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Understanding China's Belt and Road Initiative – A new link pattern for deepened interaction between China and the world

Abstract

The One-Belt-One-Road Initiative is a complete development strategy and framework of linkages for creating a deepened interaction between China and the world. The Silk Road economic belt, or land-based Silk Road, focuses on the large-scale regional economic cooperation between China and the countries and regions of Eurasia. The 21st century maritime Silk Road mainly involves an economic cooperation between China and the countries and regions along the coast of Eurasia. The China-Pakistan economic corridor and Bangladesh-China-India-Myanmar economic corridor will connect the above-mentioned land-based and maritime Silk Roads. The modern Silk Road will not only provide a link, but also a passage for the intercontinental economic cooperation on land and sea across Eurasia. Building the modern Silk Road cannot be accomplished at one stroke, and several countries must make certain accommodations for the strategy to be implemented. The One-Belt-One-Road Initiative allows China to become more active in the global arena and provides passage for the international community to enter its borders. China has chosen to cooperate and share the benefits of peaceful development with the international community, which is a new path for its development as a rising world power. While it may be new, this path reflects

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the Oriental wisdom. It also demonstrates China's sense of responsibility for and commitment to the future of mankind.

Key words:

the One-Belt-One-Road Initiative; the 21st century maritime Silk Road; connectivity; community of shared interests

1. INTRODUCTION

China's fast and sustained development has a huge impact on the whole world; that development, to a certain extent, has fundamentally changed international geopolitics and the trend of global economic development. What does the rapid rise of China mean for the world? What kind of relationship will China develop with the international community after its rise? Will China be able to explore a new path of peaceful development that parts with the idea that a strong country must be hegemonic and expansive? China needs to answer all of these questions clearly.

In fact, China has been trying to answer these strategic questions since it began implementing policies of reform and opening up to the outside world. The Chinese government has repeatedly made it clear that, although the nation is developing, it will not seek hegemony and global expansion. Instead, China will pursue a path of peaceful development and follow a good-neighbor policy. The Chinese government has long upheld the ideals of reform, openness, and peaceful development as its strategic goals for domestic and international affairs.

Since the 18th National Congress of the Communist Party of China, China has adjusted its foreign policy in six ways. First, the Chinese government has attached more importance to relations with major powers. It strives to establish a new type of major-power relationship with the United States, to promote a comprehensive strategic partnership of coordination with Russia, and to develop a comprehensive strategic partnership with the European Union (EU). Second, building friendships and partnerships with neighboring countries that advance the ideas of amity, sincerity, mutual benefit, and inclusiveness, is a central facet of its foreign policy. This makes the neighborhood diplomacy a top priority. Third, China plans to develop its navy to make the country a maritime power and to strengthen maritime awareness. Fourth, China plans to build what the Chinese government defines as a community of shared interests and common destiny, in which nations are bound together for mutual collaboration and work towards common goals. Fifth, it focuses on founding a new international political

and economic order that is just, equal, and peaceful. It also promotes development of new international relationships which feature mutually beneficial outcomes. Sixth, Chinese foreign policy includes a new security concept. By pursuing common, comprehensive, cooperative, and sustainable security, the Chinese government has initiated a new Asian security policy and insists that it is the right solution to global security problems.

Against such a backdrop, China proposes the development strategy and framework of the Silk Road economic belt and the 21st century maritime Silk Road. In addition, its government wants to include the China-Pakistan economic corridor and Bangladesh-China-India-Myanmar economic corridor to complete this plan for increased interaction and trade. With this strategic top-down approach, the government is attempting to address the issues that arise with rapid development of China and of the rest of the world. China has adopted a package of strategies that are logically consistent with others and in line with the development of its comprehensive national strength and its circumstances.

2. HISTORICAL MOTIVES FOR CHINA TO BUILD THE MODERN LAND-BASED AND MARITIME SILK ROADS

Historically, the ancient Silk Road linked Oriental and Occidental civilizations in Eurasia and provided a network for exchange between them. The Silk Road remains an icon of Chinese history and culture and holds much significance and value. In the east, the ancient Silk Road started in China. The Chinese not only traveled and traded on the Silk Road, but were also its explorers and builders on land and sea. Although the once-prosperous land-based Silk Road has disappeared in modern times due to various causes, the exploration of land communication across Eurasia has never stopped.

The Silk Road economic belt and the 21st century maritime Silk Road, that China currently proposes, have important implications. First, by conceptualizing economic strategies in this way, the Chinese demonstrate that the historical and cultural values inherent to the ancient Silk Road are still relevant for an exchange between nations. Second, China is intentionally reviving these values by incorporating them into contemporary policy. China also reassumes its historical role in the ancient Silk Road by revitalizing the spirit of exchange throughout Eurasia. Against the background of economic globalization, integration of global societies, and evolution of geopolitical

and economic circumstances, China will reshape cultural and economic exchange in a civilized, modern, and convenient manner, so as to create a friendly atmosphere in Eurasia as a whole.

