



The Belt and Road Initiative

Past, Present, Future

Edited by

Gao Xiang · Kostas Gouliamos ·
Liu Zuokui · Christos Kassimeris

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PREFACE

In 2013, when President Xi Jinping visited Kazakhstan and Indonesia, he proposed the joint construction of the “Silk Road Economic Belt” and the “21st Century Maritime Silk Road”, namely the “Belt and Road” initiative (BRI). The BRI stems from President Xi’s profound understanding of the world’s history, present, and future, as well as his profound thinking on the future of mankind. After more than eight years of construction, the BRI has now become a Chinese plan for China to participate in global openness and cooperation, improve the global economic governance system, promote global universal development and prosperity, and the building of “a community with a shared future for mankind”.

The BRI is inspired by the ancient Silk Road that crossed the Eurasian continent. From China’s Western Han Dynasty (202 BC-8 AD), merchants from China, Central Asia, West Asia, and Europe carried out close trade exchanges through the Silk Road. In this process, Chinese silk, tea, and porcelain were transported westward, while spices, furs, and agricultural products from Central Asia, West Asia, and Europe were introduced to China. Moreover, ideas, cultures, technologies, and religions also spread through the Silk Road, which opened the door for exchanges between China and the West, and promoted the great development of human civilization. Although this kind of exchange and mutual learning may be temporarily hindered, it has continued for more than 2,000 years and shown strong vitality. President Xi Jinping pointed out, “spanning thousands of miles and years, the ancient silk routes embody

the spirit of peace and cooperation, openness and inclusiveness, mutual learning and mutual benefit”. The BRI emphasizes mutual learning among civilizations, which is the inheritance and development of the great Silk Road spirit.

The BRI construction is a systematic project, adhering to the principles of extensive consultation, joint construction, and sharing, and focusing on policy communication, facility connectivity, unimpeded trade, financial integration, and people-to-people bonds. The successful international cooperation on BRI construction has built a new platform for international trade and investment, opened up new space for world economic growth, and painted a grand economic vision of openness and cooperation for countries along the route. From 2013 to 2021, the cumulative trade volume of goods between China and BRI countries reached 11 trillion US dollars. As of the end of March 2022, China has inked more than 200 cooperation documents on the joint construction of BRI with 149 countries and 32 international organizations. A large number of cooperation projects have taken root, bringing more convenient living conditions, better business environment, and more development opportunities to the people of all BRI countries. In addition to strengthening cooperation in the economic field, the joint construction of BRI also attaches great importance to consolidating the social foundation of people-to-people bonds, advocates cultural communication and civilization tolerance, strengthens dialogue between different countries, ethnic groups, and societies, and actively builds multi-dimensional intergovernmental macro-level policy communication and exchange mechanism to enhance political mutual trust.

At present, the world is experiencing “great changes unseen in a century”. The “de-globalization” and populist ideologies, and protectionist and unilateral actions that are popular in some countries and regions have weakened the principles and mechanisms of multilateralism and undermined the achievements of globalization over the past decades. The COVID-19 pandemic that broke out in 2020 is still haunting the world, and its far-reaching impact is still difficult to accurately assess. The Russian-Ukrainian conflict in 2022 has profoundly affected the global geopolitical landscape. The security challenges and humanitarian crises triggered by the conflict have generated strong impact on Europe and the world, and tested the resilience of the BRI. At the same time, issues such as poverty, terrorism, climate change, and biodiversity loss continue to plague countries around the world. These severe challenges prove once

again that human society is “a community with a shared future”. President Xi Jinping argued, “We should choose dialogue over confrontation, tear down walls rather than erect walls, pursue integration instead of decoupling, opt for inclusiveness, not exclusion, and guide reforms of the global governance system with the principle of fairness and justice”. He emphasized that “for us to break through the mist and embrace a bright future, the biggest strength comes from cooperation and the most effective way is through solidarity”. President Xi’s assertion fully embodies China’s concept of global governance with the Silk Road spirit as the background and “extensive consultation, joint construction, and sharing” as the core, and pointed out the direction for countries to work together to deal with various challenges.

As the terminus of the BRI, Europe is a key participant in the joint construction of this initiative. Since the BRI was put forward, Chinese and European high-level leaders have maintained close interaction, two-way trade and investment between the two partners have been active, and people-to-people and cultural exchanges have been frequent. In 2021, overcoming the impact of the pandemic, the China-EU trade volume reached 828.11 billion US dollars, a record high and a year-on-year increase of 27.5%. As of the end of October 2021, the China Railway Express—the “steel camel team” that runs through the Eurasian continent, has laid out 73 operating routes, reaching 175 cities in 23 European countries, and transporting more than 50,000 kinds of goods. Now, China-EU relations are at a new historical starting point. Both sides are willing to seize the opportunity to promote exchanges and mutual learning between the two civilizations, and promote economic, social, and cultural development of both sides. The Chinese side proposed that it “welcomes the active participation of the EU and other European countries in a joint effort to build a road that promotes peace, prosperity, openness and innovation, connects civilizations, facilitates green development, and upholds high ethical standards”, and stressed the need to “uphold inter-civilization dialogue and harmony in diversity to facilitate mutual learning between the Chinese and European civilizations”. The European perception and practice have a very important influence on the joint construction of BRI, and can also provide implications for further high-quality development of BRI.

Building on this understanding, this book invites researchers and practitioners from Chinese and European government departments, universities, think tanks, etc., based on their experiences and observations while

participating in the development of China-EU relations and the construction of the BRI, to discuss and analyze the initiative. These authors possess rich research and practical knowledge in academic and policy circles, with different discipline backgrounds such as politics, economics, science and technology, history, archaeology, and international relations. The book takes into account both history and reality, and comprehensively applies empirical and theoretical perspectives to conduct an in-depth and comprehensive investigation of the past, present, and future of the BRI.

This book is divided into three parts. The ancient Silk Road is not only a road of commerce and trade, but also a road for cultural exchange and mutual learning, which has played a very important role in the development of Eurasian civilizations. Therefore, the first part reviews the history of Sino-Western exchanges that the BRI carries and discusses the connotation and foundation of the “Silk Road Spirit” from the perspective of history and civilization. The second part conducts a multi-disciplinary and multi-perspective empirical study on the achievements and challenges faced in the joint construction of the BRI over the past eight years from the aspects of industrial cooperation, economic and trade exchanges, regional development, legal affairs, and international relations. The third part focuses on the future of the initiative, discusses the profound impact of the BRI on global governance from the theoretical perspective and in an all-round way, and provides clues for finding solutions to the current common challenges facing the international community.

This book, jointly written by Chinese and European scholars, is the fruit of a long-term friendship and partnership between Chinese Academy of Social Sciences and European University Cyprus. By co-authoring this book, Chinese and European scholars have the opportunity of fully exchanging views and deepening their understanding of the BRI. We believe that readers interested in the BRI, global governance, and China-EU relations will find valuable knowledge in this book.

Beijing, China
Nicosia, Cyprus
July 2022

Gao Xiang
Kostas Gouliamos

CONTENTS

Introduction	1
Christos Kassimeris	
The Ancient Silk Road: A History and Civilization Perspective	
The Introduction of Western Learning and the Response of Chinese Intellectuals from the Sixteenth to Eighteenth Centuries	9
Xiang Gao	
The “Belt and Road Initiative” and Intercultural Dialogue	35
Bart Dessein	
“Silk Road Spirit” and China–EU Civilization Partnership	53
Tian Dewen	
“Children’s Space” Along the Silk Road: Start Talking About Terracotta Pig-Shaped Rattle Unearthed in Cyprus	69
Ming Wan	
The Cyprian King Evagoras in Isocrates and the Image of Perfect Kingship in the Contexts of Classical Greek and Chinese Intellectuals	85
Houliang Lyu	

The Contemporary “Belt and Road”: An Empirical Perspective	
China and Southern Europe: Relations and Prospects: A Stakeholder’s Perspective	103
Yiannos Katsourides	
The “Belt and Road” Initiative and Eurasian Regional Cooperation	123
Guangcheng Xing	
The Characteristics of the Legal Risks of “One Belt One Road” and Their Preventive Measures	139
Mo Jihong and Sun Nanxiang	
The “Belt and Road” International Production Capacity Cooperation and Its Prospects	163
Xiaohua Li	
The Belt and Road Initiative: Supply Chain Resilience as a Prerequisite for Sustainability	195
Alexandru Georgescu	
The Future of “Belt and Road”: A Theoretical Perspective	
The History, Silk, and Future Road	217
Nikos Kotzias	
China’s “Belt and Road” Initiative as a Soft Power Apparatus in Mediterranean	241
Kostas Gouliamos	
The “Pan-Securitization” of the EU’s Connectivity Policy and China–EU Cooperation	259
Zuokui Liu	
Educational Belt and Cultural Road: Back to the Future of Great Civilizations	279
Evripidis St. Stylianidis	

The Belt and Road Initiative and the Future of Global Governance	295
Xiujun Xu	
Concluding Remarks: Developing an Interculturalism System	313
Kostas Gouliamos	

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LIST OF FIGURES

The “Belt and Road” International Production Capacity Cooperation and Its Prospects

- Fig. 1 China’s investment flow to BRI countries (*Source* Ministry of Commerce of the People’s Republic of China, National Bureau of Statistics, State Administration of Foreign Exchange. (2021). *2020 Statistical Bulletin of China’s Outward Foreign Direct Investment*. China Commerce and Trade Press. <http://images.mofcom.gov.cn/hzs/202111/20211112140104651.pdf>) 166
- Fig. 2 Cooperation in industrial parks to achieve complementary advantages between China and BRI countries 179

The Belt and Road Initiative: Supply Chain Resilience as a Prerequisite for Sustainability

- Fig. 1 BRI supply chain issues (*Source* Butt, A.S.; Arshi, T.A.; Rao, V.; Tewari, V. (2020) Implications of Belt and Road Initiative for Supply Chain Management: A Holistic View. *J. Open Innov. Technol. Mark. Complex.* 2020, 6, 136. <https://doi.org/10.3390/joitmc6040136>) 201
- Fig. 2 Concrete actions to support supply chain resilience (*Source* Author) 211

LIST OF TABLES

The “Belt and Road” International Production Capacity Cooperation and Its Prospects

Table 1	The proportion change of China’s outward FDI (excluding banks, securities, and insurance) in BRI countries	166
Table 2	BRI Countries with Chinese CDI of more than US\$100 million (2014–2020)	167
Table 3	Changes in the number of China’s international cooperation parks along the “Belt and Road” and the number of countries co-constructing parks	171
Table 4	Types of Cooperation Industrial Parks	173
Table 5	Changes of Proportion of China’s foreign contracted engineering business completed in BRI countries	175
Table 6	China’s direct investment in some BRI countries (US\$ billion)	177



Introduction

Christos Kassimeris

Launched in 2013 by China's President Xi Jinping, the Belt & Road Initiative aims to bring China closer to Europe, Africa, and other parts of the world, while also connecting certain parts of Asia into a huge network of countries through both land and maritime corridors. The ambitious project that it seeks to improve trading relations, improve infrastructure, and safeguard economic development by stimulating regional integration. While the concept originally dates back to the Han Dynasty some 2000 years ago when the Silk Road developed into an ancient network of trade routes connecting Imperial China to the markets of the Mediterranean, the Belt and Road Initiative is better defined as a far more holistic approach.

The initiative evolves from history and carries on the Silk Road spirit to facilitate friendly cooperation between China and other countries, including Europe in the new international context. It follows the principles of extensive consultation, joint contribution, and shared benefits to enhance policy coordination, facilities connectivity, unimpeded trade, financial integration, and people-to-people bond, envisioning a cooperation open to all countries along the belt and road routes including

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Europe. The successful operation of the BRI in the past six years has established new platforms for international trade and investment and opened up new possibilities for global economic growth. Committed to strengthening the foundations for people-to-people exchange, the BRI promotes mutual learning among civilizations and has injected a strong impetus for dialogues among civilizations.

China and Europe are natural partners in the construction of “the belt and road.” While this year marks the 45th anniversary of the establishment of the China-EU diplomatic relationship, their relations are standing at a new historical starting point. Facing the future, the two sides must seize the opportunity to promote at all levels their partnership for peace, growth, reform, and civilization in a comprehensive manner, and therefore to advance economic, social, and cultural development. In China’s policy paper on the European Union released in December 2018, it is stated that “China welcomes the active participation of the EU and other European countries in a joint effort to build a road that promotes peace, prosperity, openness and innovation, connects civilizations, facilitates green development, and upholds high ethical standards,” and proposes to “uphold inter-civilization dialogue and harmony in diversity to facilitate mutual learning between the Chinese and European civilizations.”

In recognition of this understanding, we invited researchers and practitioners from Chinese and European government departments, universities, and think tanks to provide a multi-disciplinary analysis based on their observations on China-EU relations and “the belt and road” construction, and contribute an article to the book titled *The Belt and Road Initiative: Past, Present and Future*. The authors come from academic and/or policy-making backgrounds and are equipped with different disciplinary and professional knowledge, such as politics, economics, history, archeology, culture, education, and international relations. The book, taking into account both history and reality, applies historical, empirical, and theoretical methods for some in-depth and comprehensive investigation of the past, present, and future of the BRI.

The success of the project, nevertheless, is further enhanced through cultural dialogue among all pertinent parties. As China’s Policy Paper on the European Union declares (issued in December 2018), one of the main aims of the Belt and Road Initiative is to “Uphold interciviliation dialogue and harmony in diversity to facilitate mutual learning between the Chinese and European civilizations.” It is precisely this

mutual learning between the Chinese and European civilizations that the present book seeks to explore by means of: (1) delving into the historical aspect of intercultural dialogue between China and Europe; (2) examining the conditions that presently characterize intercultural relations between the two; and, (3) proposing a prognosis of how the guiding principles of China-EU relations will develop with regard to inter-civilization dialogue. In particular, the proposed book will examine key aspects of any given civilization ranging from history, culture, and archeology, through politics and economics, to technology, medicine, and education. Divided into three interrelated parts, this book offers, first, a historical perspective, then, the empirical perspective and, finally, the theoretical perspective.

In the first part, Chapter 2 discusses the cultural exchanges between China and the West from the sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries much because of the traveling of Catholic missionaries from western Europe. The cultural interaction between China and the West expanded over science and technology, thus producing the necessary grounds for strengthening Sino-Western relations, particularly in terms of finance and commerce. Chapter 3 discusses the interconnection of the Belt and Road Initiative with the “tianxia” (all-under-heaven) concept, and the prospects for developing a near universal model of intercultural connections. China’s willingness to become more engaged with other countries the world over is the main ambition of the Belt and Road Initiative, one that is reflected in the differences between the more antagonistic Han dynasty and the pluralism of the Tang dynasty. Bringing us up to date, the following chapter assesses the context of the China-EU Civilization Partnership Initiative, as proposed by President Xi, from an international dimension. Against the background of globalization and international conflicts, the Silk Road Spirit of ancient China offers a credible alternative to curbing instability in the international arena and improving sustainability through dialogue and cooperation between China and Europe. Chapter 5 attempts an analysis of the pig-shaped rattles discovered in Cyprus and contextualizes these archeological findings within the histories of the Mediterranean and China. The next chapter too delves into the ancient history of Cyprus by means of reflecting the content of historiography through the lens of early biographical works such as the story of King Evagoras.

In the second part, Chapter 7 assesses the prospects for further cooperation between China and southern Europe by means of exploring the relations between the former and each of Cyprus, Greece, Italy, Malta,

Portugal, and Spain against the background of the recent economic crisis. The perceptions of key stakeholders in those European societies are examined through expert surveys, including government agencies, political parties, trade unions, and academics, aiming to identify opportunities for collaboration with China. The following chapter discusses the economic ties between China and Europe, with Kazakhstan serving as the point of departure in the Belt and Road Initiative, while also elaborating on the role of Eurasian states such as the Russian Federation, and the relationship between the Belt and Road Initiative and the Eurasian Economic Union. Finally, this chapter explores the prospect of expanding the Maritime Silk Road to Europe via the Arctic passage in close collaboration with Russia. Chapter 9 attempts a review of the legal challenges of the Belt and Road Initiative. Based on field research in the Belt and Road countries and neighboring regions, this chapter examines the potential of setting up an international legal service with the aim of advising Chinese companies and citizens abroad to uphold compliance with the Belt and Road countries' national legislation over issues pertaining to trade, culture, and investment. The following chapter discusses the prospect of China inventing in the creation of international industrial cooperation parks in the Belt and Road countries and neighboring regions. It highlights the positive differences between the more traditional international direct investment model and the operating mechanisms afforded by the Belt and Road Initiative. The revamped industrial status of the countries along the Belt and Road is also assessed in this chapter. Chapter 11 discusses the issue of supply chain resilience against the background of the COVID-19 pandemic to ascertain economic performance at a global scale.

In the final part of the book, Chapters 12 and 15 examine the Belt and Road Initiative as an alternative model for international cooperation that places as much emphasis on the economy as on all things cultural. From a Greek viewpoint, collaboration with China will advance the cultural ties between the two countries, as well as promote economic development, diversity, and inclusion. Chapter 13 examines the role of China as a Soft Power in the area of southern Europe. The historical ties between southern European states and China have been influential enough to foster, first, a valuable cultural exchange and, second, the opportunity to build an economic relationship based on mutual prosperity and development that will, in turn, promote openness and inclusiveness. Chapter 14 analyzes the context of the China-CEEC Cooperation, launched before the Belt and Road Initiative, as a tool for improving economic and trading

ties between China and Europe. Instrumental in forming Chinese diplomacy, the China-CEEC Cooperation laid the foundations for the Belt and Road Initiative. The final chapter offers a similar view of the Belt and Road Initiative in discussing the future of global governance as an alternative to the current trends of unilateralism and protectionism in the international market. As a tool for promoting international economic cooperation the Belt and Road Initiative offers a unique opportunity for enhancing international collaboration and intercultural exchanges as its high-quality development seeks to establish those conditions necessary for all partners to both contribute and assume important roles in global governance.

The main theme of the book advances the significance of cultural dialogue between China and Europe. On the whole, this book would appeal to professionals and general readers and, more specifically, it should serve the needs of policy-makers, academics, and undergraduate and postgraduate students in the social sciences and humanities.

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The Ancient Silk Road: A History
and Civilization Perspective



The Introduction of Western Learning and the Response of Chinese Intellectuals from the Sixteenth to Eighteenth Centuries

Xiang Gao

One of the most important characteristics that differs sixteenth to eighteenth-centuries China, the era from the late Ming dynasty to the early Jiaqing reign (1796–1820) in the Qing, from its previous periods is the introduction of Western culture predominantly introduced by Catholic missionaries who continually knocked and finally opened the door of China, which led to a long period of cultural exchange. A profound and lasting impacts, this cultural exchange brought novel insights along the Belt and Road regions. This article discusses reflections and responses within Chinese society, especially the intellectual elites, in relation to the newly introduced Western culture in that era.

Born in October 1963, Gao Xiang male, Han ethnicity is a research fellow and doctoral advisor with a Ph.D. in history. He is now the President of CASS and concurrently serves as the President of the Chinese Academy of History (CAH) under CASS.

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1 THE UNDERSTANDING OF WESTERN LEARNING

From the sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries, most of the missionaries who came to China were Jesuits. Since the time of Matteo Ricci, two basic strategies had been formulated.

One was to learn Confucianism and to show respect to Chinese customs in order to reduce the possible resistance and exclusion from Chinese people. Matteo Ricci was the one who respected Chinese customs, changed to wear Confucian clothes, studied Confucian classics, and used the Confucian discourse system and academic paradigm to elucidate and spread Catholic teachings. With the full emphasizing of the consistency of Christianity and Confucianism, he, therefore, was called “Western Confucianist”. He was praised for his ability in Chinese: “Ricci has mastered Chinese and Western languages so well that his writes his books in Chinese and there is no need to have them translated”.¹

The second strategy was to obtain support from the Chinese court and scholar-officials by introducing Western science and culture. It was this strategy that closely integrated the spread of Catholicism with the exchange of scientific and technological knowledge between China and the West. Ruan Yuan (1764–1849), therefore, stated in his *Chouren zhuan* (Biographies of Scientists) that “Ricci sailed to Guangdong Province in Wanli reign, and that was the beginning of the introduction of *Xiafa* (Western way) to China”.²

The arrival of missionaries and their extremely wise missionary activities initiated changes in the structure of knowledge of Chinese academic circles, among which the increasing understanding of the world outside China, the fresh recognizing, and deep thinking of new rising scientific and technology were the most striking ones.

This historical change not only infused fresh value into the Chinese culture with Confucianism as its principal part, but also laid a primitive yet indispensable social foundation for the integration of Chinese and Western cultures after the First Opium War.

The Western calendar was highly valued knowledge by scholar-officials of the day. In 1610, the thirty-eighth year of Wanli reign, someone suggested that because of the inaccurate prediction of the Chinese lunar calendar, the Western calendar imported by Diego de

¹ Li Madou [Matteo Ricci], *Qiankun tiyi, juanshou*, its abstract, in *Sikuquanshu*.

² Ruan Yuan, *Chouren zhuan*, Vol. 44, “Li Madou”, Commercial Press, 1935.

