

# **The Belt and Road Initiative and Reconstruction of the World Order: Strategic Reflections Basing on a China-led New Era**

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*As a platform for international cooperation, the Belt and Road Initiative serves as a bond for peace with peaceful development and win-win cooperation as its fundamental target. Based on economic and trade collaboration, the Initiative also aims to promote political diplomacy and cultural exchanges. Construction of the Belt and Road Initiative is a demonstration of Chinese cultural value featured by openness, inclusiveness, peace and amicability. The paper makes comparative study on the Belt and Road Initiative and the Marshall Plan which is launched by United States for revival of post-war Europe. We find out that the two are intrinsically different in contexts, contents and participants despite a few similarities. Then the paper further analyses achievements and problems along the process as well as its impact on world strategic pattern. In all, the Belt and Road Initiative is a sign showing that Chinese opening-up has upgraded and entered a new phase of growth. This will, therefore, bring about profound influence on common prosperity of the world. What is more, China should make a voice in cooperation when carrying out the Initiative. Also, China ought to propose cooperation between countries and regions which is conducive to world peace and strategic partnership featured by mutual help, benefits and common prosperity.*

## **INTRODUCTION**

The Belt and Road Initiative (hereinafter referred to as B&R, the Initiative or the B&R Initiative) countersigns the contemporary development and realistic extension of the ancient maritime silk road. By borrowing from historical and cultural symbols of the ancient silk road, the initiative serves for multi-functions. Based on peaceful development and win-win cooperation, it considers economic and trade cooperation as the cornerstone, promoting political diplomacy and cultural exchanges to defuse potential risks. B&R, together with countries and regions along the line, aims to build the world's longest and most promising economic corridor that connects European civilization, Chinese civilization, Indian civilization and Islamic civilization. At the same time, at this new historical moment, B&R construction highlights

Chinese cultural values such as being open, tolerant, peaceful and friendly. And it is committed to build new cooperative relations with mutual benefits. With concerted efforts, China aims to come up with a community of shared interests in terms of politics, economic integration, cultural containment as well as sharing responsibility, destiny and ecosystem, achieving Chinese Dream, Asian dream, European dream, African Dream and the world dream (Fan and Zhang, 2016).

B&R is conducive to the promotion of world-wide interconnection. The Silk Road is a common memory that embodies the spirit of peaceful cooperation in the history of interconnection. People of different regions, races and cultural backgrounds miraculously created an arterial-like path linking politics, economics, culture and ideology of Chinese and Western world, just as torch relay. This road has never been a purely 'road' in geographical sense, but an all-round and multidimensional network that includes road, trade, personnel exchanges and culture exchange. B&R not only considers interconnection as the goal, but also uses it as a driving path which can be seen as a methodological innovation. B&R is not in a hurry to formulate specific goals, rules and plans, but is more process-oriented, concept-oriented and method-oriented. It attaches top importance to gradual and pragmatic cooperation and pays more attention to toughness and flexibility in the cooperation process. The methodology of interconnection seeks to establish a linking relationship between different countries and cultural systems, emphasizing that all parties should find a fit point for development strategy and bridge the thought and need for each country rather than using a compulsory, hard-constraint uniform arrangement to require other participants (Su, 2016).

B&R leads the new direction of global development. The new round of globalization should place more emphasis on balance, linkage and inclusiveness to ensure that world-wide development embodies better fairness and justice. B&R can lead the trend for the following reasons. First, B&R pays attention to infrastructure construction such as high-speed railways and energy pipelines, so it can promote the adjustment of global industrial layout. Eurasian continent will gradually form a new economic network combining high-speed railways, expressways, energy pipelines and electrical business logistics and will gradually derive many new industrial chains, industrial bases and economic centers. All the procedures mentioned above will change the economic landscape of Eurasian continent which will not only promote the development of the countries along the line, but also benefit people, effectively reducing domestic and international inequalities. Second, B&R follows the idea of promoting through cooperation and guaranteeing security through development. By deepening cooperation with countries along the line, B&R is dedicated to improving the development of economy and people's livelihood, reducing poverty and striving to eliminate terrorism and extremist. In this way, it actively contributes to the sound situation where mutual assistance between development and security can be found. Third, B&R is an open framework for international economic cooperation which advocates the principle of openness and inclusiveness and embraces the participation of countries outside the boundary. It focuses on building bridges among international economic cooperation at various levels and in varying regions, resolving logical contradictions between globalization and international integration, and facilitating their mutual tolerance and mutual promotion.

As the platform for regional cooperation, B&R serves as the bond of peace as well to happiness, both for China and the world as well. Despite difficulties in the process of construction, the pace of history will not stop. So, it will continue to overcome the difficulties and seeks for continuous improvement and development, displaying its unique advantages (Cui, 2017). In all, B&R will push the world forward from horizontal expansion to vertical deepening. Advantages in technology, industry, system and mentality will be distributed more evenly all over the world. The balance and inclusiveness of the world's development will be further enhanced. And finally, B&R will benefit China as well as the world and facilitate a community of shared future (CSF) (Lin, 2017).

### **B&R Initiative and its Influence on World Economic Structure**

When delivering at the 19<sup>th</sup> National Congress of the Communist Party of China, General Secretary Xi Jinping pointed out that China adheres to the basic policy of opening-up, insists on engaging in construction with an open door and actively promotes international cooperation underpinned by the B&R Initiative. During the process, China should endeavor to achieve connectivity and interconnection of policy, infrastructure, trade, finance and people to create a new platform for international cooperation and add new impetus to common development (Xi, 2017).

