

China's Imperialist Expansion:

Two Third World Examples



Imperialist Hands Out of Africa!



The official Chinese description of the Belt and Road Initiative and overseas development cooperation use slogans such as “consultation, joint contribution and shared benefits,” “open, green and clean cooperation,” and “high-standard, sustainable and people-centered development.”

However, using the class analysis of Marxism-Leninism-Mao Zedong Thought, we reach the opposite conclusion—one that better explains the actual cases. China’s expansion into Asia, Africa and Latin America today does not mainly take the form of old-style colonial occupation. Instead, it mainly works through state-backed capital exports, large engineering contracts, control over resources, ports and transport corridors, and the enforcement of “project order” by local police and military forces or Chinese overseas security systems. In other words, this is a modern relationship of dependency built through contracts, debt, supply chains and security cooperation.

From a Maoist point of view, whether a country is imperialist cannot be judged simply by asking whether it directly annexes foreign territory. The more important questions are whether it has developed a system for exporting monopoly state capital and finance capital, and whether it uses that system to place peripheral countries within an unequal structure that benefits its own capital accumulation and strategic expansion.

According to publicly available data, by 2023 China’s total stock of outward foreign direct investment had reached US\$2.9554 trillion. Among its non-financial overseas investment, 52.2% still came from state-owned enterprises. AidData has also pointed out that nearly 70% of Chinese overseas lending now goes to state-owned enterprises, state-owned banks, special-purpose vehicles, joint ventures and private companies. These debts often do not fully appear on government balance sheets, creating what are known as “hidden debts” and “quasi-sovereign liabilities.”

This shows that China’s overseas expansion usually operates through the joint action of the state, policy banks, central state-owned enterprises and project companies.

Gwadar Port

“Beyond the many existing motives of colonial policy, finance capital has added the struggle for sources of raw materials, spheres for the export of capital, spheres of influence ... and, in general, economic territory.” — V. I. Lenin, *Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism*

In 2015, Pakistan leased 2,000 acres of land at Gwadar Port to China for 43 years to build the port’s first special economic zone. Chinese investment then

funded extensive construction at the port.

Gwadar Port officially began operations on 13 November 2016. At the opening ceremony, then Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif called it “the dawn of a new era.” The event also marked the launch of the China–Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), a series of major joint infrastructure projects stretching over 2,000 kilometres. CPEC is widely regarded as a key hub and flagship project of China’s Belt and Road Initiative.

Sounds good, right?

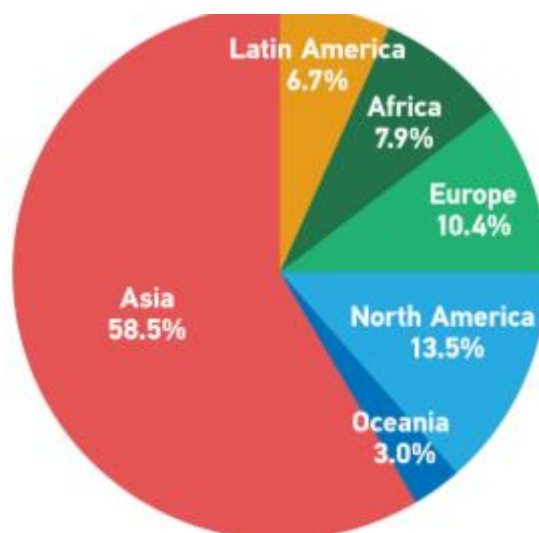
The Gwadar Port deal is highly unequal. A Chinese state-owned company gained control of the port for around forty years and receives 91 per cent of port revenue, while the Gwadar Port Authority receives only 9 per cent. It also controls much of the nearby free zone and leased land.

At the same time, many local people still lack clean water, electricity, healthcare, education and stable jobs. Fishermen have also complained about large trawlers and security restrictions. This creates a colonial-style pattern: modern infrastructure is built for trade, profit and strategic control, while local needs are neglected.