3. THE CONDITIONS FOR THE ONE-BELT-ONE-ROAD INITIATIVE

(1) The spillover effect of a deeper interaction between China and the world

China has the second-largest economy in the world. Most remarkably, its recent development has deepened its interaction with the international community and has increased its interdependence to other nations. China is inseparable from the world and vice versa. China did not put forward a package of strategic planning as an occasional event. The land and maritime Silk Roads strategy expresses China's extensive interaction with the rest of the world. It also shows direct evidence of an economic cooperation between China and the international community. The economic cooperation between China and the EU has reached a high and deep level. In 2013, bilateral trade reached \$559.1 billion. More than 5 million people travel between these countries each year, and approximately 300,000 students study overseas, either in Europe or in China. China and the EU have one of the most important bilateral relationships in the world.¹ China and the EU have set a strategic goal to increase the two-way trade between them to 1 trillion US dollars (USD) by 2020. They are actively exploring the possibility of a free-trade area. However, China and the EU urgently need a new platform and plan for massive economic cooperation. The construction of the Silk Road economic belt will represent a vehicle through which to realize this strategic goal. "We should also study to combine China-EU cooperation with the initiative of developing the Silk Road economic belt, so as to integrate the market of Asia and Europe, energize the people, businesses, capital, and technologies of Asia and Europe and make China and EU the twin engines for global economic growth."²

During his visit to Indonesia in 2013, Chinese President Xi Jinping proposed that the bilateral trade between China and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) should reach \$1 trillion by 2020. In

¹ Xi Jinping's speech at the College of Europe in Bruges http://news.xinhuanet.com/politics/2014-04/01/c_1110054309_4.htm, accessed on Oct 31, 2014.

² Ibid.

2011, Chinese and Russian leaders formally suggested that Sino-Russia trade should climb to \$200 billion by 2020.³ Moreover, the trade between China and India and between China and the Middle East will also increase substantially. The need to reach the above-mentioned \$1 trillion bilateral trade goals motivates the Chinese to implement the land-based and maritime Silk Roads strategy. Having goals of such magnitude also demonstrates the degree of cooperation and interactivity between China and other major world economies and economic organizations in Eurasia.

China is more actively reaching beyond its borders to promote the establishment of the Free Trade Area of the Asia-Pacific. It also advocates the interconnectivity with neighboring countries. China wishes to work with Asia-Pacific countries to build harmonious relations, lasting peace, and common prosperity. However, China's development is not limited to the Asia-Pacific area. It also maintains close economic links with countries in the Indian Ocean region. Moreover, China's economic development has entered into a new phase. The spillover effect of the Chinese economy requires a strategic plan and a long-term platform for cooperation. China's trade transportation network has become a bottleneck. The Silk Road economic belt and the 21st century maritime Silk Road provide a solution to these issues. "Significantly, a large section of China's trade figures are based on the maritime domain, with much less trade going by land. This overwhelming dependence on maritime trade had added new demands on the maritime areas."⁴ Since the reform and the implementation of an open policy, China's sea-trade transportation has soared rapidly so as to make the country a maritime power. But China urgently needs an overall cooperative strategic plan to cover Eurasia and to reach its \$1 trillion trade goals with ASEAN and Russia.

China's rapid development made connecting it to the rest of the world an urgent problem. Because transportation networks to facilitate trade in Eurasia are lacking, some provinces in China have begun to explore opportunities to realize innovative railway transportation establishing new routes, such as Chongqing – Xinjiang – Europe, Zhengzhou – Xinjiang – Europe, Wuhan – Xinjiang – Europe, and Suzhou – Manzhouli – Europe.

³ "Joint statement by Chinese President Hu Jintao and Russian President Medvedev on the 10th Anniversary of the Signing China-Russia Good-Neighborly Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation," http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_chn/gjhq_603914/gj_603916/oz_606480/1206_606820/1207_606832/t831559.shtml, accessed on Oct 21, 2014.

⁴ Srikanth Kondapalli, "China tosses maritime silk route bait to India," <http://www.indiawrites.org/diplomacy/china-tosses-maritime-silk-route-bait-to-india/>, accessed on Oct 12, 2014.

These new railways represent innovations to meet the demands of the Chinese economy and the spillover of its influence. They facilitate increased connectivity and surges in trade.

*(2) Meeting the demand for deep integration
and systemic cooperation in Eurasia*

China's One-Belt-One-Road Initiative covers a wide geographic area, including Eurasia, North Africa, and East Africa.

