

Chapter 5

“China’s 70-Year Development and the Building of a Community with a Shared Future for Mankind”: Thailand’s Perspective



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I would like to thank the organizers, the National Institute for Global Strategy and the Chinese Academy of Social Science, and in particular professor Wang Linggui, the Executive Vice Chairman of the Board of Directors and Secretary General of the NIGS, for inviting me to participate and write a paper for the high-level international forum “China’s 70-year Development and the Construction of a Community with a Shared Future for Mankind,” under the framework of the Second China International Import Expo, here in Shanghai on 5 and 6 November 2019.

Since 2014 I have been invited more than 15 times by various Chinese organizers—the Communist Party of China (CPC), the Chinese government, associations and foundations affiliated with the CPC or the Chinese government, Chinese academic institutes and universities, and Chinese and Thai private sector entities—to deliver speeches and to participate in various events regarding the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) in China, Thailand, and Indonesia.

I have read most of President Xi Jinping’s statements since 2012, and the two voluminous books on the Governance of China, which collect all the speeches of President Xi from 2012 to 2017, which make me think of the three essential Chinese concepts of Socialism with Chinese Characteristics, a Community with a Shared Future for Mankind, and the Belt and Road Initiative (previously called the One Belt One Road).

It is astonishing that China, as a communist country, has survived since 1949, and developed especially over the last 40 years to become the world’s second-largest economy. China is a champion in reducing inequalities, especially in terms of poverty reduction. The number of people living in extreme poverty fell from 836 million in 1987 to 156 million in 2010. In 2015, the number of poor in rural areas fell to approximately 56 million, and the country aims to eradicate poverty by 2020. This is

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21

a result of the right concepts, policies, appropriate implementation of concepts and policies, and of course the hard work of the CPC, the Chinese government, and the Chinese people.

If we look at the first socialist society, the Paris Commune in 1871, when Karl Marx was still alive, although the Communards controlled Paris they were not united in a strong and centered structure like the Bolsheviks and the Russian Communist Party; nor did they have an appropriate economic and social platform for a new socialist city. Eventually the Communards were crushed by the army of the then-French government, and more than 18,000 people died. However, the commune has served as an example for socialist revolutionaries since then. The Russian Revolution in 1917 led by Vladimir Lenin changed Russia from absolutism to socialism. Marxist ideology was implemented in reality for the first time through the Bolshevik Party, which in 1918 changed its name to the Russian Communist Party. The organization of the party was totally centered and directed and controlled by smaller entities such as the Central Committee, Politburo, and Secretary General of the Party. The hardest thing for the Russian Communist Party to do was to have appropriate economic and social platforms that served Marxism effectively. It should also be noted that the economic situation during Marx's era (1818–1883)—in particular when he wrote the famous *Communist Manifesto* with Engels in 1848, and the three volumes of *Capital* during the 1860s—is not the same as the economic and social environment of today, as there have been so many changes in political, economic, and social platforms, as well as in international relations.

For China, the victory of the CPC led by Chairman Mao against the old regime, and the establishment of the new regime in 1949, have been praised by the Chinese people.

Nevertheless, the challenge has been the same: what are the appropriate economic and social models and platforms that serve China best? In the beginning, it is understandable that China, with Chairman Mao at the top, learned and imitated many Russian models and systems. I think that Chairman Mao interpreted Marxist theory and ideology strictly, and the relationship at the time between workers, capitalists, technology, and innovation were totally different when compared to the present day. Therefore, after Chairman Mao passed away in 1976, there was a big challenge for the new leader of China, Deng Xiaoping. With the coming of Deng Xiaoping, Chinese economic reform was implemented in 1978. Deng proposed that China learn from the example of rich countries and allow workers and peasants to generate new ideas. He said, “otherwise, we won’t be able to rid our country of poverty and backwardness, or to catch up with—still less surpass—the advanced countries.” The Cold War, which began after World War II, stemmed from profound political and economic differences between the Western bloc led by the US, and the Socialist or Eastern bloc led by the Soviet Union. Both sides were afraid that the other side would attack and invade. Therefore, there were proxy wars in many parts of the world. The US collaborated with and instigated right-wing political parties and militaries to control underdeveloped countries in the belief that this could prevent the expansion of socialism. The cold war ended in 1991 when the USSR collapsed and the Russian Federation was established.

The terminology “Socialism with Chinese Characteristics” and “Socialist Market Economy” were core concepts for Chinese economic reform. And there is a need to interpret and implement Marxist theory in line with the current situation and future trends for the CPC, not only to bring peace, happiness, and stability to the Chinese people, but also to push the international community towards peace, green and sustainable development, and the eradication of poverty, on the basis of negotiation, collaboration, and mutual respect. Therefore, a Community with a Shared Future for Mankind has to be envisaged by all.