Pantoja (1571–1618) and Sebatino de Ursis (1575–1620) should be translated by Confucian officials and those in The Astronomical Directorate to remedy the limitation of Chinese lunar calendar. This suggestion was officially supported by the Ministry of Rites who nominated Xu Guangqi (1562–1633), a Examining Editor in the Hanlin Academy, and Li Zhizao (1565–1630), a Vice Director of the Nanjing Ministry of Works, Diego and Sebatino to translate the calendar.³

With the expansion of the Missionaries' influence in China, the dissemination of Western technology became wider and deeper. At the end of the Chongzhen reign (1628–1644), the emperor “already knew the secrets of Western calendar” and decided to change the title to Datong (Big Unification) Calendar and applied this calendar to Tianxia (All under Heaven),⁴ which demonstrated the influence of Western science and technology in Ming court.

The Western objects attracted many literates after they arrived in China. Xie Zhaozhe (1567–1624), a scholar in late Ming, recorded in his book: “The Western monk Matteo Ricci has a chime clock. It chimes at regular intervals via its components and there is no error in timing”. He criticized the Chinese timing system for its general mistakes in time telling.⁵

It should be specifically mentioned that the traditional Sinocentrism had gradually been impacted by the introduction of Western geographic knowledge. Sun Jue (1585–1643), a scholar-official in the Ming dynasty, mentioned in his *Gu weishu* (Compilation of the Augury Books) that “in recent times here came Ricci from Europe, sailing across the sea for 80,000 *li*. He said that there are numerous overseas large countries overseas. From their geographical location, China is regarded as the Great Ming Sea, occupying only tiny part of the whole land. Given this, how could one assume that there was no land beyond the expansive ocean?”⁶

The dissemination of Western learning was further accelerated after the establishment of the Qing Dynasty in 1644. After a period of back and

³ *Mingshi*, Vol. 31, “Li yi”.

⁴ *Ming Huiyao*, Vol. 27, “Yunli shang”.

⁵ Xie Zhaozhi, *Wuzha zu*, Vol. 2, “Tianbu er”, Shanghai shudian Publishing House, 2001.

⁶ Sun Jue, *Guwei shu*, Vol. 32, “Hetu wei”.

forth, the *Shixian Calendar* compiled by missionaries was finally accepted by the Qing court and was promulgated to all under the Heaven.

Compared with late Ming counterparts, the study and research of Western learning in early Qing academic circles did not experience any qualitative progress, but Western learning did attract many Qing scholars. Those who submitted to the new dynasty changed their attitudes toward Western learning as the policies of the Qing courts changed, but the Ming loyalists' attitudes represented the mindset of ordinary scholar-officials, since they spontaneously studied Western learning.

As a famous neo-Confucianist, Lu Shiyi (1611–1672) enjoyed high reputation among the Ming loyalists. He paid extreme attention to Western learning based on his statecraft thought and devoted himself to its research. He questioned the Spherical Earth theory put forwarded by Westerners and expounded his views in the chapter of “*Tiandao lei*” (Catalogue of the Way of Heaven) of the *Sibianlu Jiyao* (Editorial of Speculative Records). He preferred to conduct experiments to verify Westerners. He paid great attention to Western firearms with the aim of safeguarding social stability and political security. He suggested that “the Firearms Brigade should be set up in the Capital and should be strictly prohibited outside the Capital”. This proposition was historically verified.

Chen Que (1604–1677), another important and influential Ming loyalist in the early Qing Dynasty, also paid attention to the spread of Western learning. As an incisive thinker, while he was interested in Western artifacts, he was also on the alert for Catholicism. He raised important ideas, including “The Great Way is boundless, and we can seek it from peripheral regions”, and “avoid to be deceived by the superficial tricks nor be confused by the absurd words”. It is clearly that Chen strictly distinguishes Western artifacts from Western culture, especially the Western religion.

Emperor Kangxi (1654–1722, r.1662–1722) of the Qing dynasty was an active advocate of Western learning. Missionary Ferdinand Verbiest (1623–1688) taught Kangxi practical knowledge in geometry, statics, and astronomy. The emperor himself studied diligently with the intention of applying Western technology to serve his rule. The emperor was particularly fascinated by mathematics, “so that he spent almost all of his spare time to learn it, in the course of which he shown a great interest”.⁷

⁷ Bai Jin [Joachim Bouvet], Kangxidi zhuan, in Zhongguoshehui kexueyuan lishiyanjiusuo qingshiyanjiushi.

Driven by Kangxi's pushes, the Qing court established an imperial school of arithmetic and completed a series of important scientific and cultural projects, such as compiling *Shuli jingyun* (The Essence of Mathematics) and "*Huangyu Quanlan tu*" (The Nationwide Graphics Records of the Great Qing).

The emperor's preference determined the attitude of bureaucrats, however, some scholar-officials, driven by their interest, devoted to researching Western learning. Some of them attained profound insights. Li Guangdi (1642–1718) was the case to accept Western learning. He was a leading neo-Confucianist in the early Qing dynasty, but he did not reject Western learning. He embraced the theory of Spherical Earth, admitting that "it cannot be asserted that China is situated in the middle of the Earth", and further acknowledging that "the Earth is upmost round, and there exists no 'up' and 'down', so that all persons are holding up the sky and stepping on the earth, and there is no 'upside down'".⁸ From the Confucian perspective, Li Guangdi emphasized the manufacture and innovation of Western technology, instead of simply regarding it as diabolic tricks and wicked craft and completely repudiating it. He said:

Westerners could not be labeled with diabolic tricks and wicked craft. Some things they created are useful, such as the instruments, the conical sacrifice objects, and chime clock. In the *Yijing* (Book of Changes), subsequent to the passing away of Paoxi, an ancient sage-king, there emerged Shennong; following Shennong, Yao and Shun came into being. It was overstated to claim that they developed the techniques for fabricating boats, carts, ploughs and shares, pestles, and arrows, which illustrated the significant utility of manufacturing. The whole words of the *Kaogongji* (Records of Diverse Crafts) in the *Zhouguan* (the Rites of Zhou), discuss on the carts, especially the chapter of *Furen* (Auxiliary Function) with particularly importance. Mei Wending (1633–1721) said that, when talking about the nine principles of governance in *Zhongyong* (The Doctrine of the Mean), it is necessary to discuss the "recruiting of hundreds of crafts", among which the carts were full of most difficulties. Among the components of the cart, the wheel is the most remarkable. With only a minimal contact area with the ground, it is capable of generating greater energy during the running process.⁹

ed., *Qingshi ziliao*, No. 1, Zhonghua shuju, 1980.

⁸ Li Guangdi, *Rongcun yulu*, Vol. 26, "Liqi", Zhonghua shuju, 1995.

⁹ Li Guangdi, *Rongcun yulu*, Vol. 14, "Sanli", Zhonghua shuju, 1995.

It was not common that an orthodox neo-Confucianist showed such attitudes toward scientific and technological instruments and craftsmanship in the early Qing. It also indicated the introspection of Chinese intellectuals toward their history along with the introduction of Western knowledge, particularly the scientific and technology.

Another case is Huang Baijia (1643–1709), the son of the famous thinker Huang Zongxi (1610–1695). Without any official titles, Huang Baijia participated in compiling *Ming shi* (the History of the Ming Dynasty) as a commoner. Huang Baijia's outstanding contribution to the cultural exchange between China and Western countries is that he was the first Chinese who formally introduced the Copernicus theory. In *Songyuan Xue'an* (The Genealogy of Scholarships of Song and Yuan Dynasties), Huang made a more accurate introduction to the Copernicus theory. He said:

Among the theories of Earth's rotation in Western countries, Copernicus' view was the most marvelous. The Sun is in the middle of the Heaven and Earth, without any moving; the Earth revolves around the Sun and the Moon moved along the Earth. According to this rule, there is no error in observing and predicting the eclipse of the Sun and the Moon. There are three calendars in western countries: Bartholomeus, Copernicus, and Tycho. Their theories are different, but they have no difference in validating results through practice. The theory of Earth's rotation was incredible. The Heaven rotate lefts, in the middle of which the things go along with it; they will reverse if it is late a little bit.¹⁰

Huang Baijia emphasized that “the way to design calendar has become increasingly accurate so far. The distance, size, degree, ellipse, and sign of the Sun, the Moon, and each star are visible and can be deduced. That is not a result of random speculation”.¹¹

In *Songyuan Xue'an*, Baijia mentioned other Western knowledge as well. He pointed out that the moon does not have a wane because the moon receives the sunlight, one side within sight is always round. When observed from below, as the moon moves beneath the sun, its

¹⁰ Huang Zongxi, *Songyuan xue'an*, Vol. 17, Hengqu xue'an shang, shang. In *Huang Zongxi quanji*, No. 3, p.808, Zhejiang Ancient Books Publishing House, 1985.

¹¹ Huang Zongxi, *Songyuan xue'an*, Vol. 17, p. 814.

illumination appears crescent-shaped like a hook; whereas, when it is positioned opposite to the sun, its luminance resembles that of a full moon. He pointed out: “stars, moon, Venus, and Mercury receive light from the firing sun, during which the stars are *yin* (negative) so that they receive while the sun is the Yang (positive) so that they give”.¹² Based on his knowledge of Western learning, Huang Baijia pointed out specially that the causes of natural phenomena: “wind, rain, dew, and thunder” were described in detail by Westerners in recent times. He explored that “various changes are natural phenomena; the causes of the changes might come from the orbital movements which could attract the four elements including fire, air, water and soil. Each celestial body has its particularity in movement so that those who are proficient in constellation and its corresponding area in the earth could predict the flood or drought in the coming year”,¹³ Huang’s considerations in fact denied all various superstitious sayings in Chinese tradition.

Some sharp-eyed intellectuals in the early Qing dynasty not only showed relatively strong enthusiasm for Western technology, but also began to compare them at the theoretical level. During the Kangxi’s reign, Chen Duichu (1674–1724), the former Supervisor of the Household Administration of the Heir Apparent, made a comprehensive analysis of the difference between China and the West in the knowledge of mathematical astronomy in his *Zhongxi suanfa yitonglun* (The Similarities and Differences of Sino-western Mathematics)., He believed that the Western way was better and complete than Chinese way. He particularly pointed out that after the Three Dynastied (Xia, Shang and Zhou) the *liuyi* (Six Arts) are not as good as those in antiquity, let alone the mathematics. It is hard to explore mathematics, a type of specialized knowledge, and it was regarded as one of the six learnings in the eyes of Western scholars. The people who take it as a major must devote themselves to conduct research. Reviewing the *Jibe Yuanben* (Elements), Chen Duichu said that since the contribution of Christoph Clavius (1538–1612), the Western way should be evaluated in its intention by the Six Classics because of its value in judging the Chinese way in mathematics. Chen argued that even if the calculating methods between Chinese and Western knowledge

¹² Huang Zongxi, *Songyuan xuean*, Vol. 17, p. 808.

¹³ Huang Zongxi, *Songyuan xuean*, Vol. 17, p. 812.

were different, their calculating principles were the same. Hence, he advocated that the intellectuals should master both the Chinese and Western measures in mathematics, know their principles, then grasp their arts, and finally reach the Way.¹⁴

The most famous scholar in the intellectual circles of the early Qing dynasty was definitely Mei Wending. His theory of “Chinese origins of Western learning” had an important influence on later times.

Under the unique historical conditions of the Ming and Qing dynasties, studying Western science and technology and spreading Catholicism were closely related and could not be completely separated. By bringing Western science and technology, the missionaries did not aim to change the backwardness of China’s natural science and technology, but to use it as a tool to serve the preaching. How to deal with the relationship between Western technology and Catholicism has always been a key part of the cultural exchanges between China and the West. This issue had been deeply recognized and theoretically explored mainly by the scholar-officials after the Yongzheng reign (1723–1735) when Catholicism was prohibited by the Qing court.

After the 1720s, the Qing court banned the spread of Catholicism which resulted in stagnation of Sino-West cultural exchanges. The ban, however, did not mean that the scientific and technological knowledge imported by the missionaries would vanish or be paused to circulate. In fact, discussions about Western learning in Qing intellectual circles continued in later times.

The basic attitudes of Chinese intellectuals toward Western learning in the period of prohibition time could be described as to seek its practical usage. It means they supported the propositions of the court while from a pragmatic standpoint, they also preferred to extract useful skills from Western learning but prohibiting the spread of the Western religion.

The knowledge of mathematical astronomy was regarded as a sort of “practical learning”, since it was related to court sacrifices, social life, and agricultural production, and was highly valued by the court as well as the scholar-officials.

In this social background, some Chinese intellectuals studied the Western science, technology, and religion meticulously, and integrated them with their Chinese counterparts. They examined all schools,

¹⁴ Lu Yao, *Qiwenzhai wenchao*, Vol. 24, Chen Duichu, “Zhongxi suanfa yitong lun”.

preserved ancient principles in order to seek their originals, followed the new knowledge to explore its changes, and finally balanced and combined the Chinese principles and Western ones.¹⁵ To reach this balance it was not to wholly accept the Western learning but to make proper choices and to avoid the spread of thoughts that contradicted the Confucian ethics and Chinese traditional culture.

The missionaries purpose of introducing the Western science and technology was obviously to spread Catholicism. The role of science was to serve this purpose. It was obvious and recognized by the scholar-officials in Qing China and they were vigilant about this. At this point, the *Sikuquanshu zongmu tiyao* (Abstracts of the Four Treasures) stated clearly in the abstract of *Tianwen lue* (Outline of Astronomy) that “the missionaries plan to use the accuracy of astronomical measurements to prove the reliability of rules from the Catholic Church, which was definitely a sinister intention”.¹⁶ The compilers of the Abstract to *Tianxue chuhan* (Preliminary Letter on the Learning of the Heaven) stated “that the advantage of Western learning is conducting measurement, and its weakness is worshipping God that would dazzle people’s hearts. They claimed that God has created everything no matter the greatness of the Heaven and Earth or the fitness of the worms. There is no need to argue about the fallacy of the missionaries’ theory, but it is necessary to identify their intention with the statement of encouraging children to leave their parents while treating God as a very close relative, or of putting the position of missionaries prior to the emperor and seniors to let them grasp the fate of state. Nothing was more absurd than Catholicism because it violated Confucian ethics and status hierarchical order, so there was no way to be practice Catholicism in China.¹⁷ With this understanding, the intellectuals supported the Qing court’s proposition of “extracting its skills and prohibiting its trickeries”. In the eyes of intellectual elites, prohibiting principles of the Western learning aimed to maintain the traditional Chinese ethics and social order, as well as the independence and autonomy of traditional Chinese culture. Meanwhile, it also aimed to prevent the possible aggressions.

¹⁵ *Sikuquanshu zongmutiyao*, Vol. 106, “Tianwen suanfa lei yi”.

¹⁶ *Sikuquanshu zongmutiyao*, Vol. 106, “Tianwen lue”.

¹⁷ *Sikuquanshu zongmutiyao*, Vol. 134, “Tianxue chuhan”.

It is worth noting that we shall not overestimate early Qing intellectuals' understanding and acceptance of Western learning by Chinese intellectuals in the early Qing Dynast. Even those scholar-officials with relatively open attitudes toward Western learning had some misunderstandings, let alone the ones, such as Yang Guangxian (1597–1669), a notorious conservative. These misunderstanding mainly included the following two aspects:

The first one was the misinterpretation of the Western disciplinary classification and knowledge system. The most typical case is the evaluation of *Xixue fan* (The Summary of Western Learning). It was written by Giulio Aleni (1582–1649) and its contents are the methods of establish education system and of cultivating talents. In this book, Western learning was divided into *linke* (six disciplines) including *wenke* (language, literature and art), *like* (philosophy, including logic, physics, metaphysics, mathematics, and ethics), *yike* (medicine), *fake* (secular law), *jiaoke* (canon law), and *daoike* (theology). The following comments are from the *Sikuquanshu zongmutiyao* (Abstract of the Four Treasures): “There are different levels in Western education system. Generally, if *wenke* is regarded as the first level, then *like* serves as the outline for it. In the context of Chinese traditional learning, *wenke* is analogous to *xiaoxue* (philological studies), while *like* is equivalent to *daxue* (great learning). *Yike*, *fake*, and *jiaoke* are all fields that are closely associated with specific skills and professions. *Daoike* in Western learning aims to explore the ultimate nature and the final fate. What the Western learning explores is based on the investigation of things and the probing the natural laws (*li*), mastering skills as functions (*gong*). This base-function order is like Confucian knowledge classification. However, the bases investigated and probed in the Western learning are small and trivial, and the probed laws are so fragmental and absurd that they cannot be reasonably explained. Thus, the Western learning is labelled as heterodox¹⁸. It is a sort of misunderstanding to regard *wenke* as *xiaoxue*, *like* as *daxue*, *yike*, *fake*, and *jiaoke* as skills and professions. It was also absurd to use Confucian theory of investigating things and probing natural laws to describe Western scientific and philosophic theories. Such description indicated that the scholar-officials of the day just mechanically apply Chinese learning to understand Western learning and that they did

¹⁸ *Sikuquanshu zongmutiyao*, Vol. 125, “Xixue fan”.

not treat Western learning as an independent academic system. In other words, their understanding of Western learning was still quite poor in theory.

The second aspect is to take a flippant and negative attitude toward Western knowledge of geography. *Zhifang waiji* (Notes on the Extraterritorial Geography) written by Giulio Aleni was an important geographical book and decried as “all records are of remote land, which are not recorded in ancient Chinese maps”. In this book, the world is divided into five continents, Asia, Europa, America, Africa, and Oceania. But the compilers of the *Sikuquanshu zongmutiyao* ignored its value in geographic values, and criticized that many bizarre and exaggerated records could not be verified, and merely recorded these exaggerated descriptions in order to broaden the scope of bizarre information.¹⁹ Such an attitude was obviously reckless toward the science.

In the *Sikuquanshu zongmutiyao*, the *Kunyu tushuo* (Illustrated Notes on the World) written by Ferdinand Verbiest was treated similarly. There are fifteen pieces of notes covering subjects from geography to historical figures in the first volume of the book. They are all about the creatures born on the earth. Mountains and rivers, distance between places, folk customs, and products overseas in five continents are recorded in the second volume. There are seven marvelous illustrations of the West oceans. However, the *Sikuquanshu zongmu* made a farfetched comparison between it and *Shenyi jing* (Classic of Deities and Spirits) and suspected that after Verbiest came to China, he read the *Shenyi jing*, imitated its styles and changed the contents. Therefore, the compilers considered that Verbiest’s records were not necessarily real. The compilers’ attitudes actually denied the academic value of this book. However, the compilers also admitted that some parts of this book were not false and it would be acceptable to widen the scope of bizarre information.²⁰

According to the *Sikuquanshu zongmutiyao*, all records of geography, customs, and properties of Western countries are considered “bizarre information”. Such a consideration reflects the self-centeredness of the intellectuals at that time and their lack of interest in the world outside China, let alone the intention and strength of conducting exploration

¹⁹ *Sikuquanshu zongmutiyao*, Vol. 72, “Zhifang waiji”.

²⁰ *Sikuquanshu zongmutiyao*, Vol. 72, “Kunyu tushuo”.

and innovation. Under such circumstances, it is difficult for Chinese and Western cultures to achieve a deeper exchange and convergence.

2 THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE WORLD

The understanding of the outside world in Ming and Qing China has long been regarded as extremely poor among previous scholars. Jonathan D. Spence (1936–2021) considers the intelligentsia was a locked circle and was not interested in the outside world in eighteenth-century China. “Chinese descriptions of foreign countries continued to contain an exotic blend of mystical tales and fantasy in which foreigners were often likened to animals or birds and were described in patronizing or deliberately belittling language”.²¹ Spence’s view seems reasonable but too simple. In the Ming and Qing dynasties, especially the Qing, the academic circle was not monolithic. People in different times had various views toward the world or countries based on their personal qualities and theoretical preferences. Generally, the eighteenth century was no doubt a transition period with contradictions which was in accordance with the situation of knowledge and academic views of the world.

In the Ming and Qing dynasties, the intellectuals discussed more about Catholicism which brought mathematical astronomy to China. Some intellectual elites in the late Ming and early Qing dynasties respected Catholicism or even converted to it. However, with the implementation of the special prohibition policy in the reign of emperors after the Kangxi reign, especially during the Yongzheng period, the criticism of Catholicism had been increased and any criticism even became unscrupulous. The sharp and profound cultural conflicts between China and the West were fully reflected by intellectuals’ analysis, comments, and attacks on Catholicism. Zhao Yi (1727–1814), an important scholar in the High Qing, had contacted missionaries and his understanding of Catholicism was deeper than other scholar-officials. In his article *Tianzhujiao* (Catholicism), Zhao Yi not only accurately described the geographical situation of the world and the location of China, but also analyzed the history of the emergence of Catholicism and its spread to China.

There are three points needed to be noticed in his article.

²¹ Jonathan D. Spence: *The Search for Modern China* p. 119, W.W. Norton & Company. New York, 1991.

Firstly, Zhao Yi recognized that Catholicism was one of the major religions in the world. He said that “the four great religions in the world, Confucianism, Buddhism, Islamism, and Catholicism, are all born in Asia, of which the Buddhism is the most widespread”.²² This updated the understanding of the coexistence of Confucianism, Buddhism, and Taoism, giving Catholicism a new place from the perspective of world culture. Since then, the statement that Catholicism was the main religion in the world had gradually become the consensus of the intellectuals in the Qing Dynasty. In the early Guangxu’s reign (1875–1908), Chen Qiyuan (1812–1882) stated in his book *Yongxianzhai biji* (Notes in Yongxian Studio) that according to Hanyu (768–824) “there was one religion in ancient China and three now”. From the time of Tang dynasty on, it experienced more than one thousand year. During the period, Islam and Catholicism appeared, and inside the Catholicism, Protestantism was created; Buddhism was divided into Red Sect and Yellow Sect”.²³ His statement can be said to be the development of the theory of the four major religions in the early Qing.