In addition, General Secretary Xi Jinping also proposed to open fully and focus on B&R construction. We should adhere to bringing in and going out and follow the principle of co-discussion, co-building and co-sharing. While strengthening the ability for innovation and cooperation, we should put in place an efficient open pattern with network covering land and sea, home and abroad and east and west. We should also expand foreign trade, cultivate new trade models and promote ability of trading. We shall push trade to an elevated level and adopt free-and-convenient trading policy. Pre-establishment of national treatment and negative list will protect the legitimate rights and interests of foreign investment and will also relax market access and expand the opening of the service industry.

In his report, General Secretary Xi Jinping put forward that B&R construction is the succession of the Silk Road, keeping the latter's spirit of affinity, sincerity, benefit and tolerance. B&R is different from Silk Road, but the former aims to activate the spirit embedded in the Silk Road, such as peaceful cooperation, openness and tolerance, mutual learning and benefit. The broad sense of the Silk Road refers to the general name of the line formed in ancient times (Wang, 2017). It was a line for long-distance commercial trade and cultural exchange covering Eurasia, North Africa and East Africa. In terms of specific routes, it can be divided into the land Silk Road and the maritime Silk Road.

To spread Chinese culture and highlight national power, the ancient emperor sent envoys to all countries to open the land-and-sea Silk Road. It was Zhang Qian from Western Han Dynasty that went to the west for the second time when the well-known Silk Road was established. It also gained increasing popularity back then and saw the bustling scenes of visitors abroad calling at ports with people freely flowing (Li, 2017). Hundreds of years later, Ban Chao from Eastern Han Dynasty went to the west again which re-opened the land silk road from China to Eurasia.

The road starts from capital city Chang An and separated into two routes after passing Hexi Corridor. One passes Yang Guan, Jin Shan-Shan and moves to west along the north side of Kunlun Mountain. Then it also passes Sha Che and Cong Ling before leaving Da Yue Zhi and heading south to Shen Du (today's India). Or it can pass An Xi (today's Iran) and Li Qian (today's Alexander of Egypt which was annexed by Roman in 30 B.C.). The second route passes Tulufan in Xinjiang province after Yumenguan and heads to the west along the south road of Tian Mountain before passing Shu Le, Cong Ling (today's Pamir Region), Da Wan, Kang Ju and Yan Cai (north of Caspian Sea).

Later, with the decline of the land silk road, maritime Silk Road began to play an increasing important role in trades and served as a main passage for international exchanges. There are also two main routes in maritime silk road, starting from east sea or south sea. The east-sea route dated back to the beginning of Zhou Dynasty (1046 B.C.) when Emperor Wu sent Qi Zi to North Korea to impart weaving techniques. Qi Zi set off from Bohai bay in Shandong peninsula to reach North Korea. In this way, Chinese sericulture, silk reeling and weaving techniques reached to North Korea across Huanghai Sea. After Tang and Song Dynasty, South Sea became a main passage for international exchange, starting from Guangzhou and so was named as South Sea silk road. It came into being at Qin and Han Dynasty and grew up during Sui Dynasty. Tang and Song Dynasty witnessed its blooming before declining at Ming and Qing Dynasty. It is the oldest sea route (Xiao, 2017).

B&R serves for multi-purposes: carrying forward Chinese culture, promoting economic development and globalization. World-widely, developed countries begin to enter a new round of adjustment and upgrading of industrial structure: transferring large-scale industries to developing countries, accelerating adjustment and upgrade, increasing the level of industry transfer and innovating the mode of industrial transfer. It indicates the overall transferring trend of industrial chain. Synergic transfer of related

industries had also increased. In addition, the dominant role of multinationals on industrial adjustment and transfer is more obvious. The international industrial transfer provides a new opportunity to accelerate upgrading of industrial structure, to realize industrial agglomeration and to participate in the global division of labor. It also provides an opportunity for the adjustment of industrial structure and spatial distribution within the country.

We are facing the opportunity of accelerating adjustment of industrial structure in various countries which also coincides with the profound changes of ecological construction and economic growth pattern. The serious deterioration of global ecological environment has forced countries to set up environmental protection mechanism and change the way of economic growth. It can be foreseen that environmental protection and energy-saving industries will become an important engine for future economic growth. It has become the consensus of the international community to develop low-carbon economy and protect ecological environment. Property of clean energy industry will inevitably become the driving force for the new round of economic growth and influence the future of industrial development (Lin and Liu, 2017).

In recent years, the international political structure and trade rules have undergone significant changes. In the past, the international cooperation model with geographical proximity and similar cultural backgrounds were very popular, such as NAFTA, ASEAN and EU. Gradually, multilateral international cooperation which are more flexible and cheaper are gaining popularity. With the development of emerging economies, international cooperation led by developed countries such as Europe and USA has gradually shifted to the mode of multinational participation (Zhang and Deng, 2017). International economic integration is also called international economic grouping. It is a product of both the internationalization of economics and the deepening of economic relations and interdependence between countries and regions. Its essence is to break administrative boundaries of divisions, to plan layout and organize specialized production and division cooperation in unified manner according to the international economic principles. In this way, a unified market with shared interests and future can be built where members complement and collaborate with each other. By reducing the transaction cost among member countries and increasing the freedom of trade, China will realize the free flow of elements and products and achieve the optimal allocation of resources. The basic feature of international economic integration is the alienation of sovereignty, voluntariness and equality. They need to engage in the integration in voluntary manner and enjoy equal rights in the institutions.

