

---

# I. From the New World

---

## ADDRESS TO IBERO-AMERICA

# The Belt and Road Vision: To Create A Mass Movement for Development

by Helga Zepp-LaRouche

*Zepp-LaRouche delivered this keynote address to a March 22 Spanish-language EIR Schiller Institute international webcast, which included live audiences in Lima, Peru; Mexico City; and Hermosillo, Mexico. It was pre-recorded March 19. The transcript has been edited.*

Hello to all of you participating in this conference!

The New Silk Road Spirit is a very powerful new dynamic in the world. As a matter of fact, it is already the dominating tendency of the whole globe, in which 140 countries are already participating. Not everyone is happy to cooperate with this new paradigm, however. There is a very strong, almost violent opposition coming from those who are defending the old, geopolitical, unipolar world order. As a matter of fact, they are proceeding from the axiomatic assumption that everything that is associated with the unipolar world, with the Pax Britannica, or the Pax Americana, is good; that liberal democracy and human rights protections are inherently good, while Russia, China, infrastructure, and credit-issuance without strings attached, are bad.

You can see by the events unfolding over the recent days and weeks, that there is an incredible double standard, where those people who

pretend to uphold all the good values are, indeed, precisely the ones who are creating havoc in the world. The best example—or not the best example maybe, but the most horrible, is what Theresa May, the Prime Minister of Great Britain, just did in the case of the so-called double agent Sergei Skripal, who was attacked with a nerve agent. Without delivering any proof, May gave an ultimatum to Russia, demanding that within 24 hours Russia must provide evidence on how this nerve agent came into Great Britain.

Some experts doubt that this nerve agent even exists, and strongly doubt that the British have any sample to compare it with. Nor did the British follow the protocols of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), which require that Britain furnish a sample of the nerve agent to this organization and to Russia, with the accused country—namely Russia—having ten days to respond.

What Theresa May did instead, was create, in a single day, something which you could only call a war-time, or pre-war alliance, consisting of Angela Merkel, the Chancellor of Germany; Emmanuel Macron, the President of France; and herself. She tried but failed to pull in President Trump, who initially was very reluctant to say that this was clearly the Russians.







Xinhua

*Coca Codo Sinclair hydroelectric power plant, located about 150 kilometers east of Quito, was built by China's Sinohydro consortium. The power plant, the largest facility of its kind in the country, is expected to supply 30 percent of Ecuador's electricity needs.*

history, and the Western mainstream media don't find it newsworthy enough to report? Does this have something to do with the arrogance of power of those who have been used to running the world?

Recently, when the total success of this project became so overwhelmingly obvious, there was a sudden series of attacks coming from think tanks, from the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington, from the European Council on Foreign Relations, and from the Mercator Institute for China Studies think tank in Berlin. Some claimed the New Silk Road to be a threat to the liberal system, to liberal values. Before leaving for a tour of Latin America, then Secretary of State Rex Tillerson declared that Latin America doesn't need the new imperialism—meaning alleged Chinese imperialism. He did the same thing in Africa, by the way. And then, Admiral Kurt Tidd, Commander of the U.S. Southern Command, chimed in, saying that China is making aggressive investments in Central and South America.

If you think that what China is doing in Latin America is “aggressive investment,” you obviously have geopolitical glasses on your nose, so you have a distorted view of reality.

### **Face the Reality of Today**

The reality is very different. China is an amazing country. I say this with a little pride. I don't claim to be a China expert, but I've looked closely at China and been very involved with China since 1971, when I was there for the first time, during the Cultural Revolution.

The development that China has undergone during the last 40 years, since the reforms of Deng Xiaoping, is the most amazing example of human creativity and the determination to change the fate of society for the better.

China has lifted 700 million people out of poverty; it has a booming economy, which is very healthy, contrary to all the reports in the West; and what Xi Jinping presented at the 19th National Congress of the Communist Party of China last October, is the only vision for the future for the next 30, 40, and 50 years. He proclaimed that China will have eliminated all poverty at home by 2020. That's only two years from now; 30 million people in China are still regarded as poor. There are *tremendous* programs right now, in which party members are going into the villages, investigating on a case-by-cases basis, as to why each particular individual is poor; bringing in infrastructure, education for the children, and providing farmers with access to e-commerce, so they can sell their products in a modern way. So, it is absolutely believable that China will reach the goal of eliminating domestic poverty by 2020.