Secondly, Zhao Yi changed the traditional scholar-officials’ narrow mentality. He admitted that the international influence of Confucianism was less than that of Buddhism and of Catholicism. He said that “Confucianism is merely popularized in China, covering the sphere from Jiaozhi (present-day northern Vietnam) in the south, Ryukyu, Japan, and Korea in the east. It is the Buddhism that covers the widest land; The Catholicism covers less land, and the Confucianism and Islamism cover the least”.²⁴ His idea indicates that Chinese scholars-officials were coming out of arrogance and began to respect history and reality.

Thirdly, Zhao commented on the world’s major religions in a realistic manner; (It is not appropriate to admit now that Confucianism is a kind of religion, but in history, Confucianism was considered a religion). Nonetheless, in his comments, Zhao obviously believed China was the cultural center of the world. Zhao argued that “Confucius had gathered great achievements, established the extreme status of humanities, and completed the three cardinal guides and the five constant virtues. But

²² Zhao Yi, *Nianershi zhaji*, Vol. 35, “tianzhujiao”. Jiaqing Zhanyitang edition, 1800.

²³ Chen Qiyuan, *Yongxianzhai biji*, Vol. 10, “sanjiao zengwei wujiao”, Zhonghua Book Company, 1989.

²⁴ Zhao Yi, *Nianershi zhaji*, Vol. 35, “Tianzu jiao”.

his teaching was not as extensive as that of Buddhism and Catholicism, because Confucianism could only be transmitted and practiced in the clean and graceful areas of the central district, and the superficial religions could even be transmitted to and practiced by vulgar and barbarians in more extensive areas. The rituals, music, punishments, and administrations made by ancient emperors were created in terms of ethics and morality. The learning of Mind and Heart was not originally applied to common people. The way of Heaven is all-encompassing, so that it can be noticed by each person while there is no decoy to explore". Zhao Yi considered China as a clean and graceful area. He supported the thought that vulgar and barbarian people should be excluded from the learning of Mind and Heart, which justified the limitation of Confucianism's influence.²⁵ The contradictory nature of Zhao Yi's thinking is a vivid manifestation of the transformation among advanced intellectuals.

As far as European countries were concerned, Russia was the country about which Ming and Qing intellectuals had rich knowledge. Its location and living habits of people had been correctly recorded by the famous scholar-official Xie Jishi (1689–1756) in his *Xibei yuji: Eluosi* (Records of Northwest Territories). Zhao Yi examined its territory and clearly pointed out, Russia was an independent state, not a vassal state of the Qing dynasty. He said in his book *Yanpu zhaji* (Notes from the Yanpu Studio) that the courts between Russia and China had not established direct diplomatic relations and that "it had female rulers in all dynasties, called Chahan Khan". He mentioned that "I have heard recently the rulership has been changed from a female to a male".²⁶ That refers to the death of Queen Catherine II of Russia in 1796 and the throne was succeeded by his son. According to He Qiutao (1824–1862)'s research *Yanpu zhaji* was finished in 1810, when Zhao Yi was staying at home in unemployment. But he could obtain the most updated information of the political changes in Russia, which demonstrates that the literati kept an eye on the situation of the outside world, rather than just keeping ignorance as some scholars argue.

Among the books published in Ming and Qing China, the *Haiguo wenjianlu* (Records of Coastal States) by Chen Lunjiong (1684–1747)

²⁵ Zhao Yi, *Nianershi zhaji*, Vol. 35, "Tianzhu jiao".

²⁶ Zhao Yi, *Yanpu zhaji*, Vol. 1, "Eluosi".

and the *Hailu* (Records of the Sea), dictated by Xie Qinggao (1765–1821) and compiled by Yang Bingnan, are the two outstanding books since they comprehensively reflected the understanding of the world among Chinese people in that time.

Haiguo wenjianlu was based on author's personal experience. It is a comprehensive record about contemporary major countries and regions in Eurasia. Some of the records are quite accurate. Since Chen lunjiong had been to Japan, he could make accurate record of Japanese geography, climate, local customs and practices, which reflected the highest level of knowledge about Eurasia and North Africa among Chinese intellectuals in the eighteenth century.

There are three points that need to be emphasized in the *Haiguo wenjianlu* from the global perspective.

Firstly, the author gave full notice about the differences in navigation technology between China and Europe.

Secondly, the author paid attention to the living conditions of overseas Chinese.

Thirdly, the author maintained high vigilance against possible aggression by the Western colonial powers. Some cases of occupation of Southeast Asia by Western colonial robbers and the resistance of local people had been recorded. In the chapter called *Dongnan yangji* (Record of Southeast Sea) it says that the local people called *Mashen fan* were cunning in nature. The red-haired aliens (Western colonists) once occupied the port and tried to rule their land. The local people were afraid of artillery and did not dare to fight attack. They instead hid in mountains. They poisoned the river from its upstream. The aggressors suffered the poison and left".²⁷ Chen Lunjiong said that "the western people are tall and ingenious. They are good at all productions, proficient in artillery, and meticulous in astronomy and geography".²⁸ Based on the cognition of the West, Chen attached great importance to strengthening coastal defense. He argued that "the Protection of the Guangdong province relies on the Humen on the left and Xiangshan on the right. The role of Xiangshan county seems to protect Shunde county and Xinhui counties, but its core importance is key to was the provincial capital. It contributes to catch

²⁷ Chen lunjiong, *Haiguo wenjian lu*, Vol. *shang*, "Dongnanyang ji".

²⁸ Chen lunjiong, *Haiguo wenjian lu*, Vol. *shang*, "Dongnanyang ji".

bandits in the outer seas and thieves in the inland rivers. More importantly, it shares the territory of Macau and guards against foreign ships so that Xiangshan and Humen can be regarded as the two horns of a horn that can be protected mutually. So, how could it be looked down on”.²⁹

Hailu was written in the Jiaqing’s reign (1796–1820). Xie Qinggao was a native of Jinpan pu village, Jiaying department, Guangdong province. He was bright when he was young. On his route to Hainan with businessmen to conduct commercial selling on the sea, they suffered storms and were saved by foreign ships. Then, he turned to follow them. Every year, he traveled through the countries in the sea and studied foreign languages, remembered the locations of the islands, pass, customs, and products along the route. Fourteen years later, he returned to Guangdong. His experience was very rare in his times.³⁰ He became “blind later and stayed in Macau and made a living by interpretation”. About 1820, Xie met Yang Bingnan in Macau, who also came from Jiaying. Yang asked him to record his personal experiences which resulted in the book *Hailu*.

The distinctive feature of *Hailu* is that it is based on the author’s personal experiences, so it describes the situation in the outside world in detail. As for England, it says that the people “are eager for success and profit from marine trade. They fight for any lands in the sea and their trade is all over the world. It took Bangla, Madras, and Mumbai as colonist districts”. It also says that although “the country is small, its troops are strong and with a number more than 100,000. The overseas countries are all afraid of it”.³¹ As for Holland, it says, “the king has died without any male heirs. And all the bureaucrats supported the king’s daughter to be the queen. Henceforth the incumbent queen’s daughters will be her successors”.³² As for France, it says, “the people are sincere and scheming. Their clocks and watches are the best in all countries. The wine is also excellent. The customs and local products are similar to the Portugal’s. They are also Catholic”.³³ As for the United States, the relation between it and the United Kingdom was noticed. Xie Qinggao also mentions the development of science, technology, and industry, saying

²⁹ Chen lunjiong, *Haiguo wenjian lu*, Vol. *shang*, “Tanxia yanhai xingshilu”.

³⁰ Xie Qinggao and Yang Bingnan, *Hailu jiaoshi*, p. 329, Commercial Press, 2002.

³¹ Xie Qinggao and Yang Bingnan, *Hailu jiaoshi*, p. 250.

³² Xie Qinggao and Yang Bingnan, *Hailu jiaoshi*, p. 220.

³³ Xie Qinggao and Yang Bingnan, *Hailu jiaoshi*, p. 217.

that the country of the States “was originally enfeoffed by England, but now it is an independent country”. “Steam boats are used to travel in and out of the country. There are axles both the inside and outside of the boat, and a brazier is placed in the middle. The fire powders the wheel, enabling the boat to move on its own, so there is no need to rely on manpower. The area from the Portugal to the United States is called the Atlantic Ocean. They preferred diabolic tricks and wicked craft and relied on marine trade for living”.³⁴

Due to the limitation of knowledge structure and objective conditions, Xie could not make accurate record nor deep investigation. But it was very outstanding in the description of the world in the early Qing dynasty. So, it attracted eyesight in modern times. It is not an exaggeration to say that Xie Qinggao was the forerunner of the Qing dynasty to look at the world.

3 THE INFLUENCE OF WESTERN MATERIAL CIVILIZATION

During the Ming and Qing dynasties, the introduction and application of Western artifacts directly affected the lifestyle and governance of Chinese society.

If we ask which artifact imported from the West had the greatest impact on Chinese society during cultural exchanges between China and the West before the Opium War, the answer, undoubtedly, would be the introduction of firearms. Gunpowder and firearms were invented by China and introduced to Europe in the thirteenth to fourteenth centuries. After introduction, they were rapidly spread and improved in the Europe. In the sixteenth century, with the invention of a series of advanced firearms such as bronze mortars and cannons, China greatly fell behind the West in firearm manufacturing technology. After European missionaries came to China, the connection between the East and the West strengthened, resulting in importation of some Western firearms and manufacturing techniques to China gradually.

In the Ming and Qing dynasties, Western firearms were introduced into China. They were mainly artillery and muskets.

Artillery mainly referred to Folangji cannon and Hongyi cannon. Folangji cannon, also known as the “Great General”, got its name from

³⁴ Xie Qinggao and Yang Bingnan, *Hailu jiaoshi*, p. 264.

being introduced by Frank (now Portugal). It was the most advanced artillery in the world at that time.

Artillery imported from Europe played an important role in the military equipment in the Ming and Qing dynasties. At that time, people said: “in defending against the enemy, we have artillery, guns, spears, fired arrows, bows and arrows. If their onslaught is fierce, we have the Great General to attack”.³⁵

Muskets were also introduced from Europe. They were also known as “bird guns”. They played an important role in the military equipment of Qing dynasty and were provided for crack troops. There was a saying that “the Qing dynasty used the bow and arrow to pacify the realm. They relied on firearms to show deterrence and to conquer fortress. Therefore, there is Firearms Brigade in the Capital camps. Troops in the provinces were often ordered to use artillery and guns”.³⁶

The manufacture of firearms in the Ming and Qing dynasties was mainly benefited from missionaries. Johann Adam Schall von Bell (1592–1666) once helped the Ming court to make artillery. Sometimes, eunuchs also learned from him. At that time, he made cannon capable of firing 40-pound shells. He once hosted over the manufacture of hundreds of small cannons. However, due to the corruption of the Ming army, the power of these weapons was not fully utilized.

The Qing dynasty always attached great importance to firearms. Before entering the Shanhaiguan Pass in 1644, the Qing forces had fully used firearms and learned related casting techniques. Because firearms played an important role in the founding and burgeoning stage of the Qing dynasty, they gradually became the “key weapon of victory” that was highly valued by the court. The princes of the Qing dynasty had to practice firearms since childhood. Emperor Qianlong (1711–1799, r.1736–1795) said: “when I was twelve, I learned how to fire a gun which was bestowed by my father (Emperor Yongzheng). From then on, I did not miss any deer in shooting during the autumn hunting. The gun was definitely the magic tool”.³⁷ This indicates that learning how to shoot weapons and ride horses became an important part of the prince’s martial arts.

³⁵ Sun Chengze, *Chunming mengyulu*, Vol. 31, “Rong zhengfu”.

³⁶ *Qingshi gao*, Vol. 140, “Bingzhi”, No. 11.

³⁷ *Qinggaozong Yuzhi Shiwenzhi*, ji. 5, Vol. 76. “Ti jiuzhun shenqiang”.

Western medical knowledge, including red wine, was also brought into China by missionaries. Emperor Kangxi once benefited from the red wine when he felt unwell in his heart. The wine effectively recuperated his physical and mental health. Father Père Francois Xavier d'Entrecolles (1664–1741) said:

God was full of confidence, and for the good of Christianity, He may have arranged this opportunity to make the emperor like us more in our difficult times, and so blessed the medicine that the Brother Bernard Rhodes (?-1715) healed the emperor. Rhodes concocted rouge red wine for the emperor to take, which firstly stopped his severe palpitations that most disturbed him; then he advised the emperor to drink the wine from the Canary Islands. For Mass, this wine was sent from Manila to the missionaries every year, who casted an eye on it and presented it to the emperor. It didn't take long for the emperor to regain his strength and now he is in good health.

Emperor Kangxi was very interested in Western medicine, as the missionary recorded: “For two years, the emperor paid great attention to the study of European medicine, especially the powders distributed by the King of France to the poor throughout the country. We told him all the diseases cured in France by these powders. Through many experiments and observations, he saw that the curative effect of these powders is really miraculous and efficient”.³⁸ When Emperor Kangxi, had a high fever, he took cinchona every day, and “his condition improved day by day”. According to missionary records, Emperor Kangxi “publicly announced that Father Jean-François Gerbillon (1654–1707) and Father Joachim Bouvet’s (1656–1730) medicinal powder saved his life, and that the cinchona that I [Father Jean de Fontaney (1643–1710)] and Father Claude de Visdelou brought to him helped him to get rid of his fever. He promises us a substantial reward”.³⁹

Many literary works also reflected that was used to treat diseases among the upper classes. In chapter 52 of the *Honglou meng* (Dream of Red Mansions), it is described that: Qingwen was ill, and Baoyu suggested that “you can try Western medicine to cure your illness, which I guess

³⁸ DuHede [Jean Baptiste du Halde], *Yesuhuishi zhongguo shujianji*, cc. 2, Translated by Zheng Dedi pp. 288–290. Daxiang chubanshe, 2001.

³⁹ Duhe De [Jean Baptiste du Halde], *Yesuhuishi zhongguo shujianji*, cc. 1, Translated by Zheng Dedi et al., p. 290. Daxiang chubanshe, 2001.

you will get well". As a result, she used "a Western plaster for headache, called 'yifu na'".⁴⁰ Obviously, some Western medicines entered the daily life of aristocratic families during that period.

During the Ming and Qing dynasties, many Western scientific and technological instruments were well-made, ingeniously constructed, fabulous and dazzling. Some were practical, and some were quite entertaining. From the emperor, aristocracies, to the ordinary officials, Western artifacts became a popular fashion in China's elite society. At the end of the eighteenth century, drawing upon the information provided by two Chinese who were proficient in Western learning, the Deputy Envoy of the Macartney mission, George Stanton (1737–1801), described the pursuit of Western objects by the Chinese upper class at that time:

Extraordinary pieces of ingenious and complicated mechanism, set in frames of precious metal studded with jewels, and producing, by the means of internal springs and wheels, movements apparently spontaneous, had, often, borne excessive prices. They were, indeed, of no sort of use; but the imagination of the governing mandarins had been struck by them; and an intimation often followed to the native merchants to produce them, no matter at what price...Toys of this kind, or sing-songs, according to the corrupt jargon of Canton, to the enormous value of, at least, a million of pounds sterling, were, in this manner, introduced by private traders into China. Most of these expensive articles found their way, finally, into the palaces of the Emperor, and his ministers.

Astronomy being a science peculiarly esteemed in China, and deemed worthy of the attention and occupation of the government, the latest and most improved instruments for assisting its operations, as well as the most perfect imitation that had yet been made of the celestial movements, could scarcely fail of being acceptable. Specimens of the best British manufactures, and all the late inventions for adding to the conveniences and comforts of social life, might answer the double purpose of gratifying those to whom they were to be presented, and of exciting a more general demand for the purchase of similar articles.⁴¹

⁴⁰ Cao Xueqin, *Honglou meng*, Chapter 52.

⁴¹ George Staunton, *An authentic account of an embassy from the King of Great Britain to the Emperor of China*, printed for G. Nicol, Bookseller to his Majesty, Pall-Mall (London), 1797, pp. 47–49.

Some records of people at the time also vividly reflect the spread of Western utensils in China. For instance, a scholar Ling Tingkan (1757–1809) told Ruan Yuan: In Yangzhou, “latest clocks, water guns, snuff, hookah, as well as the foreign lanterns and air guns made by English, which were not seen in ancient times, all can be found in Yangzhou now”.⁴² There are a lot of descriptions of Western objects in *Dream of Red Mansions*, such as clocks, medicines, clothes. In chapter 42 describing the furnishings of Baoyu’s bedroom, the author specifically mentions that there is a Western mechanism on the mirror, “by which it could be opened or closed”. “Grannie Liu, has accidentally touched the spring which has made the mirror slide back into the paneling, revealing the doorway underneath”.⁴³ One sequel to *Dream of Red Mansions* written at the end of the eighteenth century contained records of Western objects like microscopes. Apart from that, another sequel also included descriptions of luxury goods such as the Western glazed couches. It can be concluded that in literary works, Western utensils had become an important element in describing the furnishings of upper-class families.

As for the literati’s notes in that period, more records of Western objects can be found. For example, in *Chayu kehua* (Collected Chats from Guest) Ruan Kuisheng (1727–1789) introduced not only astronomical knowledge such as the Spherical Earth theory, but also the manufacturing methods of mechanical devices, such as chime clocks and chronographs.⁴⁴ In *Lüanyuan Conghua* (Collected Chats from Lü Garden), Qian Yong (1759–1844) recorded the dissemination of clocks and astronomical instruments. He wrote that: “Chime clocks are all from the West. They entered China during the Kangxi period of this dynasty, and today they are commonly used by scholars-officials”. “Recently, the craftsmen in Caton, Nanjing, and Suzhou also have abilities to produce, however their products lag behind the exports from the West evidently”.⁴⁵

Clocks and watches became an important tool for the dignitaries to keep track of the time, especially the Qing officials who needed to know the time in order to go to the court. People at that time recorded: “clocks and watches need to be repaired frequently, otherwise the clockwork

⁴² Ling Tingkan, *Jiaolitang wenji*, Vol. 23.

⁴³ Cao Xueqin, *Honglou meng*, Chapter 42.

⁴⁴ Ruan Kuisheng, *Chayu kehua*, Vol. 13, “Zimingzhong”, “Shichen biao”.

⁴⁵ Qian Yong, *Lüyuan congua*, Vol. 12, “Tongjiang”.

inside might be loose or tight, leading to slight differences in showing the time... There are clocks and watches in room of Duke Fuheng (1722–1770), and even his retainers all have watches. Different watches and clocks can confirm time each other. Thus, it is convenient for them to keep the time”.⁴⁶

During the Ming and Qing dynasties, glasses imported from the West were popular among intellectual elites. The emperors of the Qing dynasty once bestowed glasses to their ministers to show imperial favor. For example, Emperor Yongzheng (1678–1735, r.1723–1735) once gave glasses to the Governor Chen Shixia’s (?–1738) mother. Chen memorialized to the emperor that: “the gratitude of my mother and I is beyond words”.⁴⁷ Emperor Qianlong wrote many poems about glasses. The poem *Glasses* written in 1781 read: “Glasses are not seen in ancient times, and they come through the path of foreign ships. At first, they were rare in our country, now they are a strong trend; The glass lens is too dry, while the nature of the crystal ones is warm. If people’s eyes are dim, they can get the bright light by wearing the glasses. Elder people count on glasses, just like they need a desk while reading; Nowadays people in their forties and fifties usually wear glasses, I used to doubt if they were necessities. But now I know you can’t take them off once you put them on, otherwise you can’t see anything”.⁴⁸ It vividly reflects the understanding and use of glasses by the Qing people.

Some intellectuals were deeply impressed by their interactions with missionaries, especially after visiting scientific and technological equipment from the West and began to admit China’s shortcomings and then to refresh their concepts of knowledge. For example, Zhao Yi was quite interested in Western artifacts. He visited the Catholic church near the Xuanwu Gate in the Capital, carefully inspected its architectural structure, decorations, and furnishings, and recorded in detail the production and function of the telescope and musical instruments.⁴⁹ Zhao Yi pointed out: “chime clock and chronographs are all from the West, and the watch has needles to point to the time marks. They are all unique skills”.⁵⁰

⁴⁶ Zhao Yi, *Yanpu zhaji*, Vol. 2, “Zhongbiao”.

⁴⁷ Shizong xianhuangdi zhupi yuzhi, Vol. 11, “Zhupi chenshixia zouzhe”.

⁴⁸ *Baxun wanshou shengdian*, Vol. 10, “yuzh yanjing”.

⁴⁹ Zhao Yi, *Yanpu zhaji*, Vol. 2, “Xiyang qianlijing ji yueqi”.

⁵⁰ Zhao Yi, *Yanpu zhaji*, Vol. 2, “Zhongbiao”.

He continued to state that, “Given such a big world, there should be many great sages who have made the pioneering achievement everywhere, not just Fuxi, Xuanyuan, YouChao, and Suiren”.⁵¹ This is a bold challenge to the traditional Sinocentrism, especially the theory of “Chinese origin of Western learning”. It is apparent to see from here the gradual penetration from the material level to the institutional and spiritual level, which is the normal process of intercultural exchanges.

What is intriguing is that the Western objects introduced into China during the Ming and Qing dynasties were mainly daily necessities, especially luxury goods, rather than advanced technologies and production tools that were really important to promote social progress. New inventions during the Industrial Revolution: New spinning machines, steam engines, miner’s lamps, etc., were not brought to China at that time. As for Western products, because they were mainly consumables and luxury goods which were expensive, their use was mainly limited to the nobles and elites. For ordinary people (especially those in remote areas of the inland), these products were not useful in practice.

