

China's Belt and Road (BRI): Could Save Destroyed Southeast Asia?

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Most of the people in the West or in North Asia usually never think about it, but Southeast Asia is one of the most depressed and depressing parts of the world.

It has been through genocides, wars and atrocious military regimes.

Then, those monstrous income disparities.

According to *The Bangkok Post*, in 2018,

“the 10% poorest Thais had 0% wealth. 50% of the poorest Thais (25 million people) had 1.7% of the country's wealth while 70% (35mn) controlled 5%.”

In the same year, 1% of the richest Thais controlled 66.9% of the country's fortune.

Indonesia is not doing much better. In fact, if it were to provide correct, unmassaged statistics, it would easily overtake Thailand as the most unequal country on earth. But Indonesia does not even declare the precise number of people, as I was informed by my colleagues, UN statisticians. It still claims that it has around 270 million inhabitants, while in reality, even ten years ago, there were more than 300 million people living on the archipelago.

Except in the Communist Vietnam, super-rich Singapore, and (still) relatively wealthy Malaysia, poor people matter very little. Or more precisely, they do not matter at all. They do not exist. And poor people form the great majority in this part of the world, although you would hardly read it from the pages of official government bulletins.

Image on the right: Jakarta beggars at night



It is enough to see Jakarta, Manila or Bangkok from the air, to understand that the Southeast Asian megapolises are totally fragmented, so they can serve the elites. Skyscrapers, malls and enormous hotels are surrounded by miserable houses and slums. Terribly inadequate public transportation (corrupt governments have been regurgitating every year, for decades, great numbers of cars and polluting scooters wishfully called 'motorbikes', instead of providing decent massive public transit systems) has made Jakarta and periodically Bangkok, some of the most polluted and depressing cities in the world.

Crime is out of control. Thailand has, per capita, according to *Interpol*, a higher murder rate than the United States. In the Philippines, before President Duterte came to power, cities such as Davao and Manila were suffering from some of the most horrid crime statistics in Asia. Indonesia, again, has escaped scrutiny, simply because of the absolutely amazing ability to hide the truth - most of the crimes committed there, particularly sexual ones, are never reported, and if reported, not registered.

The modern history of this part of the world is perhaps the most brutal on the planet. Brutal, but hushed up. The education system in Indonesia, Malaysia and Thailand is geared not to educate the children and young people about the monstrous genocides committed on the territory of Southeast Asia.

To mention just a few 'occurrences', the West murdered several million people in Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia, during the so-called 'Vietnam War' and 'Secret War'. It carpet-bombed poor Laos and Cambodia, while supporting the most atrocious feudal regimes all over 'Indochina'. It also displaced millions of peasants. As a result, multitudes died from hunger.

Image below: Jakarta skyscrapers between slums



Indonesia perpetrated three genocides, killing millions. First, during the 1965-66 one, triggered by the U.S.A. and its allies, murdered 1 - 3 million intellectuals, artists, teachers, Communists and members of the Chinese minority. The second was the U.S.A, U.K. and Australia-backed occupation of East Timor, which took lives of 30%-40% of the islanders. The third genocide is the on-going, horrendous occupation and plunder of West Papua.

Burma, broke and divided by British colonialism, is yet another story. And so are the monstrous Malaysian massacres, which took place in 1969. And various massacres of the opposition as well as of immigrants, in Thailand. The Thai bombing of Vietnam and Laos, to impress handlers in Washington. And the U.S. massacres in the Philippines, as well as the brutal civil war there, in Mindanao.

The list goes on and on. It is a brutal horror show, the never-ending awfulness of Western neo-colonialism, as well as the sleazy servility of local rulers.

The results are omnipresent: the beaches of entire countries are devastated. Whole enormous islands like Borneo, Papua and Sumatra are finished, scarred and poisoned by local and multi-national corporations. It is smoke and filth, clogged rivers, collapsed cultures, entire civilizations. No mercy, no compassion, no future.

But it is all hushed up. Crimes are denied. Outraged, confused nations are called 'lands of smiles', or "friendly and tolerant archipelagos'.