By 2025, China wants to be the vanguard in several scientific fields. China is already the leader in high-speed rail systems, producing the most efficient, and the greatest extent of high-speed rail systems in the world. At the recent party conference, they discussed a new maglev system, which will travel at 600 kph, and a new underground tube system at 1,000 kph. A fast maglev system for inner-city transportation will travel at 160 kph. The fact that maglev technology provides extremely quick acceleration, and can reach maximum



speed in almost no time, makes maglev trains extremely effective for urban transportation.

The other goal is that by 2035, China will be a modern, democratic country with socialism with Chinese characteristics. And by the year 2050, China will be a fully modernized, strong country, democratic and culturally advanced, whose people have beautiful lives and pursue their happiness. Xi Jinping said it was the aim of China to not only provide that for the Chinese people, but for all nations of this world.

The Belt and Road Initiative is obviously in the tradition of the ancient Silk Road. As that old Silk Road exchanged culture, ideas, technologies, and goods, so does the New Silk Road. Especially, it offers a new model for economic development to the other developing countries, and it provides credit to address the huge gap in infrastructure and industrial funding which was left by the IMF and the World Bank. As you know, those two institutions had, and still impose certain “conditionalities,” which oblige the borrowing, i.e., debt-incurring countries, to cut all social programs and slash infrastructure spending, making it impossible for them to repay the debt. And while the mainstream media accuse China of luring developing countries into a debt trap, the opposite is true! Because, as John Perkins wrote in his very worthwhile book, *Confessions of an Economic Hit Man*, it was the deliberate policy of institutions like the World Bank and the IMF to *cause* an unpayable debt trap for the developing countries, and to impose conditions that would mean absolutely no de-

velopment. If you want to know why the developing countries are in such an undeveloped condition, it has something to do with these institutions.

Adjunct Associate Prof. Friedrich Wu, of the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies at Nanyang Technological University in Singapore, pointed in a recent [article](#), to a study by the AidData laboratory at the College of William and Mary in the United States, which shows that four-fifths of the recent years’ Chinese lending was on concessionary terms, i.e., below market interest-rates. Professor Wu also quotes David Dollar of the Brookings Institution, who finds that China has been lending without any discrimination in regard to “geography or the quality of governance,” which proves this is a “demand-driven” pattern, rather than a “supply-driven development” guided “by a Chinese master plan.”

Additionally, the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB)—first proposed by China, but now counting 60 other members as well—has shown a complete absence of any political agenda in the loans it has made in its first two years of development financing. So anyone who says that China is pursuing a master plan, and pursuing its own exclusive interests, is readily proven wrong by the reality of the Silk Road and the AIIB. Rather, China is engaging in win-win cooperation, with complete respect for the sovereignty of the partner nation, complete respect for its social system, and no interference and no effort to try to change that system. And that has everything to do with the fact that, while the Chinese say that they have a socialist country with Chinese characteristics, I always think—and say—that the “Chinese characteristic” is the 2,500-year-old Confucian tradition, with its notion of the harmonious development of different cultures.

Confucianism, unlike Christianity, for example, does not proselytize and attempt to recruit other people to Confucianism. It is perfectly happy if there is the development of all. Xi Jinping calls this the “shared community for the future of humanity,” which I think is exactly truthful.

The New Silk Road Spirit is spreading so fast, because countries realize that it is in their self-interest to cooperate. It’s spreading in Asia, and it is even spreading to Europe. The Eastern and Central European countries, the 16+1 countries, are fully on board. The Balkan countries are absolutely happy about China’s investments. So is Italy, and so are Spain and Portugal, which not only want to be the western end of the Silk Road in



Xinhua/Chen Cheng

*Mazeras railroad bridge built in Kenya after a 2014 deal with China.*

Eurasia, but also want to be the hub for trade and development with the Latin American countries and the Portuguese-speaking countries in Africa. Even Switzerland, Netherlands, Belgium, and Austria are joining. In Austria, the new government has even put cooperation with the Silk Road in its government coalition agreement. The only countries putting on the brakes are Britain and Germany, as is the EU headquarters in Brussels.

Now the most incredible and most exciting example of the transformation brought about by the New Silk Road comes from Africa. A railroad is now functioning between Djibouti and Addis Ababa, a distance of 750 km; new rail lines are being built in Kenya, Cameroon, and Rwanda, with others in preparation. Many industrial parks are being built, and new hydropower is being planned and provided. There is a completely new spirit of optimism in Africa, which did not exist under 500 years of colonialism and IMF rule.