If we need to offer a general characterization to the history of cultural exchanges between China and the West from the sixteenth to the mid-nineteenth century, it can be concluded that they were the large-scale and in-depth cultural exchanges between the two in history. Regardless of their achievements or deficiencies, the changes profoundly have influenced on the historical process of Sino-foreign relations for hundreds of years thereafter.

Concerning the perspective of China, the results of these cultural exchanges (not all positive) are mainly manifested in three aspects:

First, a new and stable religious organization has appeared in China: Catholicism. At that time, not only many ordinary people but also some bureaucrats and scholars became devout Catholics. Catholicism gained particularly rapid development between years from Wanli to Kangxi’s. As senior officials, such as Xu Guangqi, were baptized, Catholicism became a powerful force that played an important role in social life, especially in the cultural aspect.

Second, the scientific knowledge and cultural knowledge brought by the Western missionaries were highly valued by Chinese intellectuals; the knowledge not only broadened their eyesight but also updated and

⁵¹ Zhao Yi, *Yanpu zhaji*, Vol. 2, “Zhongbiao”.

enriched the traditional Chinese knowledge system. The knowledge also became new elements of Chinese early modernization.

Third, Western merchant ships and artifacts brought by Western missionaries and merchant ships had profound impacts on the political and military affairs of the Ming and Qing dynasties, as well as the everyday life of the nobility, scholars, and urban residents, especially those living in coastal areas.

Since then, a continuous and virtually uninterrupted process of the interaction between China and Western countries has begun. This interactive process had made sufficient preliminary preparations for the all-around social reform after the Opium War and left profound effects on the future direction of social transformations.

What needs to be emphasized is that neither Western merchant ships nor missionaries can bring modernization to China. Thus the importance of cultural exchanges between China and Europe before the nineteenth century should not be overestimated. The Jesuits were not the representatives of advanced science and culture in Europe at that time. What they brought to China was mainly Catholic doctrines, rather than the modern Western institutions. In fact, none of the achievements carrying real modern meaning in Europe and America during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries was introduced to China by Jesuits. These achievements included, but not limited to, Enlightenment thoughts, the steam engine, and the Declaration of Human Rights. Even if the Jesuits did bring modern knowledge from the West to China, it might not lead to any effect of modernization. For the Chinese officials and people at that time, learning from the West was not an urgent task of the time.

In short, there are dual characteristics in the cultural exchanges between China and the West during the Ming and Qing dynasties clearly have a duality. On the one hand, it is the first large-scale and in-depth wave of the cultural exchanges between China and Europe in history. These changes opened a new era for Chinese people to understand the world outside and learn advanced knowledge of science and technology, which injects rich, vibrant, and up-to-date historical connotations the current Belt and Road agenda. On the other hand, there were obvious limitations to this cultural exchange trend in history. The coexistence of communication and isolation, as well as progress and backwardness, was not only the important feature of the early connections between China and the West during the Ming and Qing dynasties, but also the general norm for different cultures to start to contact and dialogue with each

other. In this regard, it is not necessary for us to be harsh on historical participants. In historical research, the most important task is not to reproach the ancients, but to disclose the obscured nature of the time beneath cultural exchanges, because this is an important premise for accurately understanding China and the world during the Ming and Qing dynasties, and exploring the development path of Chinese history over the past 300 years.

Up to now, the exchanges and interactions between China and the Western world remain fraught with uncertainties and in numerous aspects, are in a state of exploration and adjustment in many perspectives. We need to keep calm to observe a series of essential issues and those concerning regarding the overall situation.

The only thing we can ascertain is that history is not terminated. Civilizations still need conversations.

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The “Belt and Road Initiative” and Intercultural Dialogue

Bart Dessein

Those who see only with their own eyes do not see clearly,
Those who think they are always right are likely to make errors in
judgment.

(Laozi, *Daodejing*, Chapter 24)¹

¹ Laozi 老子, *Daodejing* 道德經 (*The Way and Its Power*), Zhongguo zhexueshu dianzihua jihua 中國哲學書電子化計劃, <https://ctext.org/dao-de-jing/zh>. (Last accessed on 8 May 2021)

Having studied Classical and Modern Chinese, Japanese, and Sanskrit at Ghent University, Prof. Dr. Bart Dessein obtained MA from Ghent University in 1987 with a dissertation entitled “Nāgārjuna’s Traktaat van de Twaalf Poorten (Dvādaśamukhaśāstra, T.Vol. 30, Nr. 1568)” (Nāgārjuna’s Twelve Gates Treatise (*Dvādaśamukhaśāstra*, T.Vol. 30, Nr. 1568)). After 2 years of study at Liaoning University, Shenyang, People’s Republic of China, funded by a scholarship of the Flemish Community (1987–1989), Prof. Dr. Bart Dessein returned to Ghent University where, in 1990, he obtained the Qualification Degree for Teaching in Oriental Philology. In 1991, he became researcher with the Belgian National

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1 INTRODUCTION

The importance the historical Silk Roads have had in connecting Asia with the rest of the world was, in contemporary times, perhaps first mentioned by then Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton in a speech she delivered on 20 July 2011 in the Indian city of Chennai. In this speech, she shared her vision of a new Silk Road, “Linking markets in South and Central Asia, with Afghanistan at its heart”.² She stated:

Historically, the nations of South and Central Asia were connected to each other and the rest of the continent by a sprawling trading network called the Silk Road. Indian merchants used to trade spices, gems, and textiles, along with ideas and culture, everywhere from the Great Wall of China to the banks of the Bosphorus. Let’s work together to create a new Silk Road. Not a thoroughfare like its namesake, but an international web and network of economic and transit connections. That means building more rail lines, highways, energy infrastructure, like the proposed pipeline to run from Turkmenistan, through Afghanistan, through Pakistan into India.³

On 22 September 2011, on the occasion of the “New Silk Road Ministerial Meeting” in the German House in New York City, she partly repeated these words in the presence of Minister Zalmay Rassoul, Foreign Minister of Afghanistan from January 2010 to October 2013:

Funds for Scientific Research (FWO). As a researcher, he obtained Ph.D. in Oriental Languages and Cultures with a dissertation entitled “Allerlei betreffende de Kern der Scholastiek (*Samyuktābhidharmahṛdayaśāstra*—T.Vol. 28, Nr. 1552)” (1994). The English version of this dissertation was published in 1999 with Motilal Banarsidass in Delhi. Equally in 1994, Prof. Dr. Bart Dessein became assistant at the Department of Languages and Cultures of South and East-Asia at Ghent University. In 1999, he was appointed associate professor at the same department. Prof. Dr. Bart Dessein is also a member of the Belgian Association for the Study of Religions (Babel).

² U.S. Department of State, Secretary Clinton co-chairs the New Silk Road Ministerial Meeting. *Dipnote bloggers*, U.S. Department of State Official Blogs, September. <http://2007-2017-blogs.state.gov/stories/2011/09/23/secretary-clinton-co-chairs-new-silk-road-ministerial-meeting.html> (last accessed on 8 May 2021).

³ U.S. Department of State, Travel Diary: India and the United States—A Vision for the 21st Century. July 20, 2011, <https://2009-2017.state.gov/secretary/20092013clinton/rm/2011/07/168840.htm> (last accessed on 8 May 2021).

For centuries, the nations of South and Central Asia were connected to each other and the rest of the continent by a sprawling trading network called the Silk Road. Afghanistan’s bustling markets sat at the heart of this network. Afghan merchants traded their goods from the court of the Pharaohs to the Great Wall of China.⁴

In the speech “Promote Friendship Between Our People and Work Together to Build a Bright Future” he held on 7 September 2013 at the Nazarbayev University in Astana (now Nur-Sultan), Kazakhstan, and in which he announced the “One Belt One Road” (OBOR; *Yi dai yi lu*) initiative, also Chinese State President Xi Jinping observed that “the world is going through faster economic integration and regional cooperation is booming”, and he stipulated five steps “to forge closer economic ties, deepen cooperation and expand development space in the Eurasian region”: stepping up policy communication, improving road connectivity, promoting unimpeded trade, enhancing monetary circulation, and increasing understanding between the people. The last of these five steps, so he stated, “holds the key to good relations between states”.⁵ It is to this “understanding between the people” that this contribution is devoted.

2 CHINA’S DISCOVERY OF THE WORLD, AND CHANGING IDENTITIES

China’s first direct knowledge of the outside world dates back to the Han dynasty’s (206 BCE–220 CE) famous envoy Zhang Qian (‘date of birth unknown’–114) who journeyed to Daxia (Bactria) with the aim to forge a military alliance against the Xiongnu who threatened the Han empire on its northern border.⁶ Although his mission was not successful, his

⁴ Clinton, Hillary Rodham. 2011. *Remarks at the New Silk Road Ministerial Meeting*. 22 September 2011. <https://2009-2017.state.gov/secretary/20092013clinton/rm/2011/09/173807.htm#:~:text=For%20centuries%2C%20the%20nations%20of,network%20called%20the%20Silk%20Road>. (last accessed on 8 May 2021).

⁵ Xi, Jinping. 2013. Promote Friendship Between Our People and Work Together to Build a Bright Future”. https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/wjdt_665385/zyjh_665391/t1078088.shtml. (Last accessed on 3 April 2021).

⁶ This journey is recorded in the 123rd chapter of the *Historical Records (Shiji)*, attributed to the famous historian Sima Qian (ca.145–ca.86 BCE). For a description of Zhang Qian’s mission: see Yü, Ying-shih. 1986. Han foreign relations. In *The Cambridge*

reports in which he described the possibility of acquiring luxury goods for China's enrichment, of expanding Han territory, and of increasing imperial prestige importantly ameliorated Han China's appreciation of the non-Chinese world.⁷ In the wake of Zhang Qian's mission, envoys of Bactria, Ferghana (an area spread over contemporary eastern Uzbekistan, southern Kyrgyzstan, and northern Tajikistan), Parthia (contemporary northeastern Iran), and Scythia (the Eurasian steppes) all sent envoys to the Chinese court. These diplomatic missions were soon followed by merchants bringing produce from Central Asia to China. The resulting trade between the "western regions" (*xi yu*) and China is at the basis of what later became known as the Silk Road (*sichou zhi lu*)—actually a net of roads connecting the then Chinese capital Chang'an (contemporary Xi'an) with Central Asia and further westward, via the oasis states in the Taklimakan Desert.⁸ It is also during the Han dynasty that Buddhist monks from Central Asia first traversed the silk roads⁹ and arrived in China. By the Tang dynasty (618–907), Indian and Central Asian Buddhism had become profoundly sinicized, and a number of Chinese Buddhist schools had developed.¹⁰ Through Central Asia as transit area, the religious scene of Tang dynasty China was further supplemented with the entry of Nestorian Christianity, Manicheism, Zoroastrianism, and Islam. In this way, a political, economic, and cultural connection—eventually linking up China with India via Central Asia and with the lands further to the west—was forged.¹¹ In this process, China was as much

History of China. Volume 1. The Ch'in and Han Empires 221 B.C.–A.D. 220, edited by Denis Twitchett and Michael Loewe, 377–462. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p. 407.

⁷ Hulswé, Anthony. 1979. *China in Central Asia, the early stage: 125 BC–AD 23. An annotated translation of chapters 61 and 96 of the history of the former Han Dynasty*. Leiden: Brill, p. 41.

⁸ The term "Silk Road" (Seidenstrasse) was coined only in 1877 by Paul Wilhem Ferdinand Freiherr von Richthofen, a Prussian adventurer, geologist, and geographer.

⁹ Ch'en, Kenneth. 1964. *Buddhism in China. A Historical Survey*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, pp. 32–33.

¹⁰ Zürcher, Erik. [1959] 1972. *The Buddhist Conquest of China. The Spread and Adaptation of Buddhism in Early Medieval China*. 2 vols. Leiden: E. J. Brill.

¹¹ Twitchett, Denis. 1976. Introduction. In *The Cambridge History of China. Volume 3. Sui and T'ang China, 589–906, Part I*, edited by Denis Twitchett, 1–47. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p. 34. For Nestorianism: see Hopkirk, Peter. [1987] 1991. *Barbaren langs de zijderoute. Op zoek naar de verloren steden en schatten van Chinees*

influenced by other cultures as it influenced other cultures itself. That is to say that “Chinese identity” was not a fixed, natural state of being, but an evolutionary process. Historical records testify of how this changing identity influenced the way “the others” were perceived.

During the (Northern) Song dynasty (960–1127), defense against the Mongols who threatened the Chinese empire from the north preoccupied the Chinese political elite to the extent that, compared to what had been the case in previous dynasties, less attention could be devoted to restraining the merchant class—the traditional potential political adversary of the Confucian elite. Especially after the (Northern) Song was, in 1127, forced south (where it, continued as Southern Song), the absence of effective political control over the traditionally reviled merchant class led to their important growth. During this period, merchants traded, among others, from the coastal cities of East and South China. This pivot to the oceans changed China’s exclusive terrestrial orientation (the practical result of the unremitting threat at the northern borders of the country) to also being a maritime country. When the Mongols defeated the Southern Song and integrated “China” as Yuan dynasty (1279–1368) in their Mongolian empire, this was the first truly non-Chinese rule of a unified empire which importantly added to the multicultural nature of the Chinese empire.

China’s multiculturalism is also evidenced by the Muslim eunuch Zheng He’s (1371–1433) famous sea voyages in the Ming dynasty (1368–1644) that, between 1405 and 1433, took him to India, Hormuz, and to the east coast of Africa.¹² These were the first direct contacts of

Centraal-Azië. Baarn: Hollandia (Dutch translation of *Foreign Devils on the Silk Road*. London: John Murray, 1980), p. 45; for Manichaeism: see Lieu, S. N. C. 1992. *Manichaeism in the Later Roman Empire and Medieval China*. Tübingen: Mohr, pp. 297–298; for Zoroastrianism (or Mazdeism): see Forte, Antonino. 1999–2000. Iranians in China. Buddhism. Zoroastrianism, and Bureaus of Commerce. *Cahiers d’Extrême-Asie* 11: 277–290; for Islam: see Lipman, Jonathan Newman. 1997. *Familiar Strangers, a history of Muslims in Northwest China*. Seattle: University of Washington Press, p. 25; For the Islamization of Central Asia: see Lewis, Mark Edward. 2009. *China’s Cosmopolitan Empire. The Tang Dynasty*. Cambridge MA and London: Harvard University Press, pp. 146–147.

¹² Filesi, Teobaldo. 1962. *China and Africa in the Middle Ages*, London: Frank Cass (translated by David L. Morison), pp. 52–55; For a possible tenth century presence of Chinese on the east coast of Africa: see Levathes, Louise. 1994. *When China Ruled The Seas. The Treasure Fleet of the Dragon Throne, 1405–1433*, New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 200–201; Mote, Frederick W. 1999. *Imperial China 900–1800*, Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, p. 615.

the Chinese with the Arab world after a period in which they had gained knowledge of that region only indirectly through Persian and Arab traders who had dominated international commerce up to that moment.¹³ While for the Africans, the arrival of Zheng He could have been seen as a “state visit” by the leaders of that country the merchandise of which they already were acquainted with through the Arab trade, it is, for a correct understanding of the nature of Zheng He’s voyages, important to notice that, as David H. Shinn and Joshua Eisenman have remarked, the Chinese Confucian elite did not regard their interaction with Africa as “trade”—an economic activity that was only regarded with disrespect by them.¹⁴ Phrased differently, Zheng He’s voyages were in line with Confucian thinking and had to symbolize the regained international stature of the unified Ming empire.¹⁵ This means that the Chinese political elite saw the “merchandise” that was brought back to them from far away countries as “tribute”.¹⁶ The highly symbolic value of the voyages is indeed visible from the nature of what Zheng He’s crew took home with them from the African countries they visited: while the Chinese bestowed the countries they visited on these voyages with luxury goods such as silk and porcelain, the Chinese brought back to China animals such as giraffes, zebras, lions, tigers, rhinoceroses, and ostriches. The Confucian nature of the voyages can also be deduced from the fact that the emperor is reported to have richly rewarded all officers who took part in Zheng He’s fifth voyage upon their return to China on 15 July 1419, and to have received the foreign ambassadors at the court on 8 August 1419. The unicorn (*qilin*) that

¹³ Levathes, Louise. 1994. *When China Ruled The Seas. The Treasure Fleet of the Dragon Throne, 1405–1433*, New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, p. 37.

¹⁴ Shinn, David Hamilton and Joshua Eisenman. 2012. *China and Africa: a century of engagement*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, p. 18.

¹⁵ Mote, Frederick W. 1999. *Imperial China 900–1800*, Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, p. 613; Brook, Timothy. 2010. *The Troubled Empire, China in the Yuan and Ming Dynasties*. Cambridge MA and London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, p. 94.

¹⁶ Langlois, John D. 1988. The Hung-wu reign, 1368–1398. In *The Cambridge History of China: Vol. 7: The Ming Dynasty, 1368–1644, Part I*, edited by Frederick W. Mote and Denis Twitchett, 107–181. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 168–169; Ropp, Paul, S. 2010. *China in World History*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, p. 89; Torck, Mathieu. 2009. *Avoiding the Dire Straits: An Inquiry into Food Provisions and Scurvy in the Maritime and Military History of China and wider East Asia*, East Asian Maritime History 5. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, p. 154.

was brought along from Aden on this voyage further inspired Jin Youzi (1368–1431) to—in a Confucian interpretation—attribute the arriving of so many auspicious signs, one after another, as only possible “through the perfect virtue of the emperor”.¹⁷

Upon the death of Zheng He in 1433, the Xuande Emperor (reigned 1425–1435) gave in to the complaints of the literati at the imperial court that these voyages were far too expensive, and he discontinued the voyages. Assessing the impact of this discontinuation, Paul Musgrave and Daniel H. Nexon claim that “the end of the expeditions serves as a marker for the Ming Dynasty’s inward turn, supposedly causing China’s eventual ‘century of humiliation’ at the hands of more adventuresome western powers”.¹⁸ This connection to the “century of humiliation” (*bai nian guo chi*) is important for the resurgence of Zheng He in the contemporary narratives on the Belt and Road Initiative (*Yi dai yi lu changyi*; BRI).

3 BORDERS AND LIMITS OF CULTURE

The above examples of China’s “discovery of the world” during the country’s long imperial period, are illustrative of the porosity of cultural boundaries and the incentives for constant cultural renewal this porosity brings about. This not only applies to China’s western borders that were cut by the Silk Roads and the accessibility of Chinese territory over the seas, but also to the famous Great Wall (*changcheng*) at the country’s northern border. China’s Great Wall that conspicuously marks the northern frontier of the agricultural domains that were referred to as

¹⁷ Jin Youzi 金幼孜, *Shuyi zhouzi lu 殊域周諮录* (*The records of collecting suggestions about the foreign regions*), Zhongguo zhexuehu dianzihua jihua 中國哲學書電子化計劃, <https://ctext.org/wiki.pl?if=gb&chapter=837159&cremap=gb> 《<https://ctext.org/wiki.pl?if=gb&res=918541&cremap=gb>》. (Last accessed on 21 May 2021). Ropp remarks that: “The Chinese took the giraffe to be the fabled unicorn of Chinese folklore that appeared only rarely in history to signal the appearance of a sage emperor”. See: Ropp, Paul, S. 2010. *China in World History*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, p. 89.

¹⁸ Musgrave, Paul and Daniel H. Nexon. 2018. Defending Hierarchy from the Moon to the Indian Ocean: Symbolic Capital and Political Dominance in Early Modern China and the Cold War. *International Organization* 72(3), p. 592. Also see: Barr, Michael. 2012. How Chinese Identity Politics Shapes Its Depictions of Europe. *Review of European Studies* 4(3), p. 45.

“Zhongguo” (commonly translated as “China”¹⁹) in Chinese classical literature, may have been intended to “delimitate” the Chinese cultural and agricultural (on which more later) lands from invasions by northern steppe peoples, it is important to note that, in the eyes of later historians, this Great Wall became a negative symbol as it stood for the tyranny of China’s first emperor Qin shi huangdi (reigned 221–210 BCE) toward the people who were coerced into forced labor to build the wall.²⁰ Also the repeated reconstructions of the Wall throughout Chinese history—the current Wall was (re)built in the Ming dynasty—depended on forced labor. Moreover, despite the human and financial cost to build and maintain the Wall, the structure was only effective as part of a much more complex military organization. Any neglect in maintenance works on the Wall—symptomatic for a decline of power of the central authorities—undermined the functioning of the Wall and resulted in the intrusion of northern steppe people into the heartland of “Zhongguo”. Such was the case with, among others, the aforementioned Mongols who incorporated China in their empire, and the Manchus who established the last imperial dynasty of the Qing (1644–1911). That the connotation of China’s Great Wall was, until modern times, a negative one, is important for the following: a “limit” is what one cannot go beyond. In contradistinction to “limits”, borders are what one can go beyond; they connect what they have separated.²¹ In actual practice, the Great Wall did not prevent cultural influences from the north from entering China; it therefore was a “border”, not a “limit”, in the same way that also the Silk Roads that cut into China’s western borders were channels of intercultural exchange. Related to the difference between “limits” and “(cultural) boundaries”, Zygmunt Bauman noted that the term “culture”:

[w]as conceived inside the family of concepts that included terms like ‘cultivation’, ‘husbandry’, ‘breeding’ [...] What the farmer did to the seed through attentive care all the way from seedling to crop could and ought

¹⁹ On the name “China”: see Laufer, Berthold. 1912. *The Name China*. *Young Pao*, second series 13(5): 719–726.

²⁰ Waldron, Arthur. 1990. *The Great Wall of China. From History to Myth*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p. 195.