It is insane, but tens of millions of foreign tourists descend on this ruined part of the world, annually. They see nothing. Some like it. They only nurture their complexes of superiority here. They do not want to understand anything. They choose to be blind. Cheap sex, shitty alcohol and beach food, as well as monumental sunburns. They continue the demolition work which has been triggered by their governments.

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The mood is terrible. In Indonesia, foreigners and even locals get insulted in the middle of the day, just for being 'different'. Whites are. Chinese are. Indians are. Black people are, with terrible regularity and brutality.

In Thailand, foreigners get killed and raped, for almost no, or very little reason. The terrible occurrences are reported almost weekly by the local and foreign press.

Poor people feel that their beaches, their cities, have been stolen from them. In Indonesia, on the Bali and Lombok islands, everything has actually really been looted from the locals.

Societies have crumpled. The plunder of the resources, of nature, of everything, was already taking place for years and decades, even centuries.

No one knows the way out of this nightmare. Most of Southeast Asia knows nothing else than this subjugation. And it is not even called a nightmare. In Southeast Asia, or in the West which controlled these societies for as long as one can remember, the horror is being glorified.

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And yet, yet... On the same continent, not far away, an enormous country, governed by the Communist Party, and professing 'socialism with Chinese characteristics', has been building a totally new society, defining and implementing an 'ecological civilization', pulling hundreds of millions of citizens out of poverty, constructing a great scientific base, the fastest trains on earth, massive mass transit systems in each and every city, first rate schools and universities, and stunning concert halls, opera houses and museums.

And all this with only a fraction of the financial resources, calculated on a per capita basis, of those of the West.

China... A country with 6,000 years of history and culture, with about 1.4 billion inhabitants, and with an absolutely, diametrically opposite economic and social system from that which was force-fed, for decades, to the people of Southeast Asia by the West.

A country, which, by 2020, as promised by her President Xi Jinping, will have no one, be it in the cities or in the villages, living in extreme poverty.

China, a country which is growing in order to serve its people. A country which is using capitalist companies in order to fulfill socialist goals. A country with a centrally planned and greatly successful economy. Where all land belongs to the government, and the entire future - to the people.

Imagine this country, near the decaying colossus of the mainly miserable, oppressed Southeast Asia. Southeast Asia, with mostly failed systems which has forced hundreds of millions of human beings to live in filthy, destitute cities and in the feudal countryside.

And now, China, with its culture based on communalism and internationalism, is extending its hand, and basically saying: "Let us grow together! Let us help our people, let's struggle side-by-side for a much better world. Let us save, liberate, empower your hundreds of millions of men, women and children; let us protect them from hunger, illnesses, functional illiteracy and the lack of a decent future!"

This extension of the hand is called "BRI" - *"The Belt and Road Initiative."*

And it is, most likely, the greatest global and internationalist initiative in the history of humankind.

It is the most optimistic, truly socialist, vision for our planet, based on sharing and the genuine commonwealth of nations.

An enormous belt of high-speed railroads, roads, super-fast communication corridors, ports and airports, but also schools and universities, high-quality hospitals for all, of film studios and publishing houses, theatres and museums.

As this essay goes to print, China just inaugurated amazing, 4.300 km long railroad, cutting across Africa, from Tanzania to Angola. This project alone will save dozens of millions of lives. I worked in Africa, for several years. I know.

I have worked in more than 160 countries on this planet. I have seen a lot. But I have never encountered any vision so confident, so positively revolutionary, and at the same time, so kind.