China has successfully developed its economic and social standards at an astonishing speed over the past 40 years, to make up for lost time due to invasion by Western countries since 1839, the Opium Wars, the Taiping Rebellion, the wars against the Japanese, the Second World War, and the Civil War, which totaled around 110 years. With these sad and painful memories, I think the CPC wants to see the country move forward to meet the aspirations of the Chinese people, to achieve the Chinese dream.

In this regard, Shiren Liu of the College of Marxism, Sichuan University of Arts and Science, Dazhou, pointed out in *The Philosophical Interpretation of a Community of a Shared Future for Mankind from the Perspective of the Marxist Philosophy* that this concept is a new development of Marxist philosophy in the twenty-first century. He confirmed that Marxist theory is still the core of the national ideology and is under great development, because Marxism is an open system. Chinese communism combines Marxist general theory with China’s reality, and constantly promotes theoretical innovation in practice, which is a source of vitality in theory of Marxism. He concluded that a community with a shared future for mankind is the inheritance and development of Marxism to see the world from the perspective of interconnectedness and development and use the positive side of interconnectedness to promote the development of one’s country.

However, this concept is a complex one that deserves further research for a better understanding.

The term “a Community with a Shared Future for Mankind” is an expression used by Chinese leaders since 2012, from Hu Jintao to Xi Jinping. (In the beginning this concept was translated as community with a common destiny.) Xi Jinping, in January 2017, delivered a speech at the United Nations entitled “Work together to build a Community with a Shared Future for Mankind”: Xi has elaborated upon the idea to make it more systematic and comprehensive. He urged the world community to “pass on the torch of peace from generation to generation, sustain development and make civilization flourish. This is what people of all countries long for; it is also the responsibility of our generation to shoulder. And China’s proposition is: Build a community with a shared future for mankind and achieve shared win–win development.”

In my view, the proposal of the Chinese leaders and the CPC to build a community with a shared future for mankind is both an internal and an external commitment for China and the world. The concept has reflected the Chinese will and intention not only to live peacefully with other nations but to stick and walk together to face and solve complicated world economic and other problems and difficulties—because no country can possibly stay aloof by taking good care of itself alone. In February

2017, the concept was first made part of a United Nations resolution; in March 2017 it was included in a UN Security Council resolution; and in September 2017, the proposition's underlying principle of achieving shared growth through discussion and collaboration was incorporated in a UN General Assembly resolution on the United Nations in global governance.

Finally, the concept was incorporated into a Chinese constitutional amendment in March 2018, with a statement that promoted the building of a community with a shared future.

It is interesting to look at the keynote speech by Yang Jiechi, Member of the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee, at the 55th Munich Security Conference in February 2019. He stated that "Unilateralism and protectionism have been on the rise; the multilateral international order and global governance system have come under challenge. Our world stands at a crossroads and faces a consequential choice between unilateralism and multilateralism, confrontation and dialogue, isolation and openness. As President Xi Jinping pointed out, multilateralism provides an effective way of upholding peace and promoting development, and the world needs multilateralism now more than ever." I totally support this statement. It is so strange that during the Cold War China was eliminated from the then world order characterized by Free Trade and multilateralism in the Western bloc. On the one hand, it was because China wanted to close the country to build the proletarian state internally, and feared interference from capitalism from outside. On the other hand, the Western bloc preferred to sanction and isolate China due to the fear of communist expansion.

However, with the coming of Deng Xiaoping and his economic model, China became a member of the WTO. China, under the leadership and guidance of the CPC, has learned how to adapt its economy, ideology, and some parts of its social systems to the world order dominated by the US. The result is that its goal to eradicate poverty can be achieved, in parallel with its advanced industrial and technological development over the last 40 years.

Today, while China is seeking and proposing a new world order through the building of a community with a shared future for mankind, the US, led by President Donald Trump, on the contrary, wants to isolate itself from the rest of the world, whether democratic or socialist countries, and has staged a trade war against many nations but principally against China, by referring to a trade balance deficit on the US side vis-a-vis other countries. I do agree with the view of Professor Jeffrey Sachs of Columbia University, who stated that "the real battle is not with China but with America's own giant companies, many of which are taking in fortunes while failing to pay their own workers decent wages. America's business leaders and the mega-rich push for tax cuts, more monopoly power and offshoring anything to make a bigger profit, while rejecting any policies to make America society fairer."