²¹ Chakrabarti, Arindam and Ralph Weber. 2016. Introduction. In *Comparative Philosophy without Borders*, edited by Arindam Chakrabarti and Ralph Weber, 1–33. London etc.: Bloomsbury, p. 1.

to be done to incipient human beings by education and training. Humans were not *born*, but *made*. They still needed to *become* human – and in the course of becoming human [...] they had to be guided by other humans, educated and trained in the art of educating and training humans.²²

That the term “culture” comprises a *purposeful activity* became particularly obvious starting from the nineteenth century, when Europe’s economic and military dominance brought the European nation-states to Africa and Asia, and when a civilizational “border” was drawn between Europe on the one hand, and China on the other hand. Europe’s presence in China—the beginning of the “century of humiliation”—brought about a fundamental rupture as the economic and military force that accompanied this presence did not allow for a harmonious integration of the “other” in the “self”. In her analysis of the nineteenth-century situation, Shih Shu-mei speaks of an “asymmetrical cosmopolitanism”, i.e., a manifestation of a Western-dominated world view which she defined as follows:

[t]he application of the term ‘cosmopolitanism’ is by definition asymmetrical, depending on the position of the subjects in question. When applied to Third World intellectuals, ‘cosmopolitanism’ implies that these individuals have an expansive knowledge constituted primarily by their understanding of the world (read: the West), but when applied to metropolitan Western intellectuals there is a conspicuous absence of the demand to know the non-West.²³

It has been an important consequence of this nineteenth-century characterization of the world, that Western values were portrayed as superior to those of other parts of the world. These other parts of the world were displaced as “sub-standard” and as lagging behind in a spatio-temporal

²² Bauman, Zygmunt. [2005] 2020. *Liquid Life*. Cambridge: Polity, pp. 52–53. Commenting on the observation that the term “culture” from the onset betrays an administrative view, Theodor Ludwig Wiesengrund Adorno (1903–1969) stated that “culture—no matter what form it takes—is to be measured by norms not inherent to it and which have nothing to do with the quality of the object, but rather with some type of abstract standards imposed from without”. See: Adorno, Theodor Ludwig Wiesengrund. 1991. *The Culture Industry: Selected Essays on Mass Culture by Theodor W. Adorno*, Wes Blomster trans., J. M. Bernstein ed. London: Routledge, p. 98.

²³ Shih, Shu-mei. 2001. *The Lure of the Modern, Writing Modernism in Semicolonial China, 1917–1937*. Berkeley/Los Angeles/London: University of California Press, p. 97.

hierarchy. It is in this context that, rather than the Europeans and the Chinese mutually finding themselves in the other, it was China that started to redefine her own culture in terms of European “modernity”. Thomas A. Metzger in this respect stated that:

From this normative standpoint, modern Chinese history essentially is the story of a troubled progression toward increasing discontinuity with the Chinese tradition and increasing convergence with Western modernity.²⁴

4 THE “BELT AND ROAD INITIATIVE” AND INTERCULTURAL DIALOGUE

The rise to power of Deng Xiaoping (1904–1997) and his implementation of an open-door policy (*gaige-kaifang*) aimed at economic development, fundamentally changed China’s position on the international scene. That China has, after the “century of humiliation”, regained a central role in the world helps to explain the country’s narrative of engagement with the rest of the world. China’s 2008 “White Paper on National Defense” in this sense declares that:

China has become an important member of the international system, and the future and destiny of China have been increasingly closely connected with the international community. China cannot develop in isolation from the rest of the world, nor can the world enjoy prosperity and stability without China.²⁵

According to Jikkie Verlare and Frans Paul van der Putten in a Clingendael Policy Brief of December 2015, the document titled “Vision and Actions on Jointly Building the Silk Road Economic Belt and 21st-Century Maritime Silk Road” of March 2015, can be considered “the closest thing so far in terms of an articulated ‘grand strategy’ coming

²⁴ Metzger, Thomas A. 2012. *The Ivory Tower and the Marble Citadel. Essays on Political Philosophy in Our Modern Era of Interacting Cultures*. Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press, p. 228.

²⁵ “White Paper on National Defense”. http://www.china.org.cn/government/central_government/2009-01/20/content_17155577_2.htm (Last accessed on 21 May 2021).

from the Xi Jinping Administration”.²⁶ Xi Jinping delivered a speech on 25 October 2013 during China’s “Work Forum on Diplomacy to China’s Periphery” in which he stated that China:

[s]hould focus on maintaining the peace and stability *of its periphery* [...]. It should promote win-win and mutual benefits. It should actively participate in regional economic cooperation; accelerate interconnectivity of infrastructure and establish the ‘Silk Road Economic Belt’ and ‘the 21st Century Maritime Silk Route’.²⁷ (emphasis mine),

It is clear that the BRI was at first presented as a project aimed at China’s immediate periphery only. With mentioning the “21st Century Maritime Silk Route”, Xi Jinping repeated the statement he made in the Indonesian parliament on 2 October 2013 and that can be considered as a follow-up speech to the one delivered in Kazakhstan. He said:

China will strengthen maritime cooperation with ASEAN countries to make good use of the China-ASEAN Maritime Cooperation Fund set up by the Chinese government and vigorously develop maritime partnership in a joint effort to build the Maritime Silk Road of the 21st century.²⁸

It was only beginning from 2014 that the BRI narrative also included the rest of Asia, Europe, and Africa, and only beginning in 2015 that “all countries” were included.²⁹ The just quoted 2015 “Document”, e.g., declares that the aim of the land connections and the sea connections is:

²⁶ Verlare, Jikkie and Frans Paul van der Putten. 2015. *‘One belt, one Road’, An Opportunity for the EU’s Security Strategy*. Clingendael Policy Brief, December. 2015.

²⁷ Xi, Jinping, 2013b. Xi Jinping zai zhoubian waijiao gongzuo zuotanhuishang fabiao zhongyao jianghua 习近平在周边外交工作座谈会上发表重要讲话 (Xi Jinping delivers an important speech at the Work Forum on Diplomacy to China’s Periphery) http://www.xinhuanet.com/politics/2013-10/25/c_117878897.htm. (Last accessed on 21 May 2021).

²⁸ Xi, Jinping, 2013c. Speech by Chinese President Xi Jinping to Indonesian Parliament. http://www.asean-china-center.org/english/2013-10/03/c_133062675.htm. (Last accessed on 3 April 2021).

²⁹ Zeng, Jinghan. 2017. Does Europe Matter? The Role of Europe in Chinese Narratives of ‘One Belt One Road’ and ‘New Type of Great Power Relations’. *Journal of Common Market Studies* 55(5), pp. 1164, 1169–1170.

improving connectivity throughout Asia, Europe and Africa through a policy of financing and building transport infrastructure across Eurasia, the South China Sea, the Indian Ocean and the Mediterranean.

Since its announcement, the OBOR/BRI project has indeed developed to be a worldwide “roadmap” of intricately connected land routes and sea lines. China’s leadership has on several occasions underlined that the new terrestrial Silk Roads that are to connect China with the rest of Eurasia, and the new maritime Silk Roads that are to connect China’s south-eastern coastal cities with Europe via Vietnam, Indonesia, India, Sri Lanka, East Africa, and the Suez Canal “should be seen as a grand blueprint for China’s ambitions to connect three different continents, namely Asia, Europe, and Africa”.³⁰

Seen from an international perspective, the economic success brought about by the open-door policies that started at the end of the 1970s, combined with a power balance in the world that appears to be shifting to the favor of the “non-West” and that has developed from being characterized by a bipolar world order to a multipolar world order (or, to refer to the 1992 book by Kenneth Jowitt, *The New World Disorder*³¹), the period from the first military confrontation of China with the Western world in the Opium War (*Yapian zhanzheng*) of 1839–1842 to the proclamation of the founding of the People’s Republic of China on 1 October 1949, appears to have become China’s “chosen trauma” *vis-à-vis* which it has defined its “chosen glory”, recently called the “The Chinese dream of the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation” (*Zhonghua minzu weida fuxingde Zhongguomeng*).³² This great rejuvenation is, at least rhetorically, accompanied by a (selective) reevaluation of the (imperial) Confucian tradition. A reinterpreted Confucianism can hereby not only bestow the Chinese citizens with a new feeling of “sense”, but also give the Chinese state a new *raison d’être*, both in its homeland affairs and in its international aspirations. This also illustrates China’s increasing global ambition to be a norm/system shaper rather than a (nineteenth-century) norm/

³⁰ Stahl, Anna Katharina. 2015. China’s New Silk Road Diplomacy: Implications for China’s Relations with Europe and Africa. *EU-China Observer* 1 (15), p. 17.

³¹ Jowitt, Kenneth *The New World Disorder. The Leninist Extinction*. University of California Press, 1992.

³² For the notions of “chosen trauma” and “chosen glory”: see Vamik, Volkan. 1997. *Bloodlines. From Ethnic Pride to Ethnic Terrorism*. S.l.: Westview, pp. 4–10.

system taker.³³ This ambition is also incarnated in the term “harmonious world” (*hexie shijie*).³⁴ That is to say, China’s rise on the world stage has led to a new change in the paradigms of interculturalism and intercultural dialogue.

5 THE WAY FORWARD: A NEW “CROSSING THE RIVER BY FEELING THE STONES”

That the more pro-active stance China has recently taken on the world stage has fundamentally changed the post-Second World War world order—the contemporary world seems hardly conceivable without China—confronts Europe with the need to redefine itself and its role in this world order. The question what Europe is, is, however, not only determined in Europe itself, but is also subject to global forces and determinants. Referring to the changed order in the world, Ralph Weber stated:

In a sense, whereas the Other of Europe has been a constant topic for Europeans and non-Europeans alike throughout the ages of discovery and colonialism, Europe has seldom been fashioned as the Other itself, not to itself, but to others; Europe as the Other of its Others.³⁵

Against this background, the return of Confucius in China’s contemporary political rhetoric that projects “Chinese values” on the world at large, is illustrative for a more profound attitude to no longer redefine

³³ Zeng, Jinghan. 2017. Does Europe Matter? The Role of Europe in Chinese Narratives of ‘One Belt One Road’ and ‘New Type of Great Power Relations’. *Journal of Common Market Studies* 55(5), p. 1162.

³⁴ According to Zheng and Tok, China needs a more pro-active role when it wants to shape its own destiny, both internally and externally. They claim that while “scientific development” (*kexue fazhanguan*) and “harmonious society” (*hexie shehui*) served to provide Hu Jintao’s domestic audience, ‘harmonious world’ is applicable to both China’s domestic and its foreign policies. See: Zheng, Yongnian and Sow Keat Tok. 2007. *‘Harmonious Society’ and ‘Harmonious World’: China’s Policy Discourse under Hu Jintao*. The University of Nottingham, China Policy Institute: Briefing Series 26, p. 2.

³⁵ Weber, Ralph. 2016. *All about Fiction: European Global Studies, Chinese Studies and Sinology*. Basel Papers on Europe in a Global Perspective, University of Basel Institute for European Global Studies, No. 111, p. 6.

the Chinese tradition in European terms as was done from the late nineteenth century onwards, but to reinterpret the European tradition in Chinese terms.³⁶ From a Western perspective, the “harmonious world” can therefore be interpreted as introducing a new spatio-temporal hierarchy in which China portrays itself as possessing superior (Confucian) values and the rest of the world lagging behind.³⁷

For both Europe and China, it is important to note that the globalization of the end of the twentieth and of the twenty-first century does not rule out that there is no single, universal context for all humanity. To the same extent that globalization intensifies, so does the acknowledgment of particularities of life conditions, and the awareness that there are two ways of knowing things: universal and contextual. Or to quote an example used by Ludden: “Economics might be universal, but economies are not”.³⁸ Wolf Schäfer phrased this as follows:

Localism disregards global contexts focusing exclusively on local phenomena, while globalism fails to recognize local contexts, such as people’s languages, life-worlds, and cultures.³⁹

This observation also relates to the distinction I made earlier between “borders” and “limits”, as “humans are fluid beings, with dynamic

³⁶ This was already presaged by Gu Mu, then member of the State Council of the People’s Republic of China and nominal head of the Confucius Foundation, in his speech he gave on 5 October 1989 on the occasion of the 2540th anniversary of Confucius’ birth. He emphasized the importance of a correct relation to traditional national culture, and he stressed that in the synthesis of the Chinese tradition and Western ideas, the Chinese tradition should predominate over the Western one. See Zhang, Tong and Barry Schwartz. 2003. Confucius and the Cultural Revolution: A Study in Collective Memory. In *States of Memory. Continuities, Conflicts, and Transformations in National Retrospection*, edited By Jeffrey K. Olick, 101–127. Durham: Duke University Press, p. 118.

³⁷ Nordin, Astrid H. M. 2016. *China’s International Relations and Harmonious World. Time, Space and Multiplicity in World Politics*. Interventions. London and New York: Routledge, p. 40.

³⁸ Ludden, David. 1999. *Why Area Studies?* University of Pennsylvania. 2/1/99. <https://www.sas.upenn.edu/~dludden/whyarea.htm>. (Last accessed on 16 January 2021).

³⁹ Schäfer, Wolf. 2010. Reconfiguring Area Studies for the Global Age. *Globality Studies Journal. Global History, Society, Civilization* 22. <http://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.691.9540&rep=rep1&type=pdf> (Last accessed on 16 January 2021).

and porous boundaries, intertwined with their environment and others' prososity, and therefore always becoming".⁴⁰

Focusing on the EU–China relationship, Gustaaf Geeraerts distinguishes two underlying logics: a power-based one and a transformational one. He states:

The power-based logic is premised on a belief that because of anarchy, power politics and conflicts of interest cannot be entirely overcome. According to this view, intercourse between the EU and China will reflect their relative power positions and display concerns about relative gains, making cooperation between them more difficult. In contrast, a transformational logic reflects a more liberal/constructivist perspective. It suggests that rules and shared norms can sharply reduce conflicts of interest and mitigate concerns about relative gains through the creation of trust and reciprocal socialization, making enduring cooperation between the EU and China more likely.⁴¹

All relationships, at any given moment, reside somewhere along a spectrum that extends from pure cooperation at one extreme to unrestrained competition at the other. It may be that deep-seated conceptual differences concerning norms, visions of society, modes of international engagement, and the organization of the emerging world exist between China and the West,⁴² but in the end, the different cultural traditions will have to accommodate each other in a complex international system in which “the unipolar moment is definitely fading away and slowly giving way to an international system characterized by multilayered and culturally diversified polarity”.⁴³ Given that the economic and financial crises in Europe have led many European countries to push growth and development back on top of the agenda, as a result that European economies are

⁴⁰ Palsson, Gisli. 2013. “Ensembles of biosocial relations.” In *Biosocial Becomings: Integrating Social and Biological Anthropology*, edited by Tim Ingold & Gisli Palsson, 22–41. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 39–41.

⁴¹ Geeraerts, Gustaaf. 2019. The EU–China partnership: balancing between divergence and convergence. *Asia Europe Journal* 17, p. 281.

⁴² Geeraerts, Gustaaf. 2019. The EU–China partnership: balancing between divergence and convergence. *Asia Europe Journal* 17, pp. 281–282.

⁴³ Geeraerts, Gustaaf. 2011. China, the EU, and the new multipolarity. *European Review* 19, p. 57.

“becoming more modern, less post-modern and more like other countries in the world”—a situation that is further reinforced through the Covid-pandemic—while, meanwhile, “China is moving beyond developmentalism to deemphasize growth, and to focus more on quality-of-life issues”, it should be possible for the two developmental patterns to increasingly grow to each other.⁴⁴

The question formulated in the West what China’s future role as a “responsible stake holder” may be—a question that is also at the basis of the document “Joint Communication to the European Parliament, the European Council and the Council: EU-China Strategic Outlook”⁴⁵ of the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, in which China is defined as a partner, a competitor, and a systemic rival all at once—and China’s statement that it is open to emulation not as a universal pattern, but with an eye for particular historical circumstances, open perspectives for a way forward, and incarnate the new “crossing the river by feeling the stones” (*mozhe shitou guo he*) that imposes itself on Europeans and Chinese alike.⁴⁶

6 CONCLUSION

Europe and China have, throughout their history, developed to be increasingly multicultural entities in which a harmonious living-together imposed itself. It is against this background that the Silk Roads evoke memories of economic and cultural exchanges in the minds of European and Chinese citizens alike.

In the current age, it is increasingly obvious that the future of mankind can only be safeguarded in a context of mutual understanding and collaboration. In a context in which possibilities for intercultural dialogue are increasing day by day thanks to technological innovations, also the BRI—originally meant as a developmental scheme for the countries in China’s

⁴⁴ Geeraerts, Gustaaf. 2019. The EU–China partnership: balancing between divergence and convergence. *Asia Europe Journal* 17, pp. 788–789.

⁴⁵ “Joint Communication to the European Parliament, the European Council and the Council: EU–China Strategic Outlook” (Strasbourg, 12 March 2019). https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/default/files/joint-communication-eu-us-agenda_en.pdf. (Last accessed on 21 May 2021).

⁴⁶ “Crossing the river by feeling the stones” is a popular saying that, in contemporary politics, is mostly attributed to Deng Xiaoping.

periphery, but gradually developed into a worldwide network of transport and communication—enhances possibilities and opportunities for intercultural dialogue. As in the past, homeland rhetorics may at times illustrate the fear for cold feet of a given country, in this way leaving opportunities for intercultural dialogue untapped, however, as was the case for the Silk Roads, the deployment of the Belt and Road Initiative will change reality on the ground, and will increasingly bring along the necessity for intercultural understanding. It is in the process of “crossing the river by feeling the stones” that this intercultural dialogue will mature.

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“Silk Road Spirit” and China–EU Civilization Partnership

Tian Dewen

“Western international relations model” refers to the model of international relations formed after the “great geographical discoveries” in the late fifteenth century, which is mainly characterized by antagonism, exclusivity, and power politics. This model has been able to dominate the international relations field for about 700 years due to the globalization of capital, the balance of global power, and the influence of European traditional culture and values. “Western international relations model” characterized by conflicts has made mankind pay a painful price. Under the background that nuclear weapons are capable of destroying the earth, the multi-polarization of the world has become a trend, and the new civilization of globalization has emerged, the dominance of the

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“Western international relations model” has been shaken. A new model of international relations characterized by cooperation and more conducive to world peace and development will surpass and eventually replace it. However, the transformation process of the model of international relations is bound to be full of twists and turns. The old and new ideas will coexist for a long time, collide and run into each other, and finally form a new international relations model conducive to the fundamental interests of mankind.

I ANOTHER POSSIBILITY FOR INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

The model of contemporary international relations as we know it took shape after the start of globalization, with European colonists as its initiator. Looking back to history, it is not difficult to find that the process of globalization has always been promoted in the baptism of blood and fire. Before Christopher Columbus “discovered the new world” in 1492, the world was of course not a pastoral of peace. But in terms of the number of killings, the scope of plundering, and the scale of war, after all, it is not comparable to the era of Western-led globalization. According to Marxism, the fundamental reason for this change was the transformation of international relations from a feudal model to a capitalist one, in which globalization “replaces countless chartered and self-earned freedoms with a kind of unconscionable trade freedom. In short, it replaces the exploitation concealed by religious and political fantasies with open, shameless, direct and blatant exploitation,” and then “completed an expedition completely different from the Great Migration of Peoples and the Crusade.”¹

In the process of global expansion, “civilization traffickers” from Europe “fired fiery shells into defenseless cities, killed and raped women”² and formed the modern world through hundreds of years of blood and fire. However, as Hegel said: “what exists is reasonable.” The “Western international relations model” characterized by exclusivity, antagonism, and power politics, can dominate the world, mainly because the West

¹ Marx and Engels, *Manifesto of the Communist Party*, selected works of Marx and Engels, Volume I, People’s Publishing House, 2012 edition, p. 403.

² Marx and Engels, *Persia and China*, selected works of Marx and Engels, Volume I, People’s Publishing House, 2012 edition, p. 798.

has dominated the process of globalization for a long time and has the absolute economic, military, and political advantage, and they insist that: “those who follow will prosper and those who resist will perish.” However, as more and more countries start the process of globalization, the absolute advantage of Western countries has been reduced to only relative advantage, which will create conditions for updating the model of international relations. First, globalization led by the logic of capital makes the “Western international relations model” unusually confrontational. The stock and increment of nuclear weapons in today’s world set fundamental restrictions on confrontation among countries and greatly improve the possibility of cooperation among countries. Second, the existence of “Western international relations model” is based on the premise that great powers can dominate and even seek hegemony in the world, while other countries have to choose between dependence and destruction. In the contemporary world where multi-polarization has become a trend, the cost of acquiring, maintaining, and exercising international hegemony is increasing while the benefits are decreasing, and the losses more and more often outweigh the gains. Third, the “Western international relations model” is culturally rooted in the European dualistic worldview and the tradition of antagonistic international relations. After 700 years of economic globalization, a new civilization of globalization has taken shape, and the era of European culture dominating the world has come to an end.

As the world has entered the era of globalization, conflicts between countries have taken a heavy toll on mankind and become increasingly unsustainable. In this regard, the new idea of international relations represented by the “Silk Road spirit” (SRS) may surpass the Western idea of international relations represented by the “Cold War mentality” and provide another possibility for the model of international relations.