Currently, there are four strategic international arrangements in Eurasia: the eastern expansion of the EU and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), the US strategy of the "new Silk Road," the Russia-led "Eurasian Economic Union," and China's One-Belt-One-Road Initiative. Among the former three strategic plans, Russia's is both incompatible with and in contradiction to that of the EU and the United States. To a certain extent, these policies are confrontational and conflict with each other.

The Ukraine crisis indicates that the Eurasian strategic sphere needs a new platform for cooperation which accounts for local conditions. As circumstances of the times demand, China's One-Belt-One-Road Initiative has emerged to meet the need for strengthened cooperation in the Eurasian sphere. "The unraveling of Ukraine has brought to the fore three major foreign policy challenges for the West: the danger of isolating Russia, the conundrum of China's aloofness, and the pervasive lack of fresh ideas. Surmounting them will require a concerted drive to enhance cooperation and build trust among countries with disparate political systems and national interests. Chinese President Xi Jinping's Silk Road economic belt could contribute to such an effort."⁵

China's One-Belt-One-Road Initiative will function as a means to develop a new type of political and economic cooperation in the vast sphere of Eurasia. The Silk Road economic belt will encourage modes of cooperation and exchange that are multidimensional, and it will involve an exchange of goods based on an exchange of people. The Balkan conflicts and the Ukraine crisis show that Eurasia needs to be inclusive and cooperative. What Eurasia needs the most is to promote the overall development of major regions through cooperation. In the post-Cold War era, nations need to think differently from the way in which they did before and move towards trends that benefit the interests of all countries. China's One-Belt-

⁵ Ana Palacio, "Russia and the Silk Road Approach," <http://www.project-syndicate.org/commentary/ana-palacio-emphasizes-the-economic-and-security-benefits-of-china-s-latest-initiative>, accessed on Oct 10, 2014.

One-Road Initiative incorporates all of the components needed to build an intercontinental cooperation.

4. THE PATH TO ACCOMPLISH THE ONE-BELT-ONE-ROAD INITIATIVE

The Silk Road economic belt covers all countries in Pan-Eurasia. It begins in the East in China. Russia and the Central Asia region form the core and pivot of the Silk Road economic belt, Europe is at the western end, and an extended line leads through North Africa. The Silk Road economic belt covers the western part of the Pacific Ocean and the Indian Ocean, which extends from East Asia, Southeast Asia, South Asia, the Middle East, North Africa, and East Africa to Europe. The China-Pakistan economic corridor will connect China's western region (Xinjiang) with the Indian Ocean. It will break the geographic isolation of China's hinterland from the sea. The Bangladesh-China-India-Myanmar economic corridor will connect China's southern region (Yunnan) with South Asian countries to form a strategic passage for economic cooperation.

China's One-Belt-One-Road Initiative already has a strong foundation, based on a series of sub-regional agreements of cooperation that have emerged across Pan-Eurasia and promote cooperation on connectivity and facilitate trade. In Southeast Asia and South Asia, for example, the Intergovernmental Agreement on the Asian Highway Network came into force in July 2005. This date marked the official start of the highway networks development throughout the regions included. In April 2011, 18 Asian countries signed the Intergovernmental Agreement on the Trans-Asian Railway Network, and the work on the railway initiative it outlined then began. In October 2010, the 17th ASEAN summit passed the Master Plan for ASEAN Connectivity. Additional series of connectivity plans since put in place include the connectivity plan of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), the 2009 connectivity plan designed under the framework of the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sector Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC), the regional connectivity project for Bangladesh-China-India-Myanmar (BCIM), the Great Mekong Sub-region Cooperation (GMS) economic corridor, the Pan-Beibu Gulf (PBG) Economic Cooperation, and construction of the Nanning-Singapore economic corridor. China has also initiated deals for energy pipelines with Russia and Central Asia.

These initiatives form the base and starting point for the implementation of China's One-Belt-One-Road Initiative. Instead of starting all over again, China can connect, coordinate, and integrate all kinds of sub-regional cooperative plans and initiatives for Eurasia. Thus, China will remove obstacles and walls to increase the benefits and efficiency of regional cooperation.

Although China's One-Belt-One-Road Initiative has multiple functions and strategic goals, they are specific and clear-cut, especially in regard to connectivity and trade facilitation. These two points have been incorporated and implemented throughout the entire package of plans, including the Silk Road economic belt, the 21st century maritime Silk Road, China-Pakistan economic corridor, and Bangladesh-China-India-Myanmar economic corridor.