Yang Jiechi has clearly explained the meaning of multilateralism. He reiterates that it includes, first, the principle of sovereign equality; second, dialogue and consultation; third, the rule of law; and fourth, win-win cooperation. In answer to the above, he emphasized that China wants to do four things: first, to forge partnerships through mutual respect; second, to uphold universal security through mutual support; third, to

foster global development and prosperity through win–win cooperation; and fourth, to improve global governance through reform and innovation.

With regard to the Belt and Road Initiative, I think it is wise for China to use this strategy to push forward its economic development into a greater sphere and an essential tool to make the concept of “a community with a shared future for mankind” a reality—to replace the old world order dominated and now distorted by the US under Trump.

I had the honor to be invited by the Chinese government to participate in the second Belt and Road Forum in Beijing in April this year, which so many dignitaries from around the world attended. All the participants anticipated the speech by President Xi Jinping, and we were not disappointed. The theme “Belt and Road Cooperation: Shaping a Brighter Shared Future” directly reflected the concept of a community with a shared future for mankind, while President Xi reaffirmed that “we remain committed to peaceful development and will endeavor to build a community with a shared future for mankind.”

As of April this year, 131 countries and 30 international organizations had signed BRI-related cooperation documents with China, according to the official website of the BRI.

Personally, I hope to see the idea of building a community with a shared future for mankind move forward steadily by having the BRI be available as an essential tool for all nations, with the principles and practices mentioned above. In whatever way, we should be aware of the current economic situation, which will affect this endeavor. We must prepare and help each other to overcome hurdles. On this point, a report by Baker McKenzie highlights five scenarios for the BRI during the 2020s.

One: The BRI continues on its current trajectory.

This would see major investment in sectors like power, manufacturing, and railways, with Sub-Saharan Africa being the biggest recipient. The investments in the BRI would be in the range of \$910 billion in this scenario.

Two: If China decides to drop the path of unilateral investment and turn to collaboration with governments, third parties, private capital, and multilateral development banks, investments in the BRI could soar to \$1.32 trillion. Major investment sectors would include energy, railways, ports, and manufacturing.

This is the most favorable outcome for China, in the larger scheme of things, as it eliminates political opposition to its projects and promises long-term profits and success for its investments.

Three: If China learns from its domestic building boom and focuses on sustainable initiatives, it will allow room for multilateral development banks to invest in the BRI. While this may bring investment in the BRI down to \$1.2 trillion, it will make Chinese engineering and construction companies more competitive and financially viable in the longer term.

The key investment sectors here would include energy, power, water supply and treatment, manufacturing, and railways, with Sub-Saharan Africa being the biggest recipient.

Four: If the trade war between the United States and China persists into the early 2020s, manufacturing may move outside China, and in this case Southeast Asia

would be the biggest winner of BRI investment. However, the report estimates that BRI investment will fall to \$1.06 trillion.

Fifth, and last: The doomsday scenario, in which BRI stakeholders stand to lose the most. Assuming the trade war persists into the early 2020s, and the global slowdown intensifies, signatory nations to the BRI may then not want to commit to BRI projects.

While the key investments would be in power and railways, the total investment would fall to a mere \$560 billion against \$1.32 trillion in the most favorable scenario, costing China almost \$800 billion worth of BRI investments.

Therefore, the ongoing trade war between the US and China becomes important for the BRI's future investments for the following reasons.

First: A few more years of trade war could make protectionism the global norm in the US-dominated world order. High tariffs and weakening exports would also disrupt Xi's domestic run, slowing down investments in the BRI.

Second: Within the BRI ecosystem, protectionism could extend to patented technologies.

China, with its capacity-building measures and its export-driven economy, is pursuing dominance in future technologies like electric and hybrid vehicles, artificial intelligence, and 5G. Already, Huawei is the second-biggest 5G patent-owner after Samsung.

If the trade war persists, BRI signatories across Europe and Africa may want to invest in local capacity building, thus rendering the BRI pointless.

The above analysis may or may not be totally exact, but we should keep in mind that war, in whatever form, gives nothing to humanity. Only peace and win-win cooperation can bring prosperity and happiness to mankind.

To conclude, I think China has done extremely well in forging Socialism with Chinese Characteristics, a community with a shared future for mankind, and the Belt and Road Initiative to sail the Chinese ship through stormy seas of economic, social, and political difficulties for 70 years. At present, China stands as one of the world superpowers in terms of economic and military might. But I am confident that with the leadership of the CPC and President Xi Jinping, China will always choose the peaceful path and means to develop its society and to deal with other countries with mutual respect in a win-win approach. Nevertheless, I also believe that China will not bow to any country that tries to force it to accept superiority or unfair treatment like in the past during the colonial period.

I would beg every side to be patient and altruistic, and to use wisdom to try to understand the great concept "a community with a shared future for mankind" as there is only one world for us to live in together as brothers and sisters.

Thank you.