The construction of B&R has complied with the following trends: free trade agreement has become the mainstream of cooperation among countries; geographical space of economic integration expands continuously; integrated organization are multi-layered and overlapping; institutionalized and standardized mechanism gradually come into being. It is beneficial to establish a unified market by China, Central Asia and other countries along the Silk Road. They will maximize complementary advantages, cooperate and form a community of shared interests to achieve common prosperity.

New international relations advocate equity and justice, linking development on the land and on the sea, reforming international order and achieving inclusive globalization. In space, China must transcend the unfairness of the international order caused by the semi-globalization. Traditional globalization started from the sea. Coastal countries developed first while land-based countries and their inland areas are relatively backward, forming a huge gap between the rich and the poor. Because 71% of the earth is covered by the oceans and 90% of trade is carried out by the sea, the World Bank reported that 80% of global output comes from 100 kilometers of coastal areas. Then this kind of globalization can be called “semi-globalization”. In terms of national attributes, the new international relations emphasize equality among big and small countries and build a community with shared future. China should promote evolution of the international system and make it fair and reasonable. B&R should overcome injustice caused by the big-bully-small logic. The traditional system was proposed by Europe, carried forward by United States. So, it is west centered and leads to a series of negative effects that the east follows the west; the rural areas belong to the city and the land affiliates to the sea.



B&R reflects China's good vision to seek peaceful development in the world. It surpasses the modern colonial system and the post-war hegemony system. The guiding idea of B&R resembles Silk Road spirit: discussing together (brainstorming for a community of shared interests), building together (concerted efforts for a community of shared responsibilities) and sharing together (common beneficiaries for a community of shared future). They all lead to a new international relationship that embodies win-win cooperation.

General Secretary Xi Jinping pointed out in the report that we should insist on promoting the construction of the community of shared future. Chinese dreams are interlinked with the dreams of all peoples from all countries. Realization of Chinese dream is inseparable from a peaceful international environment and a stable international order. China is unswervingly taking the path of peaceful development. We should pursue a mutually beneficial and win-win strategy of opening-up; we ought to uphold the right outlook and values; we should establish a common, comprehensive, cooperative and sustainable new security concept; we had better seek an open, innovative, inclusive and mutually beneficial prospect; we shall promote civilized exchange and seek common ground while reserving differences; we are obliged to build an ecological system that respects nature and braces green development. In all, we will always be a builder of world peace, a contributor to global development and a defender of the international order (Xi, 2017).

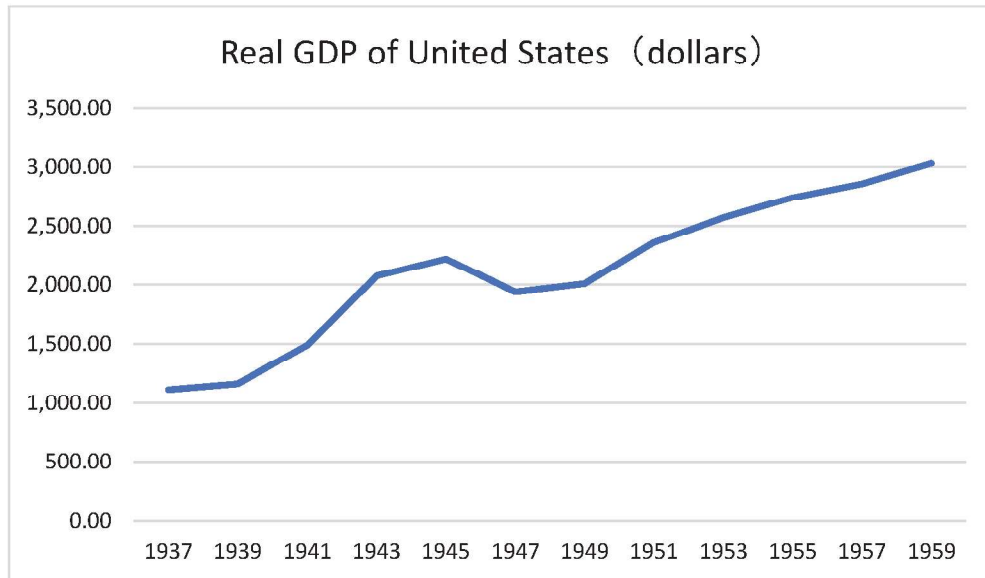
### **A Comparison between B&R and the Marshall Plan**

B&R has become clearer and more corresponding measures are available. And then it is often compared with Marshall Plan which aims to revive Europe after postwar of U.S. The domestic media is more likely to believe that, from the economic point of view, implementation of the B&R initiative will play a similar role as that Marshall Plan played in the process of European economic recovery and international integration. Western scholars and media tend to form a political and security perspective and propose that B&R Initiative is the political security strategy of China to enlarge its influence and compete for international domination in the setting where the international power center has transferred. In fact, despite some common features, B&R Initiative and the Marshall Plan are intrinsically different in backgrounds, contents and participants.