The SRS calls for a new model of international relations featuring peace and cooperation, openness and inclusiveness, mutual learning and mutual benefit. It is a refinement of the spirit of the ancient Silk Road that connected the Eurasia continent. Some foreign scholars believe that the ancient Silk Road was actually “one of the first waves of globalization,” “connecting eastern and western markets, spurring immense wealth, and intermixing cultural and religious traditions. Valuable Chinese silk, spices, jade, and other goods moved west while China received gold and other precious metals, ivory, and glass products. Use of the route peaked during the first millennium, under the leadership of first the

Roman and then Byzantine Empires, and the Tang Dynasty (618–907 CE) in China.”³ Needless to say, the formation of the SRS is directly related to China’s ancient model of international relations. But it eventually became the consensus of all participating countries along the route, ensuring that the Silk Road would last for thousands of years. Therefore, the new type of international relations characterized by the SRS should be a consensus-based model of international relations.

In this regard, there are three misunderstandings in foreign academic circles. First, China is trying to establish a dominant voice in the world by advocating the SRS, so as to exert greater international influence. Some scholars believe that “the SRS discourse locates the uniqueness of the values China espouses in the perceived shared legacies and experiences of developing countries along the ancient Silk Road. In this way, China locates an in-group consisting of its developing neighborhood vis-à-vis an out-group where outdated practices and norms are associated.”⁴ Second, the purpose of advocating the SRS is to transform the “politicized international relations idea” originated from Europe into “economic international relations idea.” In this old “Silk Road Spirit,” which Xi Jinping seeks to make anew, value-indifferent trade—not politics—drove interconnectedness and the advance of civilization.⁵ Third, China advocates the SRS in order to achieve its own strategic objectives. “By constantly hearkening back to the history of East–West exchange, Chinese outlets seem to be interested in propagating a narrative of a particular kind of globalization in which China had a central and ostensibly benign role.”⁶ The main reason for these misunderstandings is that

³ Andrew Chatzky and James McBride, China’s Massive Belt and Road Initiative, <https://www.cfr.org/backgrounders/chinas-massive-belt-and-road-initiative>, Visit date: Dec 21, 2021.

⁴ Gloria, E. V. The Silk Road spirit: China’s BRI discourse and its pursuit for great power status. *Asian Politics & Policy*, 14 April 2021, 13(4), pp. 493–510. <https://doi.org/10.1111/aspp.12600> Visit date: Dec 21, 2021.

⁵ Alek Chance, The Belt and Road Initiative and the Future of Globalization Xi Jinping’s signature policy is about more than just infrastructure, October 31, 2017, *The Diplomat*, <https://thediplomat.com/2017/10/the-belt-and-road-initiative-and-the-future-of-globalization/> Visit date: Dec 21, 2021.

⁶ Alek Chance, The Belt and Road Initiative and the Future of Globalization Xi Jinping’s signature policy is about more than just infrastructure, October 31, 2017, *The Diplomat*, <https://thediplomat.com/2017/10/the-belt-and-road-initiative-and-the-future-of-globalization/> Visit date: Dec 21, 2021.

these scholars have not yet gotten rid of the limitations of the Western model of international relations in their thoughts, and have not seen that replacing international conflicts with international cooperation is the inevitable need of the development of globalization and in line with the general trend of world peace and development. The Chinese government has repeatedly pledged to go beyond the traditional logic that “a strong country is bound to seek hegemony” and strive to play its role as a responsible major country in the world. However, it may take some time before such attitudes are widely accepted by people trapped in the “Cold War mentality.”

Theoretically, it takes a long historical process to eliminate people’s doubts about China’s advocacy of the SRS, and it needs to be gradually realized through the simultaneous promotion and interaction of three processes: the development of the times, the exchange of civilizations, and the construction of identity. In this sense, eliminating people’s doubts about China’s advocacy of the SRS is the process of transforming from the Western idea of international relations to a new idea of international relations.

The development of the times has proved that for every country, opening to the outside world is a necessary condition for development, while confrontation will greatly increase the cost of exchanges between countries. After multi-level games, countries in the world will form a new consensus, that is, cooperation can be win-win, while confrontation is bound to be lose-lose, and then gradually more and more cooperation will replace confrontation. Some scholars have found that, as the Crusades and Mongols’ sweeping across Eurasia cut off the ancient Silk Road, ancient international trade suffered a severe contraction, which made Central Asia, which had long been the center of Eurasian trade, fall into a historic decline. Thus, “today Central Asian countries are economically isolated from each other, with intra-regional trade making up just 6.2% of all cross-border commerce. They are also heavily dependent on Russia, particularly for remittances—they make up one-third of the gross domestic product (GDP) of Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. By 2018, remittances had dipped from their 2013 highs due to Russia’s economic woes.”⁷

⁷ Andrew Chatzky and James McBride, China’s Massive Belt and Road Initiative, <https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/chinas-massive-belt-and-road-initiative> Visit date: Dec 21, 2021.

So, is it possible for the United States and Western countries to isolate some countries from the world system for a long time, or simply “kick them out” of the globalization process? The ongoing Russia–Ukraine conflict shows that, at least for large countries, this is not only impossible, but will also cause serious lose-lose consequences. The United States coerced their European allies in NATO to completely cut off economic ties with Russia. As major European countries have “energy dependence” on Russia, they are currently under the dual pressure of US coercion and Russian counteraction. For Germany, France, and Italy, economic decoupling from Russia would not only be costly in the short term but also unfeasible in the long run. It can be clearly foreseen that Ukraine, Russia, and Europe will pay huge costs regardless of the course of the war. Meanwhile, the Russia–Ukraine conflict will have a serious impact on the world economy which is struggling to recover. No country, including the US, could benefit from this disaster in the long term.

2 CHINA–EU CIVILIZATION PARTNERSHIP

During his visit to Europe in 2014, President Xi Jinping proposed that China and EU should build partnerships for peace, growth, reform, and civilization, so as to fully enrich the “China–EU comprehensive strategic partnership.” Against the backdrop of rising unilateralism, receding economic globalization and a sluggish world economy, China–EU relations have seen many new challenges in recent years. In addressing these challenges, China and EU should adhere to the SRS and actively carry out dialogue and cooperation among civilizations, which will not only help achieve the goal of win–win cooperation, but also build a successful example for the harmonious coexistence of civilizations in a multi-polar world.

The theoretical basis of President Xi Jinping’s proposal to build a “China–EU civilization partnership” is his view on civilization, and the institutional basis is the “China–EU High-Level People-To-People Dialogue” mechanism. On March 27, 2014, President Xi delivered a speech at UNESCO headquarters in Paris, in which he systematically elaborated on the view that civilization is unique, interactive, inclusive, and equal. He stressed that civilizations could become more colorful and enriched through exchanges and mutual learning, and that extensive activities for exchanges and mutual learning among civilizations should be carried out in the international community. President Xi called on all

countries in the world not to view different civilizations from the perspective of “clashes of civilizations,” but to actively promote exchanges and mutual learning among civilizations. Only in this way can the seeds of the idea of peace take root in the hearts of people around the world.

China-EU relations are characterized by civilization and historical depth, and have the policy basis for building a “China-EU civilization partnership” featuring exchanges and mutual learning among civilizations. In fact, before that, China and Europe have established a multi-level cultural exchange system covering China and European countries, local governments of both sides, as well as China and the EU. After the Lisbon Treaty came into force, the EU officially obtained the competence to promote international cultural exchanges, and then implemented a number of large-scale people-to-people exchange activities. As part of the 13th China-Europe summit, the first China-EU High-Level Cultural Forum was held in Brussels from Oct 6 to 7, 2010. Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao and European Commission President Jose Manuel Barroso attended the opening ceremony, marking the formal establishment of a cultural exchange system between China and the EU. As an important measure to enrich the “China-EU strategic partnership,” in May 2011, China and the EU decided to establish the China-EU High-Level People-To-People Dialogue mechanism, following the existing China-EU High-Level Economic and Trade Dialogue and the China-EU High-Level Strategic Dialogue. This established the third pillar for the development of China-EU relations, which includes enhancing mutual understanding through equal dialogue and exchanges, strengthening exchanges and cooperation in various fields such as culture, art, media, and tourism, and expanding the scale of exchange of students and jointly supporting research on China-EU relations. In November 2020, against the background of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Fifth China-EU High-Level People-To-People Dialogue was held via video link. Chinese Vice Premier Sun Chunlan and European Commissioner for Innovation, Research, Culture, Education, and Youth Mariya Gabriel both attended the meeting and acknowledged the achievements of China-EU people-to-people exchanges.

The China-EU civilization partnership is not only an important component of China-EU relations in the new era, but also an important international cooperation project with exemplary significance for China’s diplomacy in the new era. In September and October 2013, President Xi Jinping put forward the initiatives of building the Silk Road Economic

Belt and the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road. Relying on the existing bilateral and multilateral mechanisms between China and the countries involved, and with the help of effective regional cooperation platforms, the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) aims to borrow the historical symbols of the ancient Silk Road, being committed to peaceful development, and actively develop a community of shared interests, shared future and responsibility featuring political mutual trust, economic integration, and cultural inclusiveness with countries along the routes. Looking at the China–EU civilization partnership within the framework of the BRI will help us deepen our understanding of it.

First, exchanges and mutual learning between civilizations are an important part of building a new type of international relations. The BRI is an international cooperation initiative based on history and culture. From the perspectives of narrative, activity, and interpretation, China attaches great importance to civilization exchanges and mutual learning among countries involved in the BRI. Some foreign scholars have found that when interpreting the BRI, China’s government websites and state media continuously portray BRI as a positive, intercultural exchange, and harken back to an age in which great civilizations and religions shared their wisdom via the Silk Road. In 2014, China successfully made a joint submission, along with Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, to have the Silk Road placed on the UNESCO World Heritage list. China also hosts a Silk Road International Film Festival, which is committed to promoting “mutual understanding” and numerous art exhibitions with titles like “Silk Road: Reflection of Mutual Learning.”⁸ Moreover, China’s “official rhetoric surrounding BRI has from the outset tied together several related themes with the concept of the ‘Silk Road Spirit’.”⁹

Second, exchanges and mutual learning between civilizations provide an important ideological basis for promoting the development of China–EU cooperation. Some foreign scholars believe that contemporary China–EU relations can be regarded as part of the interactive chain between two

⁸ Alek Chance, *The Belt and Road Initiative and the Future of Globalization* Xi Jinping’s signature policy is about more than just infrastructure, Oct 31, 2017, *The Diplomat*, <https://thediplomat.com/2017/10/the-belt-and-road-initiative-and-the-future-of-globalization/> Date of visit: Dec 21, 2021.

⁹ Alek Chance, *The Belt and Road Initiative and the Future of Globalization* Xi Jinping’s signature policy is about more than just infrastructure, Oct 31, 2017, *The Diplomat*, <https://thediplomat.com/2017/10/the-belt-and-road-initiative-and-the-future-of-globalization/>

ancient civilizations. Before the modern European state system came into being, the ancient Silk Road had already connected China and Europe at both ends of the Eurasian continent. Since modern times, European powers have invaded and colonized China for a long time. “The first Western European traders to reach China and establish a permanent presence were the Portuguese. Tomé Pires was sent by the King of Portugal as ambassador to the Ming court in 1517. Large contingents of Portuguese traders and adventurers later arrived from their bases in Goa, Malacca and the East Indies to settle on St John’s Island near Canton, and in 1535 Portugal secured official Chinese permission to dry their cargoes in Macao. This was the beginning of the first (and, eventually, the last) European colony in China.”¹⁰ It was not until the 1970s that China–EU relations moved toward all-around development through normalization. In other words, China–EU relations in the long history have experienced cooperation, confrontation, and then cooperation in the aspect of civilization. Therefore, in the future development of China–EU relations, maintaining civilization exchanges and mutual learning is necessary to maintain sound interactions between the two sides with cooperation as the main theme. “Today’s European Union, with its many attempts at coordinating policies internally between member states, and externally towards foreign partners, can be conceptualized as a ‘civilizational community of practice’ or even a ‘normative power’ with a self-perceived role in setting a normative example in international politics.”¹¹ In this context, it is particularly important to build China–EU civilization partnership, which may become a successful example of replacing “clashes of civilizations” with exchanges and mutual learning between civilizations.

Third, exchanges and mutual learning between civilizations will help dispel the global community’s negative expectations about China’s rise. In the Western model of international relations, “a strong nation is bound to seek hegemony,” thus, it is by no means easy for the international community to understand and accept the great rejuvenation of China characterized by peace and cooperation. Even for the BRI, the

¹⁰ Wong Reuben, *The Issue of Identity in the EU-China Relationship*, *Politique Européenne*, 2013/1 (n°39), p. 158–185. <https://www.cairn.info/revue-politique-EU-opeenne-2013-1-page-158.htm>, Visit date: Dec 21, 2021.

¹¹ Wong Reuben, *The Issue of Identity in the EU-China Relationship*, *Politique Européenne*, 2013/1 (n°39), p. 158–185. <https://www.cairn.info/revue-politique-EU-opeenne-2013-1-page-158.htm>, Visit date: Dec 21, 2021.

international community has never stopped questioning it. Some foreign scholars believe that “Xi has launched BRI at a time when Chinese foreign policy has become more assertive, even aggressive. This has meant that BRI is often interpreted as a geopolitical venture rather than a purely economic one.”¹² In fact, such doubts are unfounded. On the contrary, the BRI can provide a new platform for cooperation among all international actors committed to peace and development. Dr. Jonathan E. Hillman of the Center for Strategic and International Studies of the United States believes that the US can fully use “the United States could use BRI projects as a way to have China pay for infrastructure initiatives in Central Asia that are also in the U.S. interest.”¹³ In fact, as long as it is win-win and equal cooperation, it doesn’t matter who “pays the bill.” Hillman should be considered rational and pragmatic about the BRI, as he realized that the BRI is not necessarily incompatible with the national interests of the United States.

In recent years, China–EU relations have witnessed some negative developments, with anti-China forces rising in Europe. Some foreign scholars believe that “by 2019, China’s trajectory over the decade from the great financial crisis had undermined one of the key assumptions of EU policy – that engagement with China was justified, despite deep political and values differences, because in the end the EU had an opportunity to positively change China. By 2020, on issues from Xinjiang to Hong Kong and freedom of speech within the PRC generally, things had in many ways become even starker: China had been able to economically develop, but had become even more assertive and entrenched in its domestic political behavior and configuration. This meant that the EU had little choice but to assert more clearly that its engagement was, once shorn of high-minded idealism, also, at heart, one founded on self-interest.”¹⁴ This view is representative to some extent in Europe’s

¹² Ashok Sajjanhar, *China’s Belt and Road Initiative: Prospects and Pitfalls*, November 28, 2017, IDSA Comment https://idsa.in/idsacomments/china-belt-and-road-initiative_asajjanhar_281117 Visit date: Dec 21, 2021.

¹³ Andrew Chatzky and James McBride, *China’s Massive Belt and Road Initiative*, <https://www.cfr.org/background/chinas-massive-belt-and-road-initiative> Visit date: Dec 21, 2021.

¹⁴ Timm Beichelt, *Die Politik der Östlichen Partnerschaft—inkompatible Grundannahmen und antagonistische Herausforderung*, <https://theasanforum.org/the-EU-and-china-in-2021-separate-discourses-similar-or-different-aims/> Visit date: Dec 21, 2021.

reflection on relations with China. Its “underlying logic” at the aspect of civilization is the arrogance and prejudice of western countries that “those who follow me prosper and those who oppose me perish,” which is also the ideological root affecting the development of China-EU relations.

From the perspective of China-EU civilization partnership, it is not right to “persuade” or “coerce” the other side to change its way of thinking and behavior. However, exchanges and mutual learning between civilizations can help enhance inclusiveness, understanding, and cooperation between the two sides. In fact, negative developments have not been the main theme of the development of China-EU relations in recent years. Against the backdrop of the COVID-19 pandemic, China-EU economic and trade cooperation has continued to grow, and both sides have strengthened medical and health cooperation in combating the epidemic. At the beginning of 2020, when China was facing the most difficult time in its fight against the epidemic, many European countries donated anti-epidemic supplies to China, and the European people also provided valuable support to China through ways such as concerts and charity sales. The Austrian 2020 Spring Sound New Year Concert launched a fund-raising activity for China during the performance. Greek people held red lanterns at the foot of the Acropolis in Athens to show their solidarity with Chinese people. As the epidemic spread rapidly in Europe, China also quickly mobilized a large number of supplies to help European countries and shared its experience in fighting the epidemic. Within 2 days of Italy’s national lockdown, a Chinese medical team flew to Rome, becoming the first group of international aid workers to the affected areas of Italy. In March 2020, a total of 300,000 masks from China became the first batch of large-scale foreign aid received by Belgium. When air and sea transportation was almost suspended due to the severe impact of the epidemic, the “modern camel team on the New Silk Road,” the China-Europe Freight Trains services, strongly supported the anti-epidemic efforts of countries along the routes.

3 REPLACING “COLD WAR MENTALITY” WITH “SILK ROAD SPIRIT”

In the framework of China’s diplomacy in the new era, the BRI is the most important signifying project. Its spiritual connotation, namely the “Silk Road spirit,” is the spiritual core of China’s advocacy of building “a

new type of international relations,” “a new type of major country relations,” and “a community with a shared future for mankind.” Looking into the future, mankind will for a long time be in a process that sees the “new international relations model” surpassing and eventually replacing “Western international relations model.” At the spiritual level, this will be a process of the “Silk Road spirit” surpassing and eventually replacing the “cold war mentality.” The process will be full of struggle and turbulence, but it is a general trend of the development of the times that is irresistible. The China–EU civilization partnership is an important attempt by China and Europe to replace confrontation with cooperation, exclusion with inclusiveness, and power politics with consultation on an equal footing, and has a positive exemplary significance in this historical process of change.

In his speech at the opening ceremony of the Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation on May 14, 2017, President Xi Jinping pointed out that the ancient Silk Road, spanning thousands of miles and lasting for thousands of years, has cultivated the Silk Road spirit centered on peace and cooperation, openness and inclusiveness, mutual learning and mutual benefit.¹⁵ Some scholars believe that “as reflected in how China promotes the BRI, the SRS also signifies persistent attempts to construct a unique image of China relative to how it perceives its major power peers. The Silk Road Spirit becomes more than a placeholder of benign values. It also becomes a discourse that China actively cultivates to positively distinguish itself by telling its story of being a unique peaceful major power throughout history.”¹⁶ However, the SRS is by no means unique to China. The BRI connects China with potential partners in Asian, European, and African continents. The inspiration for this great initiative is the common heritage rooted in the ancient Silk Road. As officially described by the Chinese Communist Party, the Silk Road Spirit “represents the sum

¹⁵ Xi Jinping telling stories: the Silk Road spirit is the precious heritage of human civilization, People’s Daily Online, 2018–2–22 [reference date: 2018-12-06].

¹⁶ Gloria, E. V. The Silk Road spirit: China’s BRI discourse and its pursuit for great power status. *Asian Politics & Policy*, 14 April 2021, 13(4), pp. 493–510. <https://doi.org/10.1111/aspp.12600> Visit date: Dec 21, 2021.

of the experience and wisdom that the countries of Eurasia have accumulated through their interactions over the course of history.”¹⁷ From this perspective, the construction of the China–EU civilization partnership is just such a positive interactive process, which will gradually realize the purpose of replacing the “Cold War mentality” with the SRS through long-term exchanges.

First, replacing the “Cold War mentality” with the SRS is an unstoppable historical process. In today’s globalized and multi-polar world, peace and development are the common aspirations of people of all countries. Therefore, the SRS represents the common value of mankind in dealing with international relations. Some scholars believe that “in China’s point of view, the Silk Road Spirit embodied by the Belt and Road Initiative sets this project apart from other similar institutional innovations in history..... it can be argued that China is discursively utilizing the SRS values of peace, friendship (cooperation), openness, inclusiveness, mutual learning, and mutual benefit (win–win) to present a morally righteous image of itself. More specifically, China shows these values as better alternatives to what China identifies as outdated norms and values that still constitute today’s international relations.”¹⁸ The SRS is the underpinning of China’s diplomacy in the new era. China promises to always hold high the banner of peace, development, cooperation, and win–win results on the international stage, abide by its foreign policy of safeguarding world peace and promoting common development, firmly develop friendly cooperation with other countries on the basis of the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence, and promote the building of a new type of international relations featuring mutual respect, fairness, justice, and win–win cooperation. This position reflects China’s firm strategic confidence.

Second, replacing the “comparisons were made to the Marshall Plan, much to the annoyance of the Chinese government who endeavoured to emphasize the inclusive and ‘win–win’ nature of initiative and wanted to avoid the appearance of Chinese imperialism. In 2015, the official English

¹⁷ Gloria, E. V. The Silk Road spirit: China’s BRI discourse and its pursuit for great power status. *Asian Politics & Policy*, 14 April 2021,13(4), pp. 493–510. <https://doi.org/10.1111/aspp.12600> Visit date: Dec 21, 2021.

¹⁸ Gloria, E. V. The Silk Road spirit: China’s BRI discourse and its pursuit for great power status. *Asian Politics & Policy*, 14 April 2021,13(4), pp. 493–510. <https://doi.org/10.1111/aspp.12600> Visit date: Dec 21, 2021.

language name was changed to ‘Belt and Road Initiative’ to emphasize that it was an initiative launched by China, which any country was free to join, rather than a Chinese strategy or policy.”¹⁹ Not only that, in recent years, some negative views about the BRI have also emerged in the foreign public opinion, including “debt trap theory,” “geo-penetration theory,” “environmental risk theory,” and “unfinished project theory.” What they have in common is that they view the BRI through colored glasses of the “Cold War mentality,” and such negative views have been inevitably rising amid the backdrop that COVID-19 pandemic has made a negative impact on BRI projects. The dispelling of these misunderstandings needs not only fact-based refutations, but also the continued success of international cooperation under the BRI framework. Therefore, the BRI will have to push forward amid constant doubts for a long time in the future, and we should have sufficient strategic patience for that.

