.

A speech by this author in one of the round-tables on the Belt and Road as a “New Paradigm for Mankind,” in contrast to the threatening specter of nuclear war now on the horizon, was well-received by the other participants. Also scholars from Japan, including a former Japanese ambassador to the United Nations, gave speeches praising the Chinese development policies and lamenting the fact that, under the present Abe regime, Japan has become a tool for those right-wing circles in the United States who hope to use Japan as a marcher-lord for their imperial ambitions.

Several scholars were given awards for their contributions to China studies, including the venerable Russian China scholar, Mikhail Titarenko, one of the founders of modern China Studies in Russia and a good friend of American economist and statesman Lyndon LaRouche. While Titarenko’s health did not permit him to

participate this year, he did send his greetings in a video addressed to the conference participants.

The appeal for greater understanding of China, its goals and its wishes, expressed by numerous speakers, should not be misinterpreted, however, simply as that of a “supplicant” seeking “understanding” from a more powerful compatriot. Chinese scholars are keenly aware of the fact that the attitude of the present Obama regime, while cordial on the surface, is far from friendly. They are aware that the Obama Administration is largely motivated by an attempt to re-

establish the Cold War order with a vengeance, a policy which is dangerously close to heating up into nuclear conflict. Yet, they remain confident of their ability to lead China in the direction they intend to go, regardless of any threats or external pressures.

While rejecting any wild notions of becoming a “hegemonic” power, a myth which is continually perpetrated in the Western press, they are demanding that they be given their rightful place in the political order now that they have become the most important player in the economic order. If the Western nations do not accede to this justified demand, the consequences can be devastating for the world.

Ironically, doing the “right thing” in this case is also the only way for the Western nations to create a brighter future for themselves. A new world economic order based on the notions imbuing China’s “Road and Belt” is the only way out of the dilemma caused by the collapse of the dollar-based financial system.

Most of the developing world has already recognized this fact, as we have seen in the tremendous support garnered for the “Belt and Road” from the nations of Africa and Latin America. The people of the United States deserve better, and if they would take it upon themselves to move rapidly for the impeachment of Obama, the single impediment to joining the “Belt and Road” and whose crimes against humanity are clear for all to see, they would also serve to benefit from the new perspective offered by China’s rejuvenation, which then could become a “rejuvenation” of the world economy transforming the infrastructural investment policies of the Silk Road Economic Belt into a World Land-bridge.

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