### **Diverse Backgrounds**

B&R Initiative is based on economic globalization and a multi-polarization world. In modern times, no country can only rely on its own strength to achieve long-term and stable economic development. We all know that the example of Boeing aircrafts which are assembled on a global scale. The case perfectly proves that globalization is the current trend of economic development. After more than 30 years of reform and opening-up, today's China has accumulated a lot of advanced experience in manufacturing as well as abundant foreign exchange reserves. So, China is ready to go outside given its qualifications and strength. In this case, B&R Initiative is not only in line with the trend of this era, but also effectively reflects China's image as a big and responsible power (Cheng, 2016).

**FIGURE 1**  
**REAL GDP OF UNITED STATES**



In contrast, western European countries' economic slumped after the war. In addition, politics was left-leaning and the influence of socialism rose. With obvious ideological purpose, the Marshall Plan aims to achieve double control over Europe's economy and politics through conditional aid to Europe. It is planned to curb the influence of Soviet Socialist and consolidate established hegemonic position of United States. From the economic point of view, the pre-war economy of Europe that Marshall Plan aided was already well developed and enjoyed an elevated level of human capital. The trauma brought by the war destroyed the national infrastructure and led to temporary difficulties in economics (He and Xin, 2015).

At the same time, United States quickly entered the stage of overcapacity because the end of the war led to a rapid decline in the income from military munitions. What was more, the lowering power of European countries made it hard to purchase industrial products from U.S., leading to an even worse economy (Figure 1). In this case, to maintain 55 to 60 million people employed and to address the issue of growing overcapacity in the country, the United States started to implement the Marshall Plan since 1947. The plan had been in place for four years and European countries have gained a lot of aid from U.S. which brought substantial economic development. Europe's GNP rose from 119.6 billion dollars in 1947 to 158.8 billion dollars in 1951, increasing by 32.5%. At the same time, output of industrial products in European countries also increased by about 40% compared with that in 1938. Agriculture increased by 10% (He and Xin, 2015).

In addition, the Marshall Plan aimed to compete with the Soviet Union for political-related rights after the war. Even Marshall himself said later that the final decision to give immediate assistance to Europe was made after the failure of the four foreign ministers' meeting in Moscow in 1947 (Tajovsky and Kreck, 2009). Marshall believed that the Soviet government had stalled and would not agree to any feasible plan to ease tensions and distress in Europe, but they would instead take every possible means to worsen the situation in Europe (Price, 1955).

## **Different Contents**

On September 7th, 2013, when speaking at the Kazakh University of Kazakhstan, President Xi Jinping said that China was willing to cooperate with countries in Central Asian and innovatively build a 'Silk Road Economic Belt'. On October 3rd, 2013, when delivering a speech at the Indonesian Parliament, President Xi Jinping said that China is willing to strengthen maritime cooperation with ASEAN countries and work together for the construction of the '21st Century Maritime Silk Road'. The construction of the B&R Initiative is a strategy for common development which aims at promoting exchanges between regions with an open and inclusive mentality. First, the B&R Initiative has strengthened strategic cooperation between China and relevant countries. The B&R Initiative aims to strengthen the strategic partnership and mutual trust in politics between China and other countries along the line.

Second, The B&R Initiative aims to deepen China's energy cooperation with relevant countries, thereby ensuring energy security along the line and accelerating China's energy exports. The 'Silk Road Economic Belt' can strengthen the energy and economic ties between China and Central Asian countries. It also strives to promote diversified supply and sale channels of energy to ensure common energy security for China and Central Asian countries (Zenn, 2015). Jacob Zeng, a scholar from American Jamestown Foundation believes that Gwadar Port in Pakistan, ran by Chinese, shortens the distance between East Africa, Persian Gulf Port and west part of China, reducing 1/4 in comparison with Malacca Strait. Chiapas Bahr Port in Iran also has a similar function as Gwadar Port does. Erika Tangs from Jamestown Foundation believes that the B&R Initiative focuses more on excess domestic capacity instead of energy and it looks for new markets abroad to help Chinese industries that had been hammered by slowing economic growth (Downs, 2015).

Third, B&R Initiative helps carry out cultural exchanges between China and other countries along the line. Through the Initiative, we aim to spread Chinese civilization and spread Chinese Dream to the world. 'Asia-Pacific Dream' is like a bridge that links 'Chinese Dream' and 'World Dream' and B&R will also help its establishment. 'Asia-Pacific Dream' keeps Asia Pacific Family Spirit and has the sense of destiny community. It leads the trend of the world development towards a more peaceful and richer life. In this sense, realizing great rejuvenation of China synchronizes with realizing 'World Dream' for all mankind (Lu, Liu and Yu, 2015).

In contrast, the Marshall Plan is a political and security strategy based on ideology with obvious exclusivity. Shouldering the strategic mission of stabilizing Europe to go up against the Soviet Union, the plan demonstrates the strategic intent of United States to control Europe (Jin, 2015). Planners of the Marshall Plan feared that the Soviet Union could make use of the European crisis to further expand its influence which may threaten U.S. security. Only the United States had enough economic power to restore the vitality of Europe and offer hope to the non-communist countries in Asia. If aid is not provided, escalating chaos will seriously endanger the free world and even threaten U.S. interests. Through U.S aid, the Marshall Plan had restored European economy, making it a valuable tool to counter the Soviet Union. It also made it easier for United States to occupy and control European market. The Marshall Plan had harsh political conditions and all the pro-Soviet countries in Europe were excluded. United States set standards and rules to decide who could enter the program. Even allies and recipient countries can only accept unconditionally (He and Xin, 2015).