Preparing for joint efforts to build a community of shared interests and common destiny throughout Eurasia, however, emerges as the most important overriding goal of China's One-Belt-One-Road Initiative. A community of shared interests refers to a group of related countries that has common concerns. Through cooperation, a community of shared interests works towards common goals. Conditions must be mutually beneficial to all in a community of shared interests, and mutual understanding between countries must exist. In a community of common destiny, each country must consider not only its own interests but also those of others when implementing its policies. This is the most important value that the community of destiny should uphold. The interests of countries converge when one gives consideration to the interests of others.

During the establishment of China's One-Belt-One-Road Initiative, the Chinese government has paid special attention to problems involved in implementing its concepts. It based the formation of the modern Silk Road on the Eurasian community of shared interests and common destiny. The principles of economic cooperation, equity, and mutual benefits shape the linkages developed for deepened interaction between China and the world. China has not chosen hegemony and expansion as ways to exert its influence, as most strong countries have throughout history. Instead, it bases its exchanges with the world on economic cooperation that is equal and mutually beneficial. This philosophy is key for China's success over the course of more than 30 years. China will continue to rise by relying on these principles.

During the course of its rapid evolution, China has, from experience, gradually developed ideas about dealing with neighboring countries. First, the principle of mutual benefits, equity, and mutual trust is fundamental for cooperation with neighboring countries. This principle stresses equity and mutual benefits and opposes the use of power and coercion in international relations. Second, the principle of inclusiveness emphasizes that countries

should learn from one another, appreciating the diversity and differences in paths of development and opposing attempts to judge the world with one standard. Third, the principle of a win-win cooperation stresses the awareness of a human community of common destiny, advocating mutual benefits through cooperation and opposing unilateralism and power politics. Fourth, the principle of a community of shared interests involves a tightly bound network of countries with common concerns. With its concept of a community of shared interests, China stresses that its interests converge with those of its neighboring countries. In other words, it asserts that the advantages gained through the community of shared interests are reciprocal: Neighboring countries can benefit from China's development, and China can benefit from the development of the countries which surround it.⁶

The Chinese government has introduced two noteworthy ideas in regard to international interests, mutual benefit, and the concept of a "free ride." It will uphold the new ideas of amity, sincerity, mutual benefit, and inclusiveness when it develops relations with neighboring countries. As a result, China's development will not only benefit neighboring countries in a better way⁷, but will also allow them to share in its successes. China wishes to provide neighboring countries with a free ride to take advantage of opportunities and to join in its sphere for common development. All countries are welcome to get on board the express train of China's development. As it cooperates with other developing countries, China will uphold moral principles while pursuing its own interests. China will not subscribe to the zero-sum approach. When it comes to specific projects, China will give more consideration to the interests of its partners.⁸ These ideas stress the principles of not only equity and mutual benefits, but also of common interests. The modern Silk Road can run smoothly only by giving consideration to the interests of others: shared interests and common destiny. Eurasian connectivity and trade facilitation represents the most fundamental approach to realizing a community of shared interests and a community of common destiny.

⁶ See Xi Jinping's speech at the work meeting on neighborhood diplomacy <http://politics.people.com.cn/n/2013/1025/c1024-23332318.html>, accessed on: Oct 26, 2014.

⁷ *Documents of the 18th National Party Congress of the Communist Party of China*, 2012 ed., (Beijing People's Publishing House, 2012), 45 Xi Jinping's speech at the work meeting on neighborhood diplomacy, <http://politics.people.com.cn/n/2013/1025/c1024-23332318.html>, accessed on Oct 26, 2014.

⁸ See, Xi Jinping "Open up New Horizons for China-Mongolia Relations through Mutual Assistance – Speech by President of the People's Republic of China at the State Great Khural of Mongolia," http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_chn/gjhdq_603914/gj_603916/yz_603918/1206_604450/1209_604460/t1184896.shtml, accessed on Oct 23, 2014.

5. THE VALUE OF THE ONE-BELT-ONE-ROAD INITIATIVE

As a strategic comprehensive plan, China's modern Silk Road aims to address the relationship of the nation with the rest of the world during the course of its rise. This process involves bilateral interaction and close linkages. It calls for mutual cooperation and China's integration into the international community. China's Silk Road strategy is an action plan for cooperation between China and the world and the international community. The strategy requires full participation of partner countries. China cannot realize this strategy alone. China based the One-Belt-One-Road Initiative on lessons it learned from the rise of Western powers. It wants to avoid the old ways of Western colonialism and coercion. The One-Belt-One-Road Initiative differs, in its essence, from the strategic thinking of Western countries when they became global in perspective. "China has proven that there is a result-oriented alternative to the Western 'democratic' capitalist model for nations aiming to be successful. It is building not one, but a myriad of, new Silk Roads, massive webs of high-speed railways, highways, pipelines, ports, and fiber optics across huge parts of Eurasia."⁹