Third, replacing the “Cold War mentality” with the SRS will be a process of unremitting struggle. Some foreign scholars believe that they constitute implicit critiques of what is perceived to be a hegemonic or unipolar American-led order in which diversity (of regime-types at least) is not respected, and in which mutual benefit, win-win cooperation, and other principles of sovereign equality are not genuinely embraced. In other words, rhetoric surrounding BRI reliably hits all the notes of what can be called China’s “pluralist” rather than “liberal” vision for the future of the international order.²⁰ In today’s world where the “Cold War mentality” and the logic of power politics still widely exist, this process of replacing the “Cold War mentality” with the SRS will inevitably continue to see trials and errors. Confrontation, exclusion, and power politics will result in lose-lose consequences and impose costs on all stakeholders, and finally lead international actors to adopt cooperative and inclusive international strategies for their own interests. In the process of this struggle, adhering to the SRS requires great strategic confidence and strategic

¹⁹ Gloria, E. V. The Silk Road spirit: China’s BRI discourse and its pursuit for great power status. *Asian Politics & Policy*, 14 April 2021,13(4), pp. 493–510. <https://doi.org/10.1111/aspp.12600> Visit date: Dec 21, 2021.

²⁰ Alek Chance, The Belt and Road Initiative and the Future of Globalization Xi Jinping’s signature policy is about more than just infrastructure, Oct 31, 2017, *The Diplomat*, <https://thediplomat.com/2017/10/the-belt-and-road-initiative-and-the-future-of-globalization/> Visit date: Dec 21, 2021.

determination for any country, and they should have sufficient strategic expectations for twists and turns and even setbacks.

In this long historical process, the China–EU civilization partnership may become a successful example of building a new type of international relations. This does not mean that China–EU relations will be smooth sailing from now on. In the context of the Russia–Ukraine conflict, European countries have become increasingly dependent on the US in their foreign policies, raising the possibility of twists and turns in China–EU relations. The continuing ravages of COVID-19 pandemic have also created great difficulties for China–EU civilization exchanges and mutual learning. However, as long as China and the EU have strategic confidence, patience, and expectation to meet each other halfway, all these difficulties can be overcome, and the future of the China–EU civilization partnership remains promising.

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“Children’s Space” Along the Silk Road: Start Talking About Terracotta Pig-Shaped Rattle Unearthed in Cyprus

Ming Wan

The Republic of Cyprus is an island country in the eastern Mediterranean Sea and located at the crossroads between Eastern and Western civilizations. It has been on the main route linking the Middle East, Africa, and Europe since ancient times. Cyprus is located in Asia but is culturally part of Europe, being regarded as the “key” of the Mediterranean Sea, the gateway through which the oriental and Western maritime civilizations exchanged, as well as one of the hometowns of ancient Greek civilization. As we know, Act II, scene I of Shakespeare’s *Othello* is set in a seaport in Cyprus. An open place near the quay where exactly famous Famagusta

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was built in the third century BC.¹ By its unique geographical location, Cyprus has played an important role in the world history for the multi-culture exchanges which left great legacies in Cyprus. The children are the hope of mankind, but so far there has been little discussion of children's issues related to the Silk Road. I intend to break this silence and try to reveal some clues of this topic through the concentrations on the cultural mutual linkage and learning between China and Cyprus which of them are even though being far apart from each other, as well as how the mutual learning between the ancient Eastern and Western civilizations along the Silk Road influenced on the children cultivation and developments. The rattle, a kind of toy for children shared by China and Cyprus, reminds us of the ancient history and reveals the continuous historical process of children's cultivation and development in the ancient world. I will furthermore investigate the similarities and differences between Chinese and Cypriot cultures for making an understanding of the multicultural universality and uniqueness in the community with a shared future for mankind.

I CYPRIOT PIG-SHAPED TERRACOTTA FIGURINE: THE ANCIENT RATTLES IN MUSEUMS

The Greek and Roman Department of the British Museum has a rattle of pig-shaped terracotta figurine from Cyprus in the third to second century BC.²

The pig-shaped rattle in the British Museum was introduced in the BBC broadcast in 2018,³ as it states, there was a pig-shaped rattle used by children in Ancient Greece, the pig-shaped rattle was used the same as children use them today. The rattle was made of little ceramic beads to make the rattle sound. The sound the rattle made provided entertainment for young children in Ancient Greece. According to BBC boardcast, we observe that the rattle would have been earlier in Ancient Greece than

¹ Shakespeare, *Aosailuo* 奥赛罗 (Othello) Bilingual in English and Chinese, translated by Zhu Shenghao 朱生豪, Zhongyi Press, 2017, p. 63.

² <https://www.bmimages.com/preview.asp?image=00342998001>.

³ BBC—A History of the World—Object: Cyprus Child's Rattle (2018). Retrieved from http://www.bbc.co.uk/ahistoryofthe_world/objects/2qdi5f-HS2GyYiudDrDmvA.

the one in Cyprus which can be seen as an extension of Ancient Greece culture.

The following lovely children’s pig-shaped terracotta rattle excavated from a Cypriot children’s tomb is exhibited in Williamson Art Gallery & Museum of Liverpool in England. As the introduction of the exhibition states, “This little pig shows how children and their toys have not fundamentally changed over thousands of years. It is a rattle in the shape of a pig, the rough ridge of hair on its back showing it to be closer to a boar than contemporary pigs.” And then it tells us a story: “It was presented in 1878 to James Bibby, a Liverpool ship-owner, who was cruising the Mediterranean in his yacht ‘Helen’. Refugees escaping from a burning ship at Famagusta suspected that their ship had been purposely wrecked; they murdered the crew and caused panic in the island. The arrival of Mr Bibby’s yacht helped to quell the riot as it was believed to be a gunboat and in gratitude he was presented with the collection; it was taken from an archaeologist, Mr Cesnola.”⁴

The Aegean Sea area has entered the Neolithic Age before the time of 6000 BC, the peoples in Greece mainland and many islands of the Aegean Sea began cultivation and domesticated pigs and sheep. Pig is a symbol of an agrarian society; the domestic pig was domesticated from the wild boar that lived in the forest. The pig-shaped rattle in Williamson Art Gallery & Museum presented the evolution from the wild boar to the domestic pig.

It is said that the rattle found in Salamis of Cyprus was excavated from a children’s tomb.⁵ It may prove some kind of relation between the rattle and the children’s entertainment.

There is another cute terracotta pig lying quietly in the Metropolitan Museum of Art of the United States, it is also found in Cyprus. The object details mention that it is a Cypriot terracotta rattle in the form of a pig which was made during the Hellenistic period, third to second century BC. Its credit line is “The Cesnola Collection, Purchased by subscription, 1874–76.”⁶

⁴ <http://www.bbc.co.uk/ahistoryoftheworld/objects/2qdi5f-HS2GyYiudDrDmvA>.

⁵ Lund J. *A study of the circulation of ceramics in Cyprus from the 3rd Century BC to the 3rd Century AD*. Gösta Enbom Monographs 5, Arrhus. 2015. pp. 147–149.

⁶ Vassos Karageorghis: *Ancient Art from Cyprus: The Cesnola Collection in the Metropolitan Museum of Art*, Metropolitan Museum of Art New York, 2000. <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/240421>.

It is obvious that the pig-shaped rattles in the British Museum and the Metropolitan Museum of Art were both found in Cyprus and belonged to the Cesnola Collection. Then it is necessary to introduce the collector, Luigi Palma Di Cesnola (1832–1904), who was born in Rivarolo, a small town in Piedmont near Turin in northern Italy. He graduated from the Royal Military Academy of Kailasco in 1851 and fought in the Crimean War, and then moved to the United States in 1860, then he served as American Consul to Cyprus from 1865 to 1876.⁷ Cyprus was particularly rich in cultural relics because of its long history as a center of Mediterranean trade and the birthplace of Aphrodite, the Goddess of love in Greek mythology. Phoenicians, Egyptians, Greeks, and Romans once ruled there, leaving behind symbols of a fusion of local art styles with theirs. Thus, “Cyprus offers a continuous history of the evolution of art in the ancient world.” During the 11 years of the consul office, Cesnola surveyed the relics in Cyprus and found 16 ancient cities, excavated 15 temples, 65 cemeteries, and more than 60 thousand tombs. He collected 35,573 antiquities which included more than 2000 statues, about 14,000 potteries, nearly 4000 glasses, and so on.⁸ In the years of 1879–1904, he became the first director of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, these Cypriot antiquities were the original collections of the museum. The pig-shaped rattles were exactly both excavated by Cesnola in Cyprus.

Cesnola’s archaeological report, *Cyprus: its ancient cities, tombs, and temples: a narrative of researches and excavations during ten years’ residence* (1877) recorded that the pig-shaped rattles were found in the tombs of Alambra.⁹

Moreover, the Cyprus Museum was founded in 1883 after 4 years of British occupation. John Linton Myres, a British historian, who once taught at Oxford University and then at California University, took in charge of the archaeological excavation in Cyprus from 1894 to 1913.

⁷ Glyn Daniel, *Kaoguxue Yibaiwushinian* 考古学一百五十年 (A Hundred and Fifty Years of Archaeology), translated by Huang Qixu 黄其煦, Wenwu Press, 1987, pp. 219–220; Cao Shiwen 曹世文, Huang Jifang 黄季方: *Meiguo Mingren Cidian* 美国名人词典 (Dictionary of American Celebrity). Huaxia Press, 1991, p. 682.

⁸ C. Tomkins, *Shangren yu Shoucang Dadubui Yishu Bowuguan Chuangjianji* 商人与收藏: 大都会艺术博物馆创建记 (Merchants and Masterpieces: The Story of the Metropolitan Museum of Arts), translated by Zhang Jianxin 张建新, Yilin Press, 2014, p. 41; p. 45.

⁹ Luigi Palma di Cesnola: *Cyprus: its ancient cities, tombs, and temples: a narrative of researches and excavations during ten years’ residence*, 1877, pp. 82–102.

John Linton Myres and Max Ohnefalsch-Richter made a new classification of the collection of the museum and published the *Catalogue of the Cyprus Museum* in 1899. The *Catalogue* records the base information of the child’s rattle: barrel-shaped with pig’s face, eyes perforated, brownish varnish, with confining it to late and Hellenized tombs, being as of symbolic or votive significance.¹⁰

The ceramic in Cyprus can be dated to the Neolithic age (5250–4950 BC). The polished red pottery and the red-on-white pottery with linear and floral designs unearthed at Torouli on the north coast are the oldest ceramic artifacts ever found in Cyprus.¹¹ However, the pig-shaped rattle in Cyprus is the heritage of ancient Greek culture.¹²

It is of great significance that Aristotle, the ancient Greek thinker, praised the invention of the rattle in VIII. vi, §§2,² his *Politics*:

Children, too, should always have something to keep them occupied; and the rattle of Archytas (which parents give to children in order to divert their attention and stop them from breaking things in the house) must be counted an admirable invention. Young things can never keep quiet: a real rattle suits children in infancy: and a training in music will serve as a rattle for children of an older growth.¹³

According to Aristotle’s discussion, the Archytas, who lived in central Peloponnese of Ancient Greece during the fourth century BC, had invented a kind of rattle for their children.

As is known to all, in ancient Greek mythology of the famous Trojan War which was fought between the Mycenaean and the Trojans for control of maritime trade, the toy that the queen Hecab gave her son Paris

¹⁰ John L. Myres and Max Ohnefalsch-Richter: *A Catalogue of the Cyprus Museum with a Chronicle of Excavations Undertaken since the British Occupation and Introductory Note on Cypriote Archaeology*, Oxford: at the Clarendon Press, 1899, pp. 31–32; p. 95.

¹¹ Zhang Fuyue张夫也, *Waiguo Gongyi Meishujianshi*外国工艺美术简史 (A Brief History of Foreign Arts and Crafts), Gaodeng Jiaoyu Chubanshe, 2000, p. 50.

¹² For the Hellenization of Cyprus, see in Giorgos Papantoniou: *Religion and Social Transformations in Cyprus: From the Cypriot Basileis to the Hellenistic Strategos*, Brill, 2012.

¹³ *The Politics of Aristotle*, translated by Ernest Barker, Oxford at the Clarendon Press, 1946, p. 346.

was a rattle before the war, which became the proof for her to confirm the identity of her son.¹⁴

The pig-shaped rattles in the museum give us a profound inspiration that the mutual learning among the ancient cultures is one of the main reasons for the born and sustain of a civilization. The Greek and the Middle East civilizations had mutual influence at the same time. Cyprus was part of the Hellenic region during the period from third century BC to first century BC. John Rand made a comprehensive study of the circulation of Cypriot ceramics from the third century BC to the third century AD.¹⁵ The little pig-shaped rattle developed from ancient Greek culture and had deep cultural accumulation.

Although many scholars have explored the role of the Cypriot pig-shaped terracotta figurines in ritual worship, it is very obvious that they appeared in children's tombs as children's toys. It is not too much to describe these pig-shaped rattles as "children's space" on the Silk Road. Cypriot rattle of pig-shaped terracotta figurine has three basic elements: pottery, pig-shaped, and children's sound toy. It contains a small piece of dry clay and rattles when it is shaken. Children will be amused by the rattle, so as to cultivate children's hearing, which helps to improve children's musical and language skills, and the pig also has the significance of guarding children. As we know, Chinese children's rattle with a long history is a kind of sound toy with the same as the one of Cyprus, they are both the same type of toys with similar principles. Therefore, the rattle is common to the children in the ancient world, but not totally in a uniform between the East and West civilizations with their own characteristics. Now let's turn our attention to the Chinese rattles.

2 ANCIENT CHINESE PIG-SHAPED CERAMIC FIGURINES, CERAMIC BELLS, AND RATTLE DRUMS

As the oldest children's toy in China, the rattle drum is generally believed to date back to the pre-Qin 秦 period (3000 BC-221 BC). The first Chinese rattle drum was called "táo" 鼗, mentioned in the entry of *Xiaoshi* 小師 (Junior Preceptor) in *Chunguan* 春官 (Ministry Rites) of *Zhouli*:

¹⁴ Robert Graves, *the Greek Myths: The Complete and Definitive Edition*, Penguin, 2017, 159.o.?

¹⁵ John Lund: *A study of the circulation of ceramics in Cyprus from the 3rd Century BC to the 3rd Century AD*. Aarhus: Aarhus University Press, 2015.

“the *Xiaoshi*: take charge of instructing court music such as the drum, *tao* 鼗, *zhu* 柷, *yu* 敔, *xun* 埙, *xiao* 箫, *guan* 管, *xian* 弦, *ge* 歌,” and “make the beats all music being in harmony.” The famous scholar Zheng Xuan 郑玄, who lived in the Han Dynasty, made an annotation on this entry, and explained what was the *Tao*: “It is seemed like a drum, but smaller; if we hold its handle and shake it, the projectiles on its sides will beat itself.”¹⁶ Accordingly, the *Tao* in the period of pre-Qin had similar form with Chinese rattle drum today. As for the uses, the “rattle drum” recorded in *Zhou Li* is not a children’s toy, but a kind of musical instrument for ceremony music, and usually used to show the etiquettes in official ritual, takes the similar ritual function with the one in Cyprus.

Then, let’s discuss the style of Chinese ceramic pig. Since the Neolithic Age, China has formed an agriculture-oriented pattern, and pigs tend to be raised as livestock. The Hemudu (河姆渡) ceramic pig from around 7000 BC in the National Museum of China is made of gray pottery. Its fat, round body and a drooping belly, make it look like a lively domestic pig. Unearthed from Hemudu of Yuyao (余姚) of Zhejiang province in 1973, the ceramic pig indicates that the stock farming was raised during the late Neolithic period.¹⁷

Some scholars argue that the earliest figurative toy appeared in China was about 5000 years ago in the Neolithic Age and cited the ceramic pig unearthed from the Dawenkou 大汶口 site in Shandong province as the proof.¹⁸ Actually, in Chinese sites of the early Neolithic Age, the ceramic sculptures and pottery appeared at the same time. The ceramic human, pig, and sheep heads were unearthed at the site of Peiligang 裴里李岗 culture which can be dated to 7000 years ago. And then the pig-shaped ceramic whistle and ceramic bird in the Banpo 半坡 site of Xi’an; the ceramic pig, sheep, and fish in the site of Hemudu culture; the pig-shaped ceramic *Yu* 鬻 (pottery for cooking gruel) in the site of Dawenkou

¹⁶ Yang Tianyu 杨天宇, *Zhouli Yizhu* 周礼译注 (The Translation and Annotation of the Rites of Zhou), Shanghai Guji Press, 2016, pp. 449–450.

¹⁷ Plate 23, Zhejiangsheng Wenguanhui 浙江省文管会, Zhejiangsheng Bowuguan 浙江省博物馆, “Hemuduyizhi Diyiqi Fajuebaogao” 河姆渡遗址第一期发掘报告 (The first excavation report of Hemudu Site) in *Kaogu Xuebao* 考古学报, 1978, Vol. 1.

¹⁸ Jiang Feng 蒋风 edit., *Wanjū Lun* 玩具论 (Theory of Toys), Xiwang Press, 1996, p. 135.

culture, appeared in succession.¹⁹ Moreover, the ceramic pig toys which were found in many sites of the late Neolithic Age also can prove my opinion.

The Han Dynasty was founded during the early period of the third century when at the same time as the Cypriot pig-shaped ceramic figurines. With the development of agricultural civilization, the images of pigs in the Han Dynasty began to be enriched and their shapes became more diverse, among which the ceramic pigs were most common in this period. The pig-shaped ceramic figures thrived on the development of agricultural civilization. All sorts of pig-shaped ceramic figurines of the Han Dynasty are very numerous. Ceramic pigs unearthed in the Xi'an region are mostly concentrated in Xi'an, Xianyang, Baoji, and Huaxian. "According to statistics, a total of more than 560 ceramic pigs were unearthed from 122 tombs."²⁰ The array of ceramic pigs unearthed in Xi'an that arranged in neat rows is sufficient to reflect the prosperity of six livestock at that time. However, it is worth noting that although the pigs themselves have the function of entertaining children, so far, no pigs with internal sound have been found.

A large number of sound toys have been found in prehistoric cultural sites, which confirm the long history of Chinese sound toys. These audible toys are all made of clay, which are called ceramic bells, ceramic balls, or rattles in some archaeological excavation reports. They are generally shaped with flat bottoms, dome-shaped tops, and perforated edges, with the ceramic balls in it which can rattle when shaken. Structurally, they are undoubtedly ceramic handbells, which appeared in the Neolithic Age, and can be seen as the original form of Chinese rattle drums. Prof. Xianai 夏鼐 believes that it was given to children as a toy in the Majiayao 马家窑 culture.²¹ In terms of category, this is a kind of ringing or sound toy for children. Such ceramic bell was found in the site of Majiayao culture of Gansu province in the late Neolithic period 5000 years ago, as well as later in the site of Qijia 齐家 culture.

¹⁹ Zhang Xu 张旭, *Zhongguo Gudai Taoqi* 中国古代陶器 (Ancient Chinese pottery), Dizhi Press, 1999, p. 28.

²⁰ Liu Huan 刘欢, The Preliminary Study of Pottery Pig in the Han Dynasty Unearthed in Shaanxi Area 陕西地区出土汉代陶猪的初步研究, Cultural Relics in Southern China 南方文物, Vol.1 2014.

²¹ Xia Nai 夏鼐, *Kaoguxue Lunji* 考古学论文集 (Archaeological Papers), Kexue Press, 1961, p. 28.

The ceramic bell of Qijia culture is oblate and has a little ceramic ball that makes a crisp sound when shaken.²² Moreover, there are many other pre-historical cultural sites where ceramic bells are found in China. Among them, such as the following ones have a bigger number of bells: the site of Qujialing 屈家岭 of Jingshan 京山 of Hubei province, the site of Zhujiazui 朱家嘴 of Jingshan, the site of Maojiashan 毛家山 of Jiangling of Hubei province, the site of Qingshuitan 清水滩 of Yichang of Sichuan province, the site Ci’gang 茨岗 of Tangjiashai of Henan province, the site of Sanyuangong 梦溪三元宫 of Panxian of Hunan province, the site of Xudun 圩墩 of Jiangsu province, the site of Xuejiagang 薛家岗 of Qianshan of Anhui province.²³ Especially the sites of Lintao and Lanzhou of Gansu province, Wushan of Sichuan province, and Qianshan of Anhui province, which are of the culture of the late Neolithic age, have been found that the rattles are all placed in children’s tombs as a funerary object. It can corroborate Prof. Xianai’s perspective that the ceramic rattles are the toys for Chinese children of the Neolithic age.

The ceramic bell is a kind of musical instrument that makes a sound by shaking, and it is also a classic work of ancient pottery. As children’s toys, its function is granting every child a happy childhood as the wishes of adults. As an educational method, the use of ceramic rattles as children’s toys has been developing until the popularity of the rattle drums among the folk today. Some musical archaeologists think that it is not appropriate to equate rattle instruments with ceramic bells and make distinction between them. Actually, as children’s toys, whatever the name, ceramic bells should not be in the late Neolithic period.

The Chinese rattle drums (*Tao* 鼗) are an important embodiment of the Eastern and Western cultures blended along the ancient Silk Road. The image of the children playing rattle drums has appeared as a part of a Buddhist story depicted in the murals of No. 8, No. 184, and No. 186 caves of Kizil Grottoes in Xinjiang.²⁴ The Gandhara art elements in Chinese Buddhist art are essentially a combination of Greek art or

²² Unearthed in Gangu County, Gansu Province, China. Source: Gangu County Net.