## **Different Participants**

The B&R Initiative centers on countries that along the ancient 'land Silk Road' and 'maritime Silk Road'. It also expands to other countries including developing countries, emerging countries and developed countries. By promoting economic cooperation and cultural exchanges between countries, it is keen on making effective use of complementary advantages of various countries, encouraging differentiated competition and economic integration. It also aims to create a new model for South-South cooperation, international cooperation and intercontinental cooperation (Wang, 2015). The B&R is

intrinsically an initiative or concept rather than a mechanism or an entity. The initiative is based on the principle of pragmatism and efficiency. By making full use of existing cooperation mechanisms, it innovates forms of cooperation according to the different priorities and conditions of the countries along the route, facilitating flexible development. The B&R Initiative does not seek to realize the leading power through a new system but is an advocate of pragmatic cooperation principle that respects local conditions and project orientation (Jin, 2015).

The Marshall plan, however, is the first group of countries' assistances offered to countries belonging to the second level. The participating countries include United States, Britain, France and other European capitalist countries. The socialist countries and the vast number of third-level countries are not involved. The Marshall Plan, through institutional arrangements and rules, seeks to dominate European affairs and maintain supremacy of United States. The importance of the aid is not its size, but its impact on European economic, fiscal and monetary policies" (Price, 1955). To implement the Marshall Plan, the United States promoted the establishment of 'European Organization for Economic Cooperation' in the first place. Although the principle of its establishment is 'self-help and self-save', yet, as an observer and a backer, United States made the organization an important institutional tool to exert influence on European internal affairs. During the implementation of the Marshall Plan, the organization played a key role in analyzing the common economic difficulties and problems of the recipient countries, coordinating the policies of recipient countries, eliminating intra-European trade barriers, forming a multilateral payment system and establishing a 'European Payment alliance'. Through the institutional role mentioned above, United States made it possible for internal currency in Western European to freely convert and then the U.S. dollar became settlement currency between European countries. As a result, U.S. dollar fixed its hegemony position which changed the strict trade pattern among European countries and made United States a dominant power after war. By then, the new economic order was fixed (Jin, 2015).

### **Progress, Accomplishments and Problems of the B&R Initiative**

Learning from successful experience accumulated over years, China carried out strategic layout of the B&R Initiative: promoting the project from the top leaders, designing and implementing the framework, building the platform and driving funds. With promotion by China, the neighboring countries and other countries that are willing to take China's fast and passenger-friendly development expresses, and those international organizations that are embracing a better world economy, made various responses.

As a comprehensive means to serve China's opening-up strategy as well as a global strategy in the new era, there are already some achievements brought by the B&R Initiative in a brief time (Zhai, 2015). This does not mean, however, that there have no problems along the process.

President Xi Jinping stressed that to strengthen practical cooperation and actively promote construction of the B&R Initiative, we should strive to find common interests of all parties and achieve mutual benefit. As an important support, Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank has made substantial progress such as preparation Silk Road Funds. China-Mongolia and China-Thailand Railways and other infrastructure are under construction and inter connected with each other. FTA negotiations between China and South Korea, China and Australia have been making satisfactory progress (Wang, 2015).

From 2014 to 2016, China's global import and export trade totaled at 11.9 trillion U.S. dollars with 6.7 trillion exportations and 5.2 trillion importations. During the same time, Chinese exportation to countries along the route was 1.8 trillion, taking up 27.4% of Chinese total exportation. As for importation, the number was 1.2 trillion, taking up 23.7% of the total importation. The proportion between China's exports to countries along the line and Chinese total exportation is enlarging every year. Trade surplus had also been increasing.

In 2016, China's foreign engineering contracting was 159.42 billion, increasing by 3.5% compared with last year. And new contracts' value was 244.01 billion, increasing by 16.2% compared with last year. They both slowed down. While the turnover for the 61 countries involved in the Initiative was 75.97 billion, increasing by 9.7% and accounting 47.7% of the total; new contracting for the B&R Initiative was

126.03 billion, increasing by 36% and accounting 51.6% of the total contracting. In other words, increase of new and finished contracts for the B&R Initiative are higher than the overall increase. By the end of 2016, China established 56 economic and trade cooperation zones along the route, creating 177 thousand jobs for local area. The total accumulated investment is more than 18.55 billion and taxes paid to host countries by China is 1.07 billion (Xia, 2017).

When sharing with the global about the B&R Initiative, friendship between China and peoples of other countries has been widely promoted. Vigorous cultural exchanges and cooperation further connect people. By the end of 2016, China had signed a cooperation agreement on cultural exchanges with more than 60 countries along the road. In recent years, China has actively engaged in a full range of cultural exchanges with them, leading to a friendly atmosphere for cultural exchange.