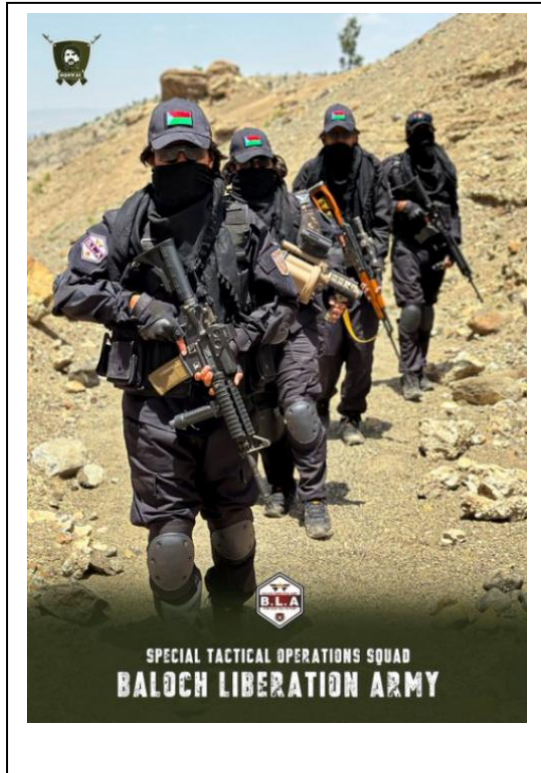
These conditions have deepened anger in Baluchistan. Separatist groups see the China–Pakistan Economic Corridor as a tool for exploiting local land and resources, leading to repeated attacks on Chinese workers and facilities.

From a Marxist-Leninist-Maoist perspective, Gwadar is an example of capital export combined with national oppression. Chinese state capital controls the port, land and most of the revenue, while the local Baloch population remains poor and politically powerless.

*China’s outbound
direct foreign
investment by
region 2020*



This is not equal development. It is a form of imperialist expansion in which infrastructure is built mainly to serve monopoly capital, trade routes and strategic control. The Pakistani ruling class acts as a local partner, while the costs are pushed onto the oppressed nation.



The result is a contradiction between foreign capital, the Pakistani state and the Baloch people. Armed resistance grows from this contradiction, although attacks on ordinary workers and civilians cannot be justified.

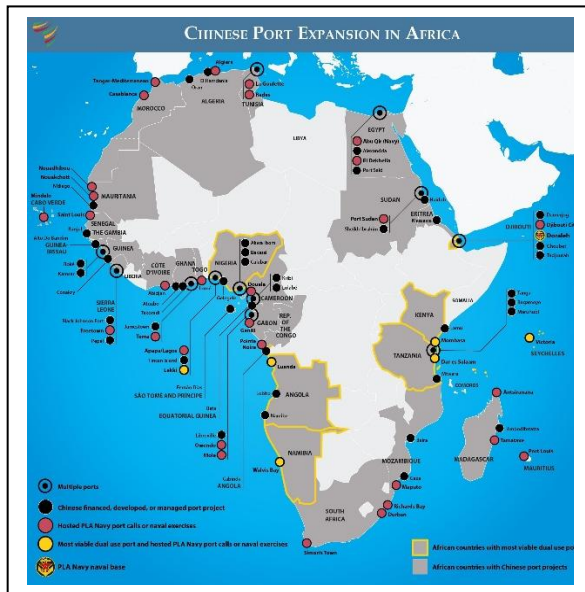
Congo-Kinshasa (DRC)

First, mining in the DRC mainly serves foreign markets rather than Congo's own development. Chinese companies control many major cobalt and copper mines, while most high-value processing, battery production and manufacturing take place outside Congo. In simple terms, Congo digs the minerals, while foreign industry

makes the larger profits.

Second, "resources for infrastructure" agreements have often been unequal. Under the Sicomines deal, Chinese companies received a 68 per cent share in the mining venture, while Congo received 32 per cent. Mining moved ahead much faster than promised infrastructure, and the Congolese government later had to renegotiate the agreement to secure billions of dollars in additional investment. This shows that the original deal heavily favored Chinese capital.

Third, Chinese capital works together with Congo's ruling class. Foreign companies provide money, machinery and access to global markets, while local officials provide mining rights, land, tax advantages and security. The two sides may argue over how to divide the profits, but ordinary workers and villagers have little control over the contracts or the use of mining revenue.



Fourth, local people carry most of the social and environmental costs. Mining expansion has caused forced evictions, loss of farmland, water pollution and unsafe working conditions. Some communities have received compensation or new housing, but they usually do not have real power to decide whether mining projects should expand. Companies gain the minerals, while local people bear the damage.

Fifth, Congo remains dependent on raw-material exports instead of

building an independent industrial economy. It exports copper and cobalt but does not control most of the refining, battery production or manufacturing that creates higher value. As a result, mining growth does not automatically reduce poverty. It often strengthens Congo's role as a supplier of cheap resources to foreign capital.

From a Marxist-Leninist-Maoist perspective, this is not simply foreign investment. It is a system in which Chinese monopoly capital controls mineral resources, investment and access to international markets, while the Congolese ruling class provides mining rights, cheap labor and political protection. Congo remains formally independent, but its economy is kept dependent on exporting raw materials.