²³ Zou Bo 邹博 edit., *Zhongguo Guocuiyisbu Tongjian: Minjian Gongyi* 中国国粹艺术通鉴·民间工艺卷 (A Guide to The Quintessence of Chinese Art: the volume of Folk Craft), Xianzhuang Shuju, 2011, p. 351.

²⁴ Chen Yu 陈钰, He Qi 何奇 edit, *Kezier Shiku Bibhua Gushijingxuan* 克孜尔石窟壁画故事精选 (Selected Stories of Kizil Grottoes Murals), Xinjiang Renmin Press, 2005, pp. 228–230.

Western classical art including Roman elements and Buddhism. With the prosperity and development of the Silk Road, the Dunhuang frescoes that finished during the period of Sui and Tang Dynasties were the concentrated places where the *Tao* (rattle drums) were depicted. The image of *Tao* in the Dunhuang frescoes is “a wooden handle with several (from 1 to 4) small drums strung on it,” “(in these frescoes), the musicians who play the the *Tao* drum often perform two kinds of music instruments, as well as take a *Jilou* 鸡娄 drum (a kind of waist drum from the center Asian) under their armpits.”²⁵ The *Tao* drum on the Dunhuang frescoes, the most representative of which are the *Zhangyichao Chuxing Tu* 张议潮出行图 (Outing Scene of Zhang Yichao) and *Songguo Heneijun Furen Chuxing* 宋国河内郡夫人出行图 (Tu Excursion of Scene of the Lady of county of Henei of Song Excursion), shows the unique performance form of the banquet music of the Sui and Tang dynasties, with purely musical and dance function, rather than as children’s toys.

The Chinese rattle drum (*Tao* 鼗) was not just used as the instrument for musical performance but also popular along the Silk Road as children’s toys. *Liudu Jijing* 六度集经 (Sutra on the collection of the six perfections), the Buddhist sutra which compiled and translated by the Buddhist monk *Kang Senghui* 康僧会 of the Wu kingdom during the period of Three Kingdoms (220–280 AD), referred to the scene of a child playing the Chinese rattle drum: “There is a child nearby who is shaking the *Tao* with scamper around, the merchant looks at him (her) and laughs again.” It is a Buddhist story, but it reflects the fact that Chinese rattle drums were used as children’s toys in China in third century AD. A researcher believes that: “The China of the third century A. D. was at the end of the Han Dynasty, fell into the chaos of the three kingdoms, so we can definitely make that assumption that it is the times of Han-Wei period (the 3rd century) when the use of *Tao* changed from the performance of elegant Music to the children’s toys during. In this regard, the Chinese rattle drum has been used as a children’s toy for at least 1500 years.”²⁶ This opinion undoubtedly points to one cue that the Chinese rattle drum originated from the musical instruments for the ceremonial music, and later popular among the society as the children’s toys. However, according

²⁵ Fan Peng 范鹏, *Longshang Xuerenwencun: Zheng Ruzhong* 陇上学人文存·郑汝中卷 (*Longshang* (Gansu) Scholar Literature: the volume of Zheng Ruzhong), Gansu Renmin Press, 2016, pp. 127–128.

²⁶ Zou Bo 邹博 edit, *Zhongguo Guocuiyishu Tongjian: Minjian Gongyi*, p. 354.

to my introduction before, there is another cue of the evolution of the Chinese rattle drum which can be traceable to the ancient children’s sound toys in the folk such as the rattle bells thousand years ago.

Therefore, in Chinese history, the rattle drum was not only the common musical instrument of the ceremonial music, but also a kind of common folk children’s sound toy. We can see the image that the peddlery of medieval China is shaking the rattle drum in the painting of *Huolang Tu* 货郎图 (Scene of Peddlery) by *Li Song* 李嵩 who lived in the Southern Song Dynasty during the thirteenth century. In the painting, the drum’s handle is like a gourd’s vine, and the drum is shaped like a pot, its two ears are like a leather strip. When hold the handle and shake it, the leather strip beats the drum and makes a sound. The scene of the painting shows us the medieval Chinese peddlers attracted customers by shaking the rattle drum which can be seen as the embodiment of its commercial functions.

In the pictures, we can clearly see that the shape of the Chinese rattle drum is quite different from the Cypriot rattle.

Sound toys refer to toys that can make sound, and there are kinds of categories of them which contain numerous scientific principles and folk aesthetic concepts.²⁷ The rattle drum is a typical one among the sound toys in China. There are 976 rattle toys in the Chinese Children’s Toy Museum in Shanghai, ranging from rattle drums as Chinese folk toys to painted ceramic bells.²⁸ Chinese rattle drums for children are derived from the ceramic bells’ acoustic principle which are the same as Cypriot rattles. However, the shape of Chinese rattle drums as children’s toys that originate from the *Tao*, an ancient musical instrument, is completely different from Cypriot rattles.

3 THE “CHILDREN SPACE” FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF SILK ROAD: UNIVERSALITY AND UNIQUENESS

Communities have existed since the beginning of human society. Seeing from the perspective of a community of shared future for mankind, the interesting story of the Cypriot pig-shaped rattle as a children toy and the

²⁷ Zhang Ben 张奔edit, *Zhongguo Minjian Meishu Jiaocheng* 中国民间美术教程 (Chinese folk art course), Chongqing Daxue Press, 2011, p. 148.

²⁸ Zhang Haishui 张海水, *Zhongmeiertong Bowuguan Yanjiu* 中美儿童博物馆研究 (Sino-American Children’s Museum research), 2016, p. 38.

Chinese rattle drum (*Tao*) is a history of the quiet connection between Eastern and Western cultures, which has also left a deep imprint in the cultural memory with each other. The human cultural links are much longer than direct contacts between the East and West that are familiar to us today, it is just as the ancient Silk Road had a long history of folk exchanges before Zhang Qian opened the Western regions in the Han Dynasty. During the times of the second century BC, in the orient world, Zhang Qian of the Han Dynasty trekked across the endless desert, Huangmen—translator黄门议长 voyaged through the boundless ocean; and meanwhile in the Mediterranean of the Western world, the people were also trying all manner of means to find the routes to the orient world. Prof. Yang Jüping considers that “The Hellenistic civilization was a pluralistic and unified new civilization formed on the basis of Alexander empire, The Silk Road connecting China and the Mediterranean was completely opened after Zhang Qian traveled to the western regions in the Han Dynasty. Both of them had overlapping points in time and space.”²⁹ In fact, as early as 7000–6000 BC, the early maritime trade had appeared in the Greek Aegean Sea; as early as 8000 years ago, the canoe which was called “China’s first ship” had appeared at Xiaoshan Lake Bridge 萧山跨湖桥 in Zhejiang Province. Greece became a maritime power before 700 BC and later expanded into Great Greece in the fifth century BC, extending from the Atlantic Ocean to the Black Sea in the east. Cyprus is located in the center of East and West maritime trade, and its pottery is one of the important items in maritime trade, which can be the reason for the association of pottery cultures between Cyprus and China.

A general observation of the children’s space under the perspective of the Silk Road throughout the past and present can explain how the different parts of the ancient world connected. Here’s another example according to a news by Tamara Zubchuk in *the Siberian Times* on October 21, 2016: Find-of-the-year by Novosibirsk archaeologists is a toy that entertained prehistoric babies. They find a handmade bear head-shaped children’s rattle, which has 4000 years of history. In North Asia, where

²⁹ Yang Jüping 杨巨平, “Xilahuawenmingyu Sichouzhiluguanxi Yanjiude Huiguyu Zhanwang” 希腊化文明与丝绸之路关系研究的回顾与展望 (Retrospect and Prospect Studies on the Relationship between Hellenistic Civilization and the Silk Road), in *Beijingshifan Daxue Xuebao*, 2016, Vol. 3.

the Silk Road stretches, a 4000-year-old child’s rattle is made into a bear’s head: and it’s still rattling!

As the news report said: “The remarkable discovery of one of the oldest toys in the world came from excavations at a Bronze Age settlement in Siberia. Inside it—and it remains sealed—are little stones ‘that make a jingling sound’, said Professor Vyacheslav Molodin, deputy head of Novosibirsk Institute of Archaeology and Ethnography. He told *The Siberian Times*: ‘This is a clay rattle with a visible well-made handle—handy for a child to hold it. It was constructed by clay firing; it is hollow inside. There are little stones inside.’”³⁰ More importantly, the rattle is still working. Compared with the three basic elements of the Cypriot rattle, the difference is that the pig shape is replaced by a bear head, and the rattle’s function as a children’s toy is exactly the same. This example shows the universality of the evolution of human civilization, that is, the basic essence of human civilization is universal. No matter the people of the East and the West, they all carry out music education for children, cultivate and entertain children by applying the acoustic principle. Such universal essence has always been constant from the past to present. The rattle toys attract children’s attention through sound and cultivate children’s concentration. Modern early education strategies have included rattle toys in the training course on children’s intelligence and language communication.³¹

In conclusion, this paper analyzes the Cypriot sound rattle of pig-shaped terracotta figurines and Chinese rattle drums and investigates their respective origins and historical changes from ceremonial musical instruments to children’s toys in the evolution of human civilization. The small rattles, which reflect the essential logics of universality of Sino-foreign cultures, can be traced back to the musical instruments of ancient sacrificial ceremonies and pottery of the late Neolithic period. The universality of Chinese and Greek civilizations is embodied in the small sound toy—children’s rattles, which reflect the correlation between ancient Chinese civilization and ancient Greek civilization. From this, we can understand

³⁰ 4000 year old children’s rattle beautifully crafted as bear cub’s head: and it still rattles! (siberiantimes.com).

³¹ Qi Kaixia 齐开霞 compile and translate, *Mengtaisuoli Zaojiaofangan: 0-3 Sui Zhiliji Yuyanxitong Xunlian Quanshu* 蒙台梭利早教方案 0-3 岁智力及语言系统训练全书 (Montessori’s Preschool Education Guide: Intelligence and Language Training Strategies for 0-3 year-old Babies), Beijing Ligong Daxue Press, 2013, p. 128.

the phenomenon of multicultural symbiosis and integration of human civilization, so it may as well be called “rattle phenomenon.” Through the “rattle phenomenon,” this paper explores the commonness and difference between Eastern and Western children’s cultures, explores the universality and uniqueness of Eastern and Western civilizations, and believes that the rattles of Eastern and Western worlds have their universal essence as well as their cultural uniqueness. The rattle was stylized as a children’s toy and lost its original character as a ceremonial instrument. This change is associated with the prosperous development of children’s education in the East and the West. The rattles of all shapes and sizes from all over the world have a universal function—children’s sound toys. This phenomenon shows that in the evolution of Eastern and Western civilizations, the building of a community with a shared future for mankind is characterized by “You are among us and we are among you,” with solid historical logic and rich practical resources. How to treat children and strive for a better tomorrow for their healthy physical and mental development has long been the concern of the Eastern and Western societies. Music is of great importance to the development and growth of children. Sound toys accompany children’s growth and occupy an important position in children’s minds, which is universal in the East and the West. It is the common responsibility of human community with a shared future to care for the healthy growth of children.

In ancient times, there was inconvenient transportation and information asymmetry existed between China and Cyprus, the direct correlation between children’s toys is not clear, but the ancient human life demands were universal, and it also had always been quiet and indirect cultural transmission, hence there are the “rattle phenomenon” in “children’s space”—a cultural symbiosis and blending phenomenon. The children’s toys of China and Cyprus, which embody the Eastern and Western civilizational compounded characters of symbiosis and uniqueness, are attached to the universal value subject, while they are represented in different forms which perfectly present the diversity of human culture.

To this day, Chinese rattle drums are still popular in some places. A rattle drum given to then-Chinese Premier Li Keqiang during his visit to Zhejiang province was acquired by the National Museum of China on December 8, 2014. As the first collection of the rattle drum in the century-old museum’s history, this rattle drum is an important witness of the enterprising spirit of the people of Yiwu of Zhejiang, most of whom were peddlers going through streets and alleys with shaking the rattle

drums at the early stage of Reform and Opening up. Today, “the rattle drum spirit” has been famous to the world. This “rattle-drum spirit” is of great practical significance to the implementation of the Belt and Road Initiative.

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The Cyprian King Evagoras in Isocrates and the Image of Perfect Kingship in the Contexts of Classical Greek and Chinese Intellectuals

Houliang Lyu

1 THE DEVELOPMENT OF BIOGRAPHY AS A LITERATURE GENRE IN ANCIENT AND MEDIEVAL EUROPE AND CHINA

In the context of ancient Greek literature, βίος originates from the *Evagoras* by Isocrates and is adapted from ἐγκώμιον performed by a female singer at the funeral of the dead.¹ Isocrates was the first to

¹ Friedrich Leo, *Die Griechisch-Römische Biographie nach Ihrer Literarischen Form*, Leipzig: Duck und Verlag von B.G. Teubner, 1901, p. 92.

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adapt ἐγκώμιον into prose² and add a sense of moral education to it, so as to encourage the youths to pursue virtue by following a perfect moral example.³ Through the influence of Xenophon and Theopompus, βίος became an important tool for philosophers to advocate for their own ethical doctrines.⁴ According to Plato and Aristotle, ὑπερή cannot really be taught; it hides in the innermost of human soul and has to be recalled to life. In their eyes, dialogue and βίος are the two main tools for moral education. Philosophical dialogues can arouse the innate moral concepts in the human soul and lead them to study the meaning of life; while βίος in praise of heroes exhibits ideal lifestyles for the readers and could shape their positive characters. Among the followers of Socrates, Xenophon is the pioneer of biographical composition,⁵ who produced the influential *Agesilaos* in prose. In the Hellenistic period, as the imperial government's impact on social life increased, biographies of monarchs became popular among Greek philosophers.⁶ Theopompus, one disciple of Isocrates,⁷ composed the biography of Philip II in 58 books,⁸ which offers a narrative of this monarch according to the mode established by Isocrates.⁹ According to the introduction of Dionysius of Halicarnassus, the most significant feature of this work is its moral sense.¹⁰ The biography written by Theopompus was widely read in the Greek and Roman world.¹¹ Aristoxenus and Aristo of Chios composed similar biographies after Theopompus,¹² perhaps also following the tradition of Isocrates.

² Isoc. *Evag.* 8.

³ Isoc. *Evag.* 5.

⁴ Albrecht Dihle, *Greek and Latin Literature of the Roman Empire, From Augustus to Justinian*, Manfred Malzahn, trans., London & New York: Routledge, 1989, p. 191.

⁵ Arnaldo Momigliano, *The Development of Greek Biography*, Cambridge & Massachusetts, Harvard University Press, 1971, p. 47.

⁶ Momigliano, *The Development of Greek Biography*, p. 73; John Marincola, *Greek Historians*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001, p. 107.

⁷ Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Letter to Gnaeus Pompeius*, 6.

⁸ Paul Cartledge, *Agesilaos and the Crisis of Sparta*, London: Duckworth, 1987, pp. 68–69; Tim Duff, *The Greek and Roman Historians*, London: Bristol Classical Press, 2003, p. 46.

⁹ Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Letter to Gnaeus Pompeius*, 6.

¹⁰ Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Letter to Gnaeus Pompeius*, 6.

¹¹ Cartledge, *Agesilaos and the Crisis of Sparta*, p. 69.

¹² Momigliano, *The Development of Greek Biography*, p. 75, p. 81.

In the first century B.C. and the first century A.D., Nepos and Plutarch further adapted βίος into a biographical historiography. Biography gradually developed into the most popular historical genre in the late Antiquity, Carolingian Dynasty and the Byzantine Empire.

Nevertheless, in world cultural history, biographical literature and biographical historiography are not a privilege of ancient Greek and Roman culture. In ancient China, *Guo Yu*, *Zuo Zhuan*, *Lun Yu* and *Meng Zi* already contain rich biographical elements of Duke Huan of Qi, Duke Wen of Jin, King Goujian of Yue, Confucius and Mencius. From *Shi Ji* and *Han Shu* on, biographical history becomes the orthodox genre for the narrative of the history of former dynasties. The 24 official ancient Chinese biographical histories, as well as *Xin Yuan Shi*, *Qing Shi Gao* and *Nan Ming Shi* by Haiyue Qian supplemented by modern scholars left for us rich and valuable materials of biographical historiography.

A common feature of the development of ancient Greek and Chinese biography is that heroes coming from the “cultural frontier” play an important role in both cultural contexts. On the one hand, these cultural frontiers are closely connected to the Greek or Chinese world; on the other hand, these regions also have their own local characters. The experience of the legendary heroes from these cultural frontiers is to some extent exotic to Greek and Chinese readers, but also has an important or even decisive impact on the political, military and culture affairs of the main culture. Therefore, it is no wonder that they became the focus of biographical literature in both the West and the East. The Cyprian King Evagoras I (411–374 B.C.) and King Goujian of Yue (c. 520–465 B.C.) are two “excellent kings” in ancient Greek and Chinese biographical literature. This paper will compare the idealized images of kingship in the *Evagoras* by Isocrates and in Book I of *Yue Yu*, *Biography of King Goujian of Yue* in *Shi Ji*, *Yue Jue Shu* as well as *Wu Yue Chun Qiu* and analyse the similarity and variety of political concepts in the Mediterranean world and East Asia before the Silk Road was connected.

2 EVAGORAS I IN ISOCRATES AND KING GOUJIAN OF YUE IN *GUO YU*

As the inventor of prose biography in ancient Greek literature, Isocrates admitted that his *Evagoras* was adapted from the funeral *ἐγκώμιον*. He explains in *Evagoras* 8–11 that

Οἶδα μὲν οὖν ὅτι χαλεπὸν ἔστιν ὁ μέλλω ποιεῖν, ἀνδρὸς ἀρετὴν διὰ λόγων ἐγκωμιάζειν ... τοῖς μὲν γὰρ ποιηταῖς πολλοὶ δέδονται κόσμοι καὶ γὰρ πλησιάζοντας τοὺς θεοὺς τοῖς ἀνθρώποις οἶόν τ' αὐτοῖς ποιῆσαι καὶ διαλεγομένους καὶ συναγωνιζομένους οἷς ἂν βουληθῶσι, καὶ περὶ τούτων δηλῶσαι μὴ μόνον τοῖς τεταγμένοις ὀνόμασιν, ἀλλὰ τὰ μὲν ξένοις, τὰ δὲ καινοῖς, τὰ δὲ μεταφοραῖς, καὶ μηδὲν παραλιπεῖν, ἀλλὰ πᾶσι τοῖς εἶδεσι διαποικίλαι τὴν ποίησιν· τοῖς δὲ περὶ τοὺς λόγους οὐδὲν ἕξεστι τῶν τοιοῦτων, ἀλλ' ἀποτόμως καὶ τῶν ὀνομάτων τοῖς πολιτικοῖς μόνον καὶ τῶν ἐνθυμημάτων τοῖς περὶ αὐτὰς τὰς πράξεις ἀναγκαῖόν ἐστι χρῆσθαι. πρὸς δὲ τούτοις οἱ μὲν μετὰ μέτρων καὶ ῥυθμῶν ἅπαντα ποιοῦσιν, οἱ δ' οὐδενὸς τούτων κοινοῦσιν· ἅ τοςαύτην ἔχει χάριν, ὥστ' ἂν καὶ τῇ λέξει καὶ τοῖς ἐνθυμημασιν ἔχη κακῶς, ὅμως αὐταῖς ταῖς εὐρυθμίαις καὶ ταῖς συμμετρίαις ψυχαγωγῶσι τοὺς ἀκούοντας. γνοίη δ' ἂν τις ἐκείθεν τὴν δύναμιν αὐτῶν· ἦν γὰρ τις τῶν ποιημάτων τῶν εὐδοκιμούντων τὰ μὲν ὀνόματα καὶ τὰς διανοίας καταλίπη, τὸ δὲ μέτρον διαλύσει, φανήσεται πολὺ καταδέεστερα τῆς δόξης ἢς νῦν ἔχομεν περὶ αὐτῶν. ὅμως δὲ καίπερ τοςοῦτον πλεονεκτοῦσης τῆς ποιήσεως, οὐκ ὀκνητέον, ἀλλ' ἀποπειρατέον τῶν λόγων ἔστιν, εἰ καὶ τοῦτο δυνήσονται, τοὺς ἀγαθοὺς ἄνδρας εὐλογεῖν μηδὲν χεῖρον τῶν ἐν ταῖς ᾠδαῖς καὶ τοῖς μέτροις ἐγκωμιαζόντων.

I am fully aware that what I propose to do is difficult—to eulogize in prose the virtues of a man. ... For to the poets is granted the use of many embellishments of language, since they can represent the gods as associating with men, conversing with and aiding in battle whomsoever they please, and they can treat of these subjects not only in conventional expressions, but in words now exotic, now newly coined, and now in figures of speech, neglecting none, but using every kind with which to embroider their poesy. Orators, on the contrary, are not permitted the use of such devices; they must use with precision only words in current use and only such ideas as bear upon the actual facts. Besides, the poets compose all their works with metre and rhythm, while the orators do not share in any of these advantages; and these lend such charm that even though the poets may be deficient in style and thoughts, yet by the very spell of their

rhythm and harmony they bewitch their listeners. The power of poetry may be understood from this consideration; if one should retain the words and ideas of poems which are held in high esteem, but do away with the metre, they will appear far inferior to the opinion we now have of them. Nevertheless, although poetry has advantages so great, we must not shrink from the task, but must make the effort and see if it will be possible in prose to eulogize good men in no worse