The cultural exchanges and cooperation between China and other countries have ascended a new level since the birth of the initiative. In 2016, the 13th meeting of Cultural Ministers of SCO (Shanghai Cooperation Organization) member countries was held in Tashkent, the capital city of Uzbek. During that period, the Chinese Ministry of Culture sponsored the joint exhibition of the National Academy of Arts of China and Uzbekistan National Academy of Arts and Sciences; Sino-Russian Cultural Forum has been held alternately since 2013. Cultural figures have been exchanging ideas in academics and thoughts to increase understanding of each other which promotes a deeper communication and cooperation in various fields such as cultural policies, cultural mentalities, public cultural service and cultural industry etc. In April 2017, the Hungarian ballet Sissi staged in the Beijing Tianqiao Art Center, opening curtain of the 17th annual Meet in Beijing festival. The festival is a good opportunity for Chinese people to know about Hungarian culture and is beneficial for cultural exchanges between the two countries. In addition, China has also established long-term cultural cooperation with Indonesia, Czech Republic and other countries along the road, providing a platform and opportunity for deeper communication in the future (Wang et al., 2017).

According to the requirement of an all-round and deepening reform, government projects should be evaluated by professional departments and adjusted according to the evaluation results beforehand, during the process and afterwards. For example, when B&R was launched in September 2013, domestic and foreign scholars proposed that the initiative might affect Russia's Eurasian Alliance Strategy and advised the government to strengthen its communication with Russia. At the beginning of 2014, President Xi attended the Sochi Winter Olympics in person and talked with Putin about B&R. And after that, they reached a consensus on mutual support. In addition, the 'five-connection' policy, proposed by President Xi first in September 2013, refers to connectivity of policy, road, trade, currency and people. In February 2015, it can be found both in Vice Premier Zhang Gaoli's speech and 'Vision and Action of the B&R Initiative' that 'road connection' is updated into infrastructure connection and currency is changed into capital connection.

After adjustment, the two concepts are more encompassing and more realistic. In addition, the content of 'community of shared future' is growing in richness. It can be expressed as actively promoting the construction of the B&R Initiative and building a community of shared benefits, responsibility and destiny. In this community, all members will trust each other in politics and work together with countries along the route for economic integration and cultural inclusion (Comprehensive Department of Ministry of Commerce of the People's Republic of China, 2015).

There are some achievements as well as problems in the process. Since 2014, Mr. Xi has made a few visits to Asian and African countries, spreading the B&R initiative and welcoming countries along the border to share China's development opportunities to achieve common prosperity (Xi, 2015). But it is not always plain sailing in the process of advancing and there are still many problems. At present, the main problems are that people cannot reach a consensus on the nature of the initiative and have different opinions on its implementation.

First, in domestic academic circles, there is 'generalization' and 'virtualization' when defining the B&R Initiative. Because of wide range of areas involved in the initiative, scholars from different fields

have defined a wide objective inclusive of all debatable issues in their own area. Take the aim of the B&R Initiative as an example, there are at least more than 10 types of targets: to transfer excess capacity or promote international capacity cooperation; to push Chinese enterprises to go out; to open up overseas markets for Chinese enterprises; to get access to energy or resources from countries along the road; to promote the internationalization of RMB; to open up to the outside, especially to open up the inland area in of the Midwest of China; to pursue the strategy of economic diplomacy; to adopt a peripheral or global strategy to serve China; to safeguard China's security in the west area; to reconstruct China's geo-political-and-economic strategy; to promote Chinese mode to the world; to promote China's participation in global governance and to expand its voice in it; to build a bridge of humanistic communication; to apply the geo-political strategy of promoting rejuvenation of China, etc. Of course, the list can go on and on. Regardless of whether the Initiative alone has the capacity to serve so many goals, attaching so many tags to it will cause fear and worry for the outside countries. A common international challenge is that, since these objectives are what China wants to achieve, why others are obliged to participate in and cooperate? Throughout international or international strategies launched by the world's major powers, there is never a single strategy that contains so many domestic goals. Of course, the Chinese do not deny the rationality of these objectives. And there is nothing wrong with linking them to the Initiative. However, the core matter is whether they can become strategic objectives of the B&R Initiative.

Second, the Initiative and local government's opportunism behavior might be related. One year after the Initiative was brought about, by the end of 2014, the two sessions of the local government were held. The Initiative was written into the development plan for all provinces and autonomous regions of the country. This is a positive signal indicating local governments' recognition and willingness to participate. But many local governments build infrastructures in the name of the Initiative and the projects have a high degree of similarity. At the same time, many regions try to dig out their own various silk roads in different dynasties to be listed as the central city or region to attract preferential policies of the central government. In fact, many local governments regard the Initiative as an opportunity to solicit investment projects and preferential policies from the central government. In 2015, the central government issued 'The Belt and Road Initiative White Book' which cooled down this hot wave in a timely manner and did not identify which cities were core cities (it only defined Xinjiang as the core of the land Silk Road and Fujian as the core of the maritime Silk Road). In recent years, this phenomenon has been curbed, but many decision-makers in local government have not eliminated their misunderstanding of the Initiative and opportunism behavior still exists.

Third, some countries along the line consider the Initiative as China's foreign aid projects. Therefore, they are passive waiting and relying too much on China and sometimes raise high price in cooperation. Since Chinese academics have given too many Chinese targets to the Initiative, some countries along the road are seeing it as a foreign aid program launched by China to make itself an enormous power. For example, some countries require Chinese side to provide preferential interest rate to show bilateral friendship in some cooperative projects; they sometimes refuse to offer government guarantees for debt financing for infrastructure; they even proposed some business clauses that would make a loss for the investment, and so on and so forth. As a result, some projects had to be suspended. Besides, in Central Asia, influenced by traditional ideology, some people had an old impression on China, assuming that China is the same as during the period of Sino-Soviet confrontation. They maintain an elevated level of vigilance and precaution, thinking that the real intention of those Chinese companies who move there for development is to plunder their resources rather than help. This psychological prejudice and ideological gap on the Initiative created some risky uncertainty (Li, 2017).