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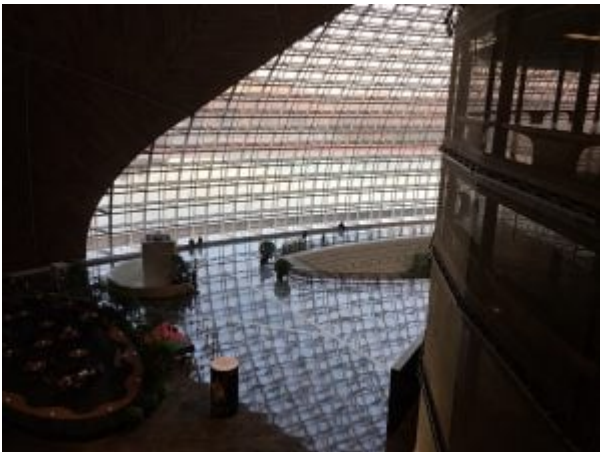
The West will fight. It will do everything in its power to prevent the BRI from succeeding.

It will not let Southeast Asia go without a struggle. As it is not letting Central Asia go.

Recently, I analyzed the so-called “Uighur Issue”, in my detailed report compiled in Turkey, Syria, Afghanistan and Indonesia – “March of Uighurs” it is called. The West and its allies are radicalizing, arming and militarizing the Uighur ethnic minority, doing all they can to sabotage the BRI, by attempting to destroy its important center – Urumqi – in Northwest China. This may slow the projects aimed at inter-connecting China, entire Central Asia, Iran, and even Turkey and parts of Russia.

The same has been happening in Southeast Asia. The West has unleashed a tremendous propaganda force; it has employed countless NGO’s, as well as thousands of local ‘academics’ and ‘journalists’, trying to smear all China’s attempts to pull the region out from slumber and above all, from the toxic dependency on Western colonialist powers.

Image on the right: Beijing Egg – the biggest opera house in the world



I have been monitoring this occurrence, in among other places, the Philippines, where the administration of President Duterte has moved the country much closer to Beijing, and away from Washington, improving greatly the lives of the great majority of the Filipino people. President Duterte enjoys the support of around 80% of his citizens, but is brutally attacked by Western media and NGO’s. He calls China “the kindest nation on earth”. This can never be forgiven in the West.

The same can be said about Laos, where China is basically revamping everything; pulling this poor and historically ruined country back to its feet, by building a high-speed rail system, modern energy sector, while constructing hospitals, schools, and even brand-new cities. And what did West do in Laos? It fought a ‘Secret War’ here, a side-kick of the Vietnam War, basically carpet-bombing with B-52s, a big part of the countryside, killing hundreds of thousands of people, just ‘preventively’, so they do not become Communists. Washington and Thailand never even apologized for these crimes against humanity.

Now when China is rescuing its neighbor, a fellow Communist nation, the West is blabbing nonsense about the ‘environment’ and ‘debt-trap’. Anyone who bothers to travel to the Plain of Jars or other ruined parts of Laos, will discover minefields left after the carpet-bombings. People are still dying there, and Western companies which produced these monstrous

cluster bombs do not even share technical specifications with the de-mining agencies. Great concern about the environment! Here, U.S. bombs are used as village fences.

A similar situation in Cambodia.

And several other nations in the region, including Myanmar.

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Nobody is laughing out loud, mainly because the West and its servile local regimes have managed to sweep their crimes, genocides and economical plunder, under the carpet.

The downfall, or call it the near collapse of Southeast Asia, is not being defined as a downfall. Far from it.

Nowhere has brainwashing been so intense and so successful, as in this part of the world. The great majority of local people are nowhere near to even beginning to comprehend what had been done to them. People do not know that they are the true victims, or that a different world is actually possible.

The Brits, Dutch, French, Portuguese and Spaniards, have all managed to get away with the plunder and murder, mainly because 'education' has been shaped by the local 'elites', read: shameless treasonous servants of the Western imperialism. Talk to 'educated' (pro-British) Malaysians; read the books of their contemporary writers (almost all funded 'from abroad'). Then you will understand.

The United States is still admired in Indonesia, a country thoroughly impoverished and ruined by Washington's greed and geopolitical ambitions.

But Indonesia with a quality of life equal to that of poor Sub-Saharan African countries, is not officially considered to be poor, or deprived, or fascist or even feudal. Nobody seems to be questioning its ridiculously perverted statistics. The Philippines, too, was not defined as poor and destitute, before the arrival of President Duterte, even as millions were fleeing to all corners of the world, attempting to make living [as overseas workers] often under horrid conditions, in places such as the Gulf.