China did not create all of Congo's poverty, corruption or armed conflicts. These problems have deep roots in Belgian colonialism, Western imperialism and the actions of neighboring states. However, Chinese capital has entered this existing system and benefited from it rather than breaking it. It has helped reproduce a structure in which minerals leave the country, profits are concentrated in foreign companies and local elites, and ordinary workers and villagers bear the social and environmental costs.

Marxist-Leninist-Maoist Analysis

China was once a socialist country. After Mao Zedong's death, the Deng Xiaoping revisionist clique carried out capitalist restoration and gradually transformed the former socialist state sector into a state-capitalist system controlled by a new bureaucratic bourgeoisie. Using China's huge population, industrial base and cheap labor force, this new ruling class first accumulated

capital through low wages, the exploitation of migrant workers and the transfer of public assets into capitalist hands. As capital became more concentrated, Chinese monopoly capital began searching overseas for more raw materials, larger markets and new places for investment.

Lenin wrote: “When monopoly prevails, the export of capital becomes the typical feature.”

China’s activities in Gwadar and the Democratic Republic of the Congo are examples of this export of capital. Chinese policy banks provide loans, state-owned construction companies build ports, roads and mining infrastructure, and Chinese corporations gain long-term control over ports, land and mineral resources. This is not simply the export of goods. It is the direct expansion of Chinese capital into foreign economies.

Lenin also wrote that finance capital struggles for: “Sources of raw materials, spheres for the export of capital, spheres of influence ... and, in general, economic territory.”

Gwadar Port is a clear example. A Chinese state-owned company gained control of the port for around forty years, receives most of its revenue, and controls nearby leased land and the free zone. Gwadar is not only a commercial project. It is also a strategic route linking China to the Indian Ocean. Chinese capital therefore controls not only a construction project, but also port income, trade routes and strategic space.

The situation in Congo shows the struggle for raw materials. Chinese companies control major copper and cobalt mines, while the more profitable stages of refining, battery production and manufacturing mainly take place outside Congo. Congo provides the minerals and bears the costs of pollution, displacement and low wages, while Chinese industry captures more of the value from the wider supply chain. In simple terms, Congo digs the minerals, while Chinese capital controls the more profitable stages.

Mao Zedong wrote: “The comprador big bourgeoisie is a class which directly serves imperialism and is fostered by it.”

Chinese capital does not expand without local support. In Pakistan, the central government provides land, contracts and military protection, while many Baloch people receive little of the port’s revenue. In Congo, local officials and state mining companies provide mining rights, tax advantages and security, while gaining shares and income from the agreements. Workers, peasants and local communities have little real power over how the ports and mines are controlled.

Infrastructure is also not neutral. Gwadar has a modern port, free zone and airport, but many residents still lack clean water, electricity and stable employment. Congo exports enormous quantities of copper and cobalt but has not developed a complete domestic battery and manufacturing industry. This shows that these projects are mainly organized around trade routes, resource exports and capital accumulation rather than local needs and independent development.

State ownership does not automatically make these activities socialist. When state-owned banks and companies export capital, compete for profit and control foreign markets and resources, they still operate according to capitalist and imperialist logic. The state is not being used to abolish capital, but to support the overseas expansion of monopoly capital.

China did not create every problem in Pakistan or Congo. However, it has entered these already unequal systems, worked with local comprador ruling classes and used local land, labor and resources for its own accumulation. From a Marxist-Leninist-Maoist perspective, this is a modern form of imperialism based on capital export, resource control, unequal contracts and local political collaboration.

Conclusion

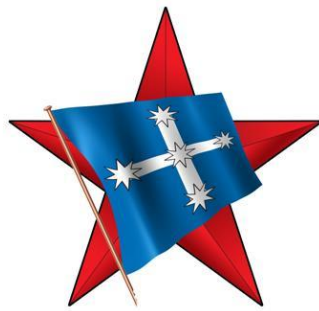
The two examples we have provided could be replicated elsewhere.

Readers are asked to regularly check our website at www.cpaml.org for updates on China's imperialist expansion.

For example, on April 23, 2026, we reported on Chinese investment in the Peruvian port of Chancay, and on June 9 we explained a new set of guidelines for the protection of Chinese capital export to take effect on July 1, 2026.

In December 2018 we published a small booklet, *Explaining China: How a socialist country took the capitalist road to social-imperialism*. It is available on our website in the "Booklets" section of our "Media and Archives" drop-down menu.

While US imperialism remains, for the time being, the main enemy of the world's people and the main source of the danger of a new world war, the logic of inter-imperialist rivalry and of the uneven development of rival imperialist states requires us to remain vigilant about the growth of capitalist China's influence and power.



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