

# Party Congress Reaffirms China's Commitment to New Type of Development

by William Jones

Oct. 31—The dramatic changes initiated at the 19th Party Congress of the Chinese Communist Party, which concluded on Oct. 23, are slated to produce deep-going and long-lasting shifts in the party's thought and practice. The incorporation in the Party Constitution of Xi Jinping's concept of "Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era" marks a significant new direction for China and the world.

One could well mark the shift already in September 2013, when President Xi launched what became known as the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), one of the most ambitious engineering projects ever attempted. Prior to that, China had pursued the policy laid out in Deng Xiaoping's concept of "reform and opening up" in 1978. Coming out of the devastating period of the disastrous Great Leap Forward (1958-62) and the subsequent Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution (1966-75), the "reform and opening up" marked the entry of China into the world market and an end to the isolation of China that characterized the Cold War period (1947-91).

While China was then entering an economic system that was seriously flawed, and was entering it as a cheap-labor producer, Deng intended to utilize that opening in order to gradually bring China up, technologically and economically, to a significantly higher level. The success of that policy over the last 40 years has been breathtaking in its scope.

At the same time, Deng's policy focused on having China maintain a low political profile on the international stage, while slowly building up its economic capacity and raising its people to a decent standard of living. But it was clear that if the policy were successful, as even Napoleon had foreseen two centuries ago, China, with a population of well over a billion people, would be playing a major role on the international scene, not only economically but also politically. The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) was the debut of modern China's entry onto the world stage as a shaper of global policy.

But it would be a mistake to view this shift in terms of traditional geopolitics, as the "fake news" media has portrayed it: Xi was trying to "grab power," to bring in



his "cronies" into the top leadership, and to change the rules of the game to secure his position.

Look at the seven members of the new Standing Committee, the highest policy-making body in the party: only two had worked closely with Xi earlier, while the others had no particular relationship to him. It was obviously something else which had caused them to merit promotion. The fake news media also harped on the idea that Xi would break with the rules and keep close his old collaborator on the old Standing Committee, Wang Qishan, who had reached the mandatory age of retirement. Much to the chagrin of the China-bashers, Wang Qishan retired in good order from the Standing Committee.

Nor is China inclined to become the leading "hegemon" in a fragile and failing system—but rather, it seeks to change this flawed system into one which not only works, but works for the benefit of all peoples. For this reason, the colossal infrastructure project that is the Belt and Road Initiative has won the overwhelming support of the world's people, particularly in the developing sector, which has the most to benefit from the BRI's shift toward infrastructural investment.

Since the early fight in the 1970s over the Third World's demand for a New World Economic Order and the creation of an International Development Bank—a 1975 proposal by economist Lyndon LaRouche which

at the time won wide adherence from developing sector countries—the post-Bretton Woods system has offered little to these countries except more poverty and misery.

The BRI and the creation of the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB)—founded in December 2015—were a clarion call to these nations, announcing that real development was once more on the table. Since then, China has been one of the most active countries in reshaping foreign policy in many parts of the globe. President Xi's call for replacing the zero-sum game of geopolitics with a win-win "community for a shared future for mankind" has also won great support among many countries of the world, even among the developed countries. Helga Zepp-LaRouche has characterized it as a new Peace of Westphalia, comparing it to the peace that ended Europe's brutal Thirty Years' War in 1648 with the notion of working for "the good of the other."

## Major Changes

The 19th Party Congress accomplished this shift, including the Belt and Road Initiative, which has now been incorporated into the party constitution. It has become the *leitmotif* of all party activity. As this does reflect a shift from the low-profile early years of "reform and opening up" beginning in 1978, there is, no doubt, some apprehension among many party members about the shift. Not only does it place a greater responsibility on China to see to it that the Belt and Road succeeds, but it also puts China more in the spotlight, which can have negative effects whenever obstacles are met along the road.

Already now, there are projects in the works to study the implications of this "new era" policy. Beijing's Renmin University is setting up an entire department to study "Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era." At the heart of the policy, as President Xi underlined in his Work Report, is the whole-hearted commitment of the Chinese Communist Party and its members to improve the conditions of life of the Chinese people, a policy which restores and reinvigorates the role of the party in the life of the common man.

Immediately following the Congress, an additional post-Congress press conference was held to elucidate some of the main ideas presented in President Xi's Congress Work Report, initiating a discussion which will be continuing in the weeks and months ahead.

And in an important gesture, filled with symbolism, President Xi traveled, with the other members of the newly elected Standing Committee, to Jiaxing in east China's Zhejiang province, the site where the first CPC

National Congress was held in 1921. Each Standing Committee member reaffirmed the oath taken by all members when they join the Communist Party. And while the 19th Party Congress may well be compared to the captain of the ship of state bringing together his officers and crew to re-establish clear guidelines and a compass to indicate the direction the ship is to take on on this new voyage of exploration, at the same time, President Xi was also intent on reassuring the world community that China's rise as a world power would mean closer collaboration and partnership with other countries, both big and small.

In his Work Report, Xi was very clear on this point: "We [nations of the world] should stick together through thick and thin," he said, "to promote trade and investment, liberalization and facilitation, and make economic globalization more open, inclusive, and balanced, so that the benefits are shared by all. We should respect the diversity of civilizations. Let us replace estrangements with exchange, clashes with mutual learning, and superiority with co-existence."

"China will actively promote international cooperation through the Belt and Road Initiative," Xi continued. "In doing so, we hope to achieve policy, infrastructure, trade, financial and people-to-people connectivity, and thus build a new platform for international cooperation to create new drivers of shared development."

Xi recognizes that no country is more important to establish cooperation with than the United States. Speaking to visiting U.S. scholars and businessmen after the Congress, Xi told them: "China is willing to work with the U.S. side to look far ahead and aim high, take each other's interests and concerns into consideration, properly solve differences, and jointly promote China-U.S. cooperation so as to realize a mutually beneficial and win-win situation. We are optimistic about the prospects for China-U.S. relations."

Some have called this new policy "globalization with Chinese characteristics." And yet, while the policy bears something of a Confucian character, it also appeals to a more universal ideal of global cooperation which transcends any one culture and envelops them all. If President Xi is successful in convincing the other world leaders of the wisdom of this policy, the 19th CPC Party Congress will not only have been a clarion call for the "rejuvenation of the Chinese nation," but a significant catalyst for putting mankind back on the road of technological progress and mutual respect for the disparate variety of cultures that make up our world.