About two weeks ago, a truly historic conference, the International Conference on Lake Chad, took place in Abuja, Nigeria, where the historic Transaqua project was agreed upon by all the participating countries of the Lake Chad region. Transaqua is a monumental project. It involves taking 3 to 4% of the water from the tributaries of the Congo River, from an elevation of 500 meters, and flowing this water north through a canal system into Lake Chad. This is a transformational breakthrough, because not only will the currently dying Lake Chad be

refilled and saved, but the project will create an inland shipping channel between the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Lake Chad, traversing all participating countries. The system will provide huge amounts of water for irrigation, and hydropower for the increasing electricity requirements of this growing region.

At that conference, an agreement was reached for a joint feasibility study between PowerChina, the large Chinese construction firm which built the Three Gorges Dam, and Bonifica, the Italian engineering firm that developed the Transaqua concept more than 30 years ago.

At the same time, there was an agreement between China, Italy, and the participating African countries, that the Transaqua project is the only way that Lake Chad can be saved, and that only an inter-basin water transfer from the Congo Basin to the Lake Chad Basin, will solve the problem. They called on the African Union to support it, and thus extend development and also security throughout the entire Lake Chad region. They called on the African Development Bank to create a \$50 billion fund for this project, to finance the canals, reforestation, and agriculture.

This is not an option, the governments at the conference said, but an absolutely urgent necessity. Over the past 60 years, Lake Chad has decreased in area by 95%, because of an extended drought with reduced rainfall, so that the surface area of the lake has shrunk from 26,000 sq. km in 1963, to less than 1,500 sq. km today. It's an ecological disaster. This has destroyed the livelihood of the people living there, and absent such an intervention, it will unquestionably cause a humanitarian crisis of unprecedented dimensions. It would extend the desertification of Africa.

This is the heart of Africa: The Lake Chad Basin is 8% of the total size of Africa. Eight countries are located there: Algeria, Cameroon, the Central African Republic, Chad, Libya, Niger, Nigeria, and Sudan. In these eight countries live 374 million people, 12% of them immediately around Lake Chad.

This is what Cheikh Anta Diop used to call “the cultural unity of Africa,” and it was completely shattered with the 95% reduction of lake’s area, leading to a total economic collapse. There was mass migration of people; nomads had to move their herds to try to find remaining pastureland. This also led to the rise of the Boko Haram terrorist organization.

The situation has reached such a total crisis point, that Nigerian President Muhammadu Buhari said at this conference that it is urgent to save Lake Chad, and there can be absolutely no delay.

He said, “The time to act is now, the time to bail out our region is now. The time to show our humanity is now.”

There were many very skilled Nigerian water engineers at this conference, scientists who have been discussing this project for many decades. And there was a big debate, which I think is also very relevant, between UNESCO, on the one side, which said that water is a commodity with a price, as opposed to those who argued that water is a basic human right and that everyone must have sufficient safe, physically accessible, potable water, for consumption, cooking, and personal and domestic hygiene requirements.

### A Transformed World

So Transaqua will lead to an industrial revolution in the heart of Africa. It will completely redefine the curriculum for African students, because literally millions of scientists, engineers, and experts must be educated and trained. And it will spin off many follow-on projects, leading to a broad industrialization of all of Africa.

PowerChina’s lead engineer declared that, because the Italian government is providing 1.8 million euros for the feasibility study, it will be completed in only one year. An engineering feasibility study will be completed within the second year, and this engineer was confident that the entire project can be completed in twelve years. This is incredible, and further, with it will come a comprehensive system of highways and railways—all part of the extension of the New Silk Road, or the Belt and Road Initiative, into Africa.

Transaqua, upon which the relevant governments agreed as the only alternative, is also a beautiful model



Schiller Institute

*The February 2018 Lake Chad conference.*

for cooperation among (a) China, along with (b) a European country, namely Italy, and (c) the African nations. And that, I think, is absolutely beautiful, because it also constitutes a breakthrough towards the similarly needed cooperation among Asian and Latin America nations, by demonstrating how countries from completely different cultural backgrounds can cooperate in such a beautiful project.

It is projected—I don’t know if it’s completely scientifically backed up—but it is projected that by 2050, the average temperatures in this Central African region will rise by 2 to 3 degrees. In that case, the drying up of Lake Chad would cease being a regional or even a Pan-African matter, becoming rather a global concern. From this standpoint, Transaqua is not an “option,” but a necessity. Without it there will be an unbelievable humanitarian crisis. By the year 2040, there will be no fewer than two billion Africans, among them many, many young people who need jobs, who need education, and who need a positive hope for the future. But now, with Transaqua, I think Africa is on a good trajectory.