Finally, among countries along the road, especially some big powers who are not involved, doubt about China's strategic motivation to promote the Initiative. On one hand, scholars or officials in these countries are confused by confusing statements and explanation on the Initiative by Chinese scholars and the media; on the other hand, they are in the state of hostility for China's growing up and they have no faith in China's peaceful rise. This query has several types. Firstly, some regard the Initiative as Chinese

version of the Marshall Plan. After the war, United States carried out Marshall Plan for the establishment of its hegemonic position in the world and made massive economic aid to its European allies. They compare the Initiative with the Marshall Plan and come up with the corollary that China is also planning to build its dominance. It is considered as China's hidden motivation to promote infrastructure, open up the market and deal with excess capacity by western scholars. The real intention in their opinion is to achieve neo-colonialism through the Initiative. Thirdly, revival the tributary system. Holmes, an expert on Chinese issues at the U.S. Naval War Academy, points out that China is using economic favors in exchange for political obedience from its neighbor countries (Li, 2017). Because of these misunderstandings, the Initiative is interpreted as a type of national strategy of capitalism. In other words, it is regarded as an effort by a newly-emerging capitalist country to expand its sphere of capital with the help of national power (Wang and Li, 2017).

### **The Impact on the World's Economic Pattern**

The economic and trade investment and international cooperation on capacity under the Initiative will implant new impetus into the development of the world economy. The Initiative will change the leading position of Europe and the United States in global trading system. China, as the largest country of international business, is the biggest trading partner for 130 countries and regions in the world. Therefore, China can push forward optimizing and upgrading of doing business which is beneficial for more cooperation. China's investment in the Initiative will boost economic growth. With more than 3 trillion U.S. dollars as foreign exchange reserves, China has enough capital to invest on infrastructures related with the Initiative and meet requirements for industrial upgrading. These will help solve the bottleneck issues related with infrastructure in developing countries. At the same time, China cooperates with countries along the road in investment and production capacity which can help developing countries achieve rapid growth (Chen and Tian, 2017).

As a national strategy of opening, the Initiative was proposed and carried out by China. It has efficiently promoted the infrastructure construction for countries along the road and facilitates interconnection and trade growth. It also drives a deeper South-South cooperation which corresponds to the goal of common development and an open, inclusive and balanced world economy. It is, therefore, a major innovation and practical action of China to accelerate world economic growth in an inclusive and balanced manner as well as to reshape the world economic order (Xia, 2016).

In the context of the world new normal economy, the world needs Chinese economy to be developing in a sound way. The Belt and Road Initiative is different from mechanisms of cooperation in three aspects: openness, inclusiveness and fairness. These three factors are exactly the essential elements in overcoming the difficulties in the trend of the world new normal economy (Jia, 2017). Openness comes first. In the context of today's global order, United States remains a major provider of global public goods. However, in the face of a series of recent changes and trends, the existing international system cannot effectively keep up with changes in demand for global public goods. In the past, public goods are faced with high thresholds and must meet many additional conditions, so they cannot benefit developing countries. The initiative is based on the ancient Silk Road but is not limited to it.

Any country that accepts the cooperative concept of the Silk Road is welcome to participate. In terms of inclusiveness, the Initiative is not an entity or mechanism but is more like a concept or cooperation framework without any exclusion. Within this framework, there can be many cooperation mechanisms such as FTA, sub international cooperation and economic corridor which are based on a country's different political, economic and cultural features. Hence, it will not replace or go against any international existing cooperation mechanism (Mao, 2015). The construction of infrastructure cannot be separated from dedicated support of capital. According to predictions of the Asian Development Bank, there will be investment need for 8 trillion dollars between 2010 to 2020. But from the perspective of existing global or international platforms for governance, most of the developmental financial institutions are less concerned about the agenda of developing countries. Existing multilateral financial institutions,

such as Asian Development Bank, provides only 10 billion dollars every year. The huge funding gap severely restricts the overall development of developing countries (Wang and Xiang, 2015).

The B&R Initiative emphasizes on building an open, sharing, balanced, universal cooperation framework to break barriers between continents and sub-regions. So that the global governance structure will develop continuously along a fair and reasonable direction, meeting the demands of developing countries: reshaping international economic and trade rules; reducing monopoly where few countries dominate in enactment and implementation of global economic and trade rules. This is China's exploration of optimizing global economic governance and building new international relations. And it is the contribution of China to promote mutual benefit in international cooperation and add more norms, openness and justification to global economic governance.

The Initiative adheres to the concept of understanding, respecting and sharing, aiming at building a world political structure featured by peace, harmony and common prosperity. Based on the global strategic point of view, the Initiative advocates the principle of equality and mutual benefit. During carrying out the strategy, China's influence on the world political structure will be strengthened. The trend of globalization of core western countries is based on inequality, so the strategy of equality and mutual benefit mechanism will be resisted by the former (Ren, 2009). The conflicts caused by intrinsic differences of two mechanisms will be felt in the way that core western countries will introduce a new mechanism to maintain the existing status. China, however, will unite more developing countries to strive for a new order. In the process of strategy formulation, China takes full account of political differences of various countries. In this way, China respects each other's will and help establish a peaceful, harmonious and common prosperous world political framework.