China aims to build a new type of major-power relationship with the US while developing close strategic friendships with developing countries in Africa and Latin America. However, China has attached greater importance to the development of geopolitical and economic relations in Eurasia for several reasons. Most obviously, China is itself an important part of Eurasia, which naturally dictates that it should focus on development trends of the region. Second, Eurasia connects Africa and North America, as well as the Pacific Ocean, the Arctic Ocean, the Atlantic Ocean, and the Indian Ocean. Because of its position as a rising power, China cannot ignore such an important economic and political sphere. The EU lies at the western end of Eurasia. It is China's important economic partner. Russia is pivotal at the center and borders the EU, China and the Asia-Pacific. Russia has an independent voice on the international stage and is an important comprehensive strategic partner of economic coordination for China. Eurasia also possesses many danger spots. Between Europe and Asia, North Africa and the Middle East are fraught with contradictions and conflicts. Situations in Afghanistan and the Korean Peninsula are complicated and highly risky. A serious crisis has broken out between Russia and the EU,

⁹ Pepe Escobar, "The Birth of a Eurasian century: Russia and China Do Pipelineistan," http://www.tomdispatch.com/post/175845/tomgram%3A_pepe_escobar%2C_who%27s_pivoting_where_in_eurasia/, accessed on Oct 12, 2014.

and the Ukraine crisis indicates that Europe is not a land of peace and prosperity. All the above-mentioned factors require China to pay close attention to Eurasia.

As China pays close attention to Eurasia, a number of strategic pillar countries, such as Russia and Germany, have emerged. Though China, Russia, and Germany have maintained good relations with each other, the latter two countries are not ready to embrace a developing Eurasian strategic sphere that excludes the United States, and they do not plan to do so in the future. Eurasia needs to deepen its cooperation with the overall strategic plan for the common benefit, integration, and strategic interaction among its stakeholders. But all these moves are not aimed at rejecting the United States. China's One-Belt-One-Road Initiative asserts the need for cooperation throughout Eurasia. It is neither an institutional and strategic arrangement, nor an exclusive regionally organizational arrangement. Although China is the country that proposed, advocated, and promoted the idea of the One-Belt-One-Road Initiative, it is definitely not the only supporter of the idea. China should explicate this strategic idea and lobby relentlessly for it. China should make it clear to all the stakeholders that the implementation of the One-Belt-One-Road Initiative is in the interest of not only China, but also all other participants. The more China and the participants in the modern Silk Road share goals and interests, the more progress will be made in developing Eurasia. Eurasia will also be more stable, open, and harmonious.

The international community has responded warmly to the Modern Silk Road. It shows that China has chosen a peaceful way to cooperate and share its interests with the international community, as it rises in stature worldwide, rather than using its power to take advantage of other nations.

6. RELATIONSHIPS THAT NEED TO BE PROPERLY DEALT WITH, SO AS TO ACCOMPLISH THE ONE-BELT-ONE-ROAD INITIATIVE

The coordination of arrangements for domestic and international circumstances remains an important issue for China, as it tries to achieve the goals of the modern Silk Road: "We should keep in mind both the domestic and the international situations; the domestic situation involves China's two centennial goals (i.e. the goals of building a moderately prosperous society in all respects, by the time the CPC celebrates its centenary in 2021,

and turning China into a modern socialist country which is prosperous, strong, democratic, culturally advanced and harmonious by the time the People's Republic of China marks its centennial in 2049, proposed in the report of the 18th National Congress of the Communist Party of China in 2012) and the dream to rejuvenate the nation; while the international side's essentials for success include creating favorable external conditions for the country's reform and development; safeguarding the country's sovereignty, security, and development interests; and maintaining the world's peace and stability, so as to promote common development.¹⁰ The Third Plenary Session of the 18th Central Committee of the Communist Party of China has decided to promote the modernization of the state government system and its governance, capacity, so as to deeply and more comprehensively further reforms, and open up the country. The Fourth Plenary Session forwarded the idea of administrating the country by law. These policies demonstrate China's willingness to reform and open up to achieve its dream. The core objective of the "Chinese dream" is also elaborated on through the "two centennial goals". The dream is firstly proposed by Xi Jinping, when visiting the Road toward Rejuvenation exhibition at the National Museum in Beijing on Nov 29 in 2012. Xi said: "Everybody has their own ideal, pursuit and dream. Today everybody is talking about the Chinese dream. I firmly believe that, by the time the CPC celebrates its 100th anniversary, we will no doubt have achieved the goal of completely building a well-off society, and by the time the People's Republic celebrates its 100th anniversary, we will become a prosperous, strong, democratic, civilized and harmonious socialist modernized country on its way to the ultimate great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation. This is the greatest dream of the Chinese nation in modern history." Realizing the Chinese dream requires a favorable international environment in which to respond to world changes. By finding the points at which domestic and international interests intersect, the modern Silk Road will have enough international support to succeed, and the goals of the Chinese dream will be met.