Lessons can be drawn for the Latin American situation, because here as well, the One Belt, One Road initiative expresses the true self-interest of Latin America. At the China-Community of Latin American and Caribbean States Forum in Chile on January 22, Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi offered the total cooperation of China in the development of the Latin American continent. Juan Carlos Varela, the President of Panama, who recently returned from a very important tour in China, said that with the help of China, there will soon be a high-speed rail line from Panama City to Chiriqui on

the Costa Rican border. Soon after, it will connect all of Central America, and soon after that, all of the Americas.

Within a short period, then, there will be high-speed rail systems running from the southern tip of Argentina and Chile, crossing the Darien Gap, and going up all the way across the Bering Strait, thus connecting a great and unified transportation system of the Americas with the Eurasian corridors.

The geopolitical opposition in the United States, is of course opposed to that—but is the opposition surmountable? Well, President Varela, who wants cooperation with China, has also asked the United States to be part of it! The good thing is that President Trump has excellent relations with China's President Xi, the sort of President-to-President relationship which can really outflank the geopolitical opposition. Fifty-three percent of U.S. citizens are positive about China, despite the non-stop attacks by the mainstream media and the think-tanks. The United States itself has a huge infrastructure crisis: It doesn't have a high-speed rail system, as China does. Its aging infrastructure is rapidly rotting away. We have just witnessed the collapse of a brand new pedestrian bridge in Florida, killing six people, before it was even completed. Even its new infrastructure doesn't work!

Chinese experts estimate that the United States needs \$8 trillion of investment in infrastructure to remedy its situation. China has \$1.4 trillion of reserves in U.S. Treasuries, which could be invested in U.S. infrastructure through an infrastructure bank. It's clear that the neo-cons in the Republican Party do not want to provide budget resources for this investment, but Chinese-U.S. cooperation could lead to a solution of this problem, based on the major-power relationship concept proposed by Xi Jinping.

Will it be easy? Well, in light of what I said in the beginning about the geopolitical confrontation, as demonstrated by Theresa May—absolutely not! Therefore, what is needed is a mass movement for development. In Latin America we need hundreds of thousands and even millions, both young and old, demanding not only cooperation with China and the New Silk Road, but that the United States join in, seeing China and the Belt and Road projects not as a threat, but as a great opportunity for joint ventures.

Therefore, I appeal to all of you to create such a mass movement for development. There are also many Hispanic people in the United States, who need produc-

tive jobs, and a future. They can and must be part of this.

Begin a broad discussion around you about a vision: Where should the Americas be in 50 or 100 years? If China can eliminate all poverty among its citizens by 2020, why can't the Americas do that, too? Maybe we need five years. Maybe we need seven years, but not much more.

Rather than calling Chinese investment in Latin American "aggressive," as the head of the U.S. Southern Command, Adm. Kurt Tidd said, the United States, China, and Latin American countries should be cooperating in development projects, as we see now among China, Italy, and the African countries.

Mankind is different from all other species, in that we are human! We are not wolves, each of us set against all the other wolves. The economy is not a zero-sum game. As a human species, we can unite on a higher level of reason and be guided by a tremendous love for mankind! We can have a beautiful vision for the future of all of humanity. We are on the verge of making so many scientific breakthroughs. For example, China is very close to accomplishing thermonuclear fusion energy, and once we have that, we have not only energy security, but raw materials security as well. We can have nuclear-powered space flight, which will completely change the nature of space exploration. Soon we can build villages on the Moon, which can become the basis for further exploration of space. And in one generation, maybe two at most, we can have inter-stellar space travel, to explore the secrets of our galaxy, and maybe beyond.

When the New Silk Road becomes the World Land-Bridge, which is the program of the Schiller Institute, we will gain the material conditions for every child on this planet to have a universal education. The number of people who become geniuses will increase incredibly, and we will relate to each other in a truly human fashion, by relating to the creativity of the other person, rather than regarding him or her as a threat or a nuisance.

We are at a very exciting time in history. I personally think that the beautiful vision of Xi Jinping of completely transforming the world by 2050, so that everyone on this planet can have a happy life and a beautiful world, is definitely realizable. So, please, create a mass movement for development. That's the best thing you can do to accomplish that goal.

*hz.zepp@schiller-institute.de*