As a national development strategy featured by peace and win-win, the core of the Initiative is to promote balanced development of the region, to connect the sea and land trade corridors and to build an ecological Asia-Europe economic circle. For international development, first, China should connect east and west areas within the country based on achievements brought by China's Western Development Program and narrow differences between international development; second, China should expand coastal economic prosperity and enlarge advantage of western area to achieve an around opening including inland-ocean and inland-inland pattern. For development strategy, China will share the advantages in capital, technology and equipment with countries all over the world and establish a global political and economic system which has sharing interests, responsibility destiny (Luo and Shi, 2017).

Post western international system and the modern international system have intrinsic differences, such as decline of multi-polarization, globalization and American hegemony (Li, 2002). Then, from a comparative perspective, there is a saying as decline of the West and rise of the East. Since the 1990s, there has been the trend of economic globalization and international collectivization world-wide. IT-based technological revolution has led to substantial growth of the global economy. From 1995, the World Trade Organization began to operate and then economic groups such as European Union, NAFTA and APEC started emerging. China overtaking Japan and becoming the world's second-largest economy, together with the rise of BRICS, trigger a reshuffle of the world economic structure. Jim O'Neill from Britain made predictions in a report titled as 'Dreaming with BRICS: The Path to 2050' that by 2050, BRICS will surpass western developed countries including Britain, France, Italy and Germany, and will join United States and Japan as the world's six largest economies. In the post-western international system, international political power is moving eastward. The rise of the group of emerging powers represented by BRICS is a mark that the east is returning to the center of international system. At the same time, this is also an indication that the world is moving towards a hegemony-free and balanced international order (Zhang, 2012).



## CONCLUSION

The B&R Initiative marks a new stage of updating in China's opening and will produce global dividend. Comrade Xi Jinping pointed out that our cause is to cooperate with the world in a win-win manner. The international community is gradually becoming a community with shared destiny. In face of a complex world economy and global problems, no country can develop by itself. So, it requires all countries to work together as we are in the same boat. In other words, while pursuing our own interests, China should also concern other countries and promote common growth for all. In this way, China will build a more equitable and balanced new global partnership for development and to build a better world. In terms of China's relationship with the world, the world needs a strong China and China needs a peaceful and friendly world. To improve the Belt and Road Initiative, China should focus on building a new platform for cooperation, turning to new impetus for growth and exploring innovative ways of development. By working together for new international relations with the core of win-win cooperation, we will enter a new phase of interconnection. All these will push the Initiative up along the ladder and facilitate world peace, harmony and sustainable development.

In second half part of the 20th century, peace and development became a world-wide theme. But after entering the new century, especially after 9.11, the theme was impacted by anti-terrorism which made the international environment extremely complex. Actions of western countries in recent years show that anti-terrorism action has a trend of expanding. What is more, there is a military layout on global scale. This is clearly a departure from the theme of peace and development. In this context, China must reaffirm the theme of peace and development at the right time. China should point out all deviating acts by political and military power to arouse moral judgments throughout the world. The implementation of the Initiative needs a peaceful environment as well as driving force motivated by demands and desires for development. If China can highlight the theme of peace and development, she will not only gain moral advantage but also can create a sound environment for the implementation of the Initiative.

After entering the 21st century, although factors that may cause the world's turbulence have not diminished nor have the economic and political relations between countries been significantly improved, yet in a sense, the concept of cooperation is possible to become a universal ideology. In this case, it is entirely possible to seek the right for boosting cooperation. And if we can have a voice in cooperation, we will be able to efficiently solve many problems in international communication. As far as the Initiative is concerned, cooperation is embedded but its essence was not explored deep enough. Therefore, for better carrying out the construction of B&R, it should be a priority to establish Chinese voice during the cooperation. In this way, China should be able to put forward more beneficial advice to strengthen cooperation between countries and regions, to form strategic partnership and to achieve mutual help and common prosperity.

Besides Asian Investment Bank and the Silk Road Fund, China should expand its multi-channel sources of funding and enhance its fund-raising capabilities in the international market. For lowering loan risk, China can refer to the evaluation mechanism of existing international financial institutions. China can also supervise the entire process of lending and evaluate its future affect to ensure its maximum potential benefit can be achieved. For countries with rich energy and natural resources but limited financial resources, China can design flexible approach to offer loans in exchange for resources. For innovative financial products, some measures can be made. In the first place, China can set up funds led by government equity, PPP guidance funds and railway funds. In addition, China can also issue diverse types of securities including Silk Road Bonds to widen funding channels. What is more, China should establish multi-input mechanism sponsored by the government and social capital.

China should set up compensation fund to safeguard financial stability. At the same time, mechanism for assistance for countries with financial risks should also be established to safeguard financial security for countries along the route. In addition, China should improve insurance system for overseas investment. In details, China should coordinate effective cooperation between policy-oriented insurance

agencies and commercial-oriented ones, increase insurance aimed at foreign investment. In addition, China ought to set up foreign investment fund, offering guarantee for foreign investment to improve the strength and level of foreign investment insurance. Then in case of a state default, China Export and Credit Insurance Corporation will play its role as an escort: providing support against potential risk and offering protective umbrella for Chinese overseas investment.

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