No one is laughing, because people were stripped off their ability to compare.

The glorification of capitalism and imperialism has been too powerful.

As has the smearing of Communism.

And as has been the professional and consistent attempts to discredit everything Chinese, first by the racist European colonialists, and later by Cold War warriors and propaganda gurus from Washington and London.

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China led by the Communist Party; socialist China with its own characteristics, is clearly misunderstood. The BRI is also, and absolutely, misunderstood. Not because it is not transparent – transparent it is. But because Western propaganda is, so to speak, constantly and professionally muddying the waters.

Everything about China's success is turned upside-down. The biggest fear, total horror, of the West and its lackeys in the new type of colonies here, is that China is both Communist, and a tremendously successful nation.

I am not going to argue here whether China is Communist or not, and if it is, to what extent. To me, it clearly is. Both Communist and successful. As well as internationalist. That is why I am decisively on its side, and on the side of BRI.

What is indisputable is that the intentions of the West to discredit both the PRC and BRI have absolutely nothing to do with trying to find solutions to the horrid problems our world in general, and Southeast Asia in particular, are facing.

The West does not want to find solutions. It wants Southeast Asia to remain ignorant, divided and servile.

The intentions of the West are clearly self-serving. Their only goal is to keep control over this resources-rich part of the world. And to prevent China from gaining its rightful position in Asia.

For centuries, the West kept plundering, killing and enslaving Southeast Asian people. That simple. Full stop. The nightmare is continuing, to date. This time, local elites are fully involved, although, frankly, they were always involved, acting shamelessly as go-betweens for the colonialists and the enslaved people.

It is time to try a different approach. An approach which has already saved hundreds of millions of people from misery; by giving them new lives, education, health, culture and dignity. An approach which now puts ecology and the quality of life well above business and economic growth.

The people of Southeast Asia have to be informed about the choices they have.

It will not be easy, as there is no free, no alternative press there. The mass media and 'education' are controlled by the elites who, naturally, want to maintain the *status quo*.

But there are choices. For the first time in many years.

Once the people of Southeast Asia know the truth, colonialism will end. Rapidly, almost immediately.

China and its system are showing great example by their deeds, not just by words. Wherever China comes, new winds are blowing. New societies are beginning to grow. Rationality blossoms. Nihilism disappears.

Soon a new chapter of Asian history will begin. The continent will be united, by belt and by road, by solidarity, determination and a great revolutionary spirit which will lead to the unstoppable renewal of this part of the world.

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Andre Vltchek is a philosopher, novelist, filmmaker and investigative journalist. He has covered wars and conflicts in dozens of countries. Four of his latest books are [China and Ecological Civilization](#) with John B. Cobb, Jr., [Revolutionary Optimism, Western Nihilism](#), a revolutionary novel ["Aurora"](#) and a bestselling work of political non-fiction: ["Exposing Lies Of The Empire"](#). View his other books [here](#). Watch [Rwanda Gambit](#), his groundbreaking documentary about Rwanda and DR Congo and his film/dialogue with Noam Chomsky ["On Western Terrorism"](#). Vltchek presently resides in East Asia and the Middle East, and continues to work around the world. He can be reached through his [website](#) and his [Twitter](#). His [Patreon](#).

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Andre Vltchek is a philosopher, novelist, filmmaker and investigative journalist. He covered wars and conflicts in dozens of countries. His latest books are: "Exposing Lies Of The Empire" and "Fighting Against Western Imperialism". Discussion with Noam Chomsky: On Western Terrorism. Point of No Return is his critically acclaimed political novel. Oceania - a book on Western imperialism in the South Pacific. His provocative book about Indonesia: "Indonesia - The Archipelago of Fear". Andre is making films for teleSUR and Press TV. After living for many years in Latin America and Oceania, Vltchek presently resides and works in East Asia and the Middle East. He can be reached through his website or his Twitter.

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