Second, the One-Belt-One-Road Initiative will realize China's national interests in Eurasia by providing comprehensive plans for relationships between the Silk Road economic belt, the 21st century maritime Silk Road, the China-Pakistan economic corridor, and Bangladesh-China-India-Myanmar economic corridor. The One-Belt-One-Road Initiative has extended beyond China's traditional international sphere of influence in neighboring areas, so as to include Eurasia and even Pan-Eurasia. The One-Belt-One-Road Initiative

¹⁰ Xi Jinping's speech at the work meeting on neighborhood diplomacy, <http://politics.people.com.cn/n/2013/1025/c1024-23332318.html>. Accessed on: Oct 26, 2014.

should take into account the Silk Road economic belt and the 21st century maritime Silk Road and properly divide up the work between them, while coordinating functions, spheres, and approaches to cooperation. Through the modern Silk Road, China will be able to carry out its diplomatic strategy and do its most to safeguard national interests while making the land-based and maritime Silk Roads important strategic platforms and vehicles for accomplishing China's Asian, European, and African strategies. The modern Silk Road will step across into the spheres of Asia, Europe, and Africa.

Third, the development of the Silk Road economic belt should be incorporated with all kinds of national economic programs. It should advance China's plan to improve its western region and to revitalize Northeast China's old industrial bases. China should also connect the implementation of the 21st century maritime Silk Road with its strategy to become a sea power. The development of the China-Pakistan economic corridor should be combined with the work in the northwestern region, especially of Xinjiang with construction of the Kashgar Special Economic Zone. China should also include the development of Bangladesh-China-India-Myanmar economic corridor in its Yunnan gateway strategy. In its overall strategic policy, the plans for the Yangtze River economic belt should be closely intertwined with the modern Silk Road. In addition, the modern Silk Road should involve opening-up strategies in coastal areas and the borderlands.

Fourth, neighborhood diplomacy has become a priority of China's overall foreign policy. In October 2013, the central authorities of the Communist Party of China (CPC) held a meeting to draft policies for carrying out the neighborhood diplomacy in a better way and formulating strategic goals and approaches for its implementation. The modern Silk Road was fundamental to those plans.

Fifth, the modern Silk Road has implications for relations with all major political forces in Pan-Eurasia. Since the influence of the One-Belt-One-Road Initiative extends across this region, it creates vistas for an intercontinental cooperation. Many countries and regions fall within this sphere. They have different levels of economic development, various development strategies and policies, and divergent views on their relationships with China and the world. These countries interrelate on different levels, and their interest-based relationships are complicated. All of these factors have added to China's difficulties in obtaining consensus for implementation of the modern Silk Road and have led to a lot of uncertainty. China should strengthen its policy coordination with related countries, so as to ensure policy consistency in Eurasia.

Sixth, China must take the United States into full consideration when developing the modern Silk Road. The United States have adopted the strategy of rebalancing the Asia-Pacific against the rise of China. It aims to contain China's further development, cement its traditional hegemony in the region, and stabilize its relationships with its Asia-Pacific allies. China will be unable to avoid the US interference as it develops the 21st century maritime Silk Road and Bangladesh-China-India-Myanmar economic corridor. The Chinese government will feel the US pressure in East Asia, Southeast Asia, South Asia, West Pacific, and the Indian Ocean. Second, China's Silk Road economic belt and Bangladesh-China-India-Myanmar economic corridor will collide with the US strategy. The United States does not want China to play a leading role in Eurasia. It, therefore, will take all kinds of measures to contain China's unique influence in Eurasia. The United States will try to persuade Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Central Asian countries to side with India and countries in the Indian Ocean, rather than with China and Russia, so as to impede Russian and Chinese influences. Finally, China intends to break the US strategic encirclement of the Asia-Pacific modern Silk Road. The modern Silk Road will resolve the strategic dilemma of Strait of Malacca, reduce China's overdependence on sea transport, and redirect China's focus away from the southeast. The modern Silk Road will also connect the Indian Ocean to China's western region, creating a vital trade passage. Second, the United States is determined to develop a US-led international economic order. It wants to reshape the international trade rules and defend its leading role in writing new global free-trade agreements. The Trans-Pacific Partnership and the Trans-Atlantic Trade and Investment Partnership, which the United States advocates, do not include China. Meanwhile, China has seized the opportunity to propose the modern Silk Road, which covers the entire geographic sphere of the Pan-Eurasia. While the US strategy extends across the Pacific and the Atlantic oceans, China's involves the continents of Asia, Europe, and Africa. However, China and the United States have not engaged in an all-out competition in the realm of Asia-Pacific policy. Their respective economic programs are so complex that they conflict in some respects and are mutually beneficial in others.

Seventh, China must take into account security and other issues, and must merely focus on the economic development, as it strengthens relationships in Eurasia. In recent years, the competition between major powers and intensified conflicts in West Asia and North Africa and have further destabilized Eurasia. Yet the land-based and maritime Silk Roads both transect this region. A part of China's energy supply also comes from this region. China, therefore, needs to focus more attention on the role of

this region in the modern Silk Road. While circumstances in traditionally unstable areas remain relatively unchanged, new hotspots have emerged. The Ukraine crisis has created a new flashpoint in Europe. In 2014, the rise of the Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham (ISIS) in Iraq and the continuous surge of religious extremism threaten this region's peace and stability. After the withdrawal of the US army, the situation in Afghanistan has become volatile, and extreme religious forces will probably stage a comeback. Religious extremism from the Middle East, Central Asia, and South Asia has spread continuously into Xinjiang to threaten the security of China's northwest border. These destabilizing influences impede development of Xinjiang and obstruct China's efforts to advance the Silk Road economic belt into its western territories. China needs to take all of these factors into consideration when implementing the One-Belt-One-Road Initiative.

Eighth, China does not intend for the One-Belt-One-Road Initiative to replace all kinds of international organizations in Eurasia. Instead, it must work in cooperation with the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) and the Eurasian Economic Union (EEU). By linking up with them, the modern Silk Road will enable these international organizations to be more efficient and effective. Chinese President Xi Jinping clearly stated that his nation welcomes the active participation from SCO member states, observer states, and dialogue partners, so that they can work out plans, build projects, share benefits, establish a new model of regional and south-south cooperation, and promote the connectivity and new industrialization of the region.¹¹ There is plenty of room for cooperation between China's One-Belt-One-Road Initiative and Russia's EEU. The two initiatives do not exclude or conflict with each other. Instead, they complement each other.

Ninth, China must coordinate the One-Belt-One-Road Initiative with other Eurasian countries' regional strategies. Russia has advanced a strategic plan for developing its far-east region. Kazakhstan similarly proposed its own development strategy, and Mongolia introduced the Ulaanbaatar Dialogue on Northeast Asian Security and the initiative for a "passage to grassland." China should join its strategic plans with those of Russia, Kazakhstan, and Mongolia to maximize the benefit of cooperation. For instance, the potential is huge for China-Mongolia cooperation on a railway and highway connectivity, development, and deep mineral processing. Such potential should be transformed into real economic benefits. The economies of China and Mongolia also complement each other; China's market, capital,

¹¹ Xi Jinping, "Working Together with Sincerity and Dedication to Take SCO to a New Level," http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_chn/gjhdq_603914/gjhdqzz_609676/lhg_610734/zjh_610744/t1190748.shtml, accessed on Oct 20, 2014.

technology, and transportation corridors coupled with Mongolia's rich natural endowment promise great opportunities for closer cooperation.¹²

Tenth, China's modern Silk Road also needs to fit well with the Free Trade Area of the Asia-Pacific (FTAAP). The FTAAP aims to mitigate the risk of fragmented regional economic cooperation. It seeks new forces for growth in the post-global-financial-crisis era, and it addresses the financing bottleneck that hinders connectivity construction. The FTAAP is an open and highly integrated trade arrangement that operates across the Pacific. In face of new changes of international conditions, the Asia-Pacific needs to renew initiatives that open up the region and that encourage exchange and integration on a grand scale. China has proposed the goal and roadmap for promotion of the FTAAP.¹³ The China-South Korea Free Trade Agreement (FTA), the China-Australia FTA, and the FTAAP will also help promote China's One-Belt-One-Road Initiative. The FTAAP and the modern Silk Road will expand the super-regional economic cooperation arrangement to Eurasia and the whole Asia-Pacific.

Finally, China also needs to find ways to resolve the remaining disputes with related Asian countries. Problems with some countries have persisted since World War II or even earlier. Historical problems regarding the South China Sea between China and Japan profoundly affect China's One-Belt-One-Road Initiative. Many possible solutions exist. China should rely more on the Oriental wisdom to solve problems, diffuse tension, and advance harmony. Furthermore, China should embrace the Asian approach of feeling out and achieving comfort levels in relationships with other nations that encourage mutual understanding and respect. This approach embodies the Asian tradition of diplomatic relations among neighbors. Moreover, China should advocate openness and inclusiveness. It should seek common ground while resolving differences. And, last but not least, China should pursue mutually beneficial policies to construct a bigger set of common interests.¹⁴

¹² Xi Jinping's signed article published on Mongolian media http://news.xinhuanet.com/politics/2014-08/21/c_1112172340.htm, accessed on Oct 24, 2014.

¹³ Xi Jinping, "Shaping the Future through Asia-Pacific Partnership – Opening Speech at the 22nd APEC Economic Leaders' Meeting," http://news.xinhuanet.com/world/2014-11/11/c_1113203721.htm, accessed on Nov 11, 2014.

¹⁴ Xi Jinping, "Open up New Horizons for China-Mongolia Relations through Mutual Assistance."

7. CONCLUSION

China's One-Belt-One-Road Initiative consists of a collection of strategies that are independent from and interwoven with each other. The Silk Road economic belt focuses on a large-scale regional economic cooperation between China and the countries and regions of Eurasia. The 21st century maritime Silk Road primarily deals with the economic cooperation between China and the countries and regions along the coast of Eurasia. The China – Pakistan economic corridor and Bangladesh – China – India – Myanmar economic corridor will connect the above-mentioned land-based and maritime Silk Roads to become a passage for intercontinental economic cooperation on land and sea across Eurasia. This situation creates a new pattern of linkages for a deeper interaction between China and the world.

The economic cooperation forms the most important plank of the platform for the One-Belt-One-Road Initiative. It represents the most fundamental characteristic and is the essence of the strategy. China's reform and open attitude have benefited the most when it comes to its rise in world's stature. Through opening up, China has integrated smoothly into the current international economic order. China needs to expand further into the global sphere, although its economic interests have extended deeply into other parts of the world. The One-Belt-One-Road Initiative extends China a step further globally, and it provides the international community with a strategic way to cooperate and interact with it.

During its rapid rise, China has focused its One-Belt-One-Road Initiative on a mutually beneficial economic cooperation, but that strategy does not mean that it has ignored all the security issues, confrontations, and conflicts of interest in the world. China developed its strategies for intercontinental and regional cooperation in Pan-Eurasia because of the presence of many unstable factors, particularly in Eurasia. China has proposed "five connectivity" initiatives (i.e. policy coordination, facility connectivity, unimpeded trade, financial integration and people-to-people bonds) that are meant to achieve connections and facilitated trade across Eurasia. Through this cooperation, all countries will develop a community of shared interests and common destiny and realize lasting stability and peace in Eurasia.

China's One-Belt-One-Road Initiative and the FTAAP it advocates will provide huge opportunities for economic cooperation, by encompassing Eurasia and the Asia-Pacific, which includes all the major continents in the world and the Pacific, Indian, and Arctic oceans. The One-Belt-One-Road Initiative provides new patterns of linkage between China and the

land sphere of Eurasia, while the FTAAP provides new connections between China and the Asia-Pacific. China is at the crossroads which joins the two together.

Connections and facilitated trade are at the foundation of China's One-Belt-One-Road Initiative. China will advance the idea of free-trade areas wherever conditions permit. China's One-Belt-One-Road Initiative seeks to establish a community of shared interests and common destiny in Eurasia. As the international economic order has become increasingly fragmented, the Chinese concepts of community of shared interests and common destiny should become the soul of economic globalization, while connectivity and trade facilitation will become the adhesive for economic globalization and regional economic cooperation. Connectivity and trade facilitation will be the fundamental measures of the success of the modern Silk Road.

During its rise, China has promoted the principle of mutual benefit and inclusiveness. By advocating inclusiveness, China not only recognizes the differences among nations, but also encourages them to learn from each other. China has also incorporated the ideas of amity and sincerity into its foreign and economic policies. It has allowed neighboring countries a free ride to share in its successes. The Chinese government has bolstered a sharing of interests among nations. It seeks ways to accommodate the comfort levels of all during the cooperation, which is the Asian approach to solving problems, diffusing tension, and advancing harmony using the Oriental wisdom. Using all of these ideas and principles, China has developed a set of strategies for peaceful development, which are embodied within the One-Belt-One-Road Initiative and the FTAAP. China has chosen peaceful development, mutually beneficial cooperation, and a platform and strategic plan for a deeper interaction with the world. These policies show that a rising power need not be expansive, coercive, or hegemonic in nature, and they highlight China's sense of responsibility for and commitment to the future of mankind. China, of course, has clearly realized that today's international conditions are complex and that many unstable and even dangerous factors persist. The Chinese government understands that it must continue to deal with power politics underlain with desires for dominance and with unreasonable demands for international order. In this international milieu, China is trying to tell the world, using the most direct and simple ideas, approaches, and actions, that only sustained, deepened, comprehensive, and sincere international cooperation can make the world peaceful, happy, and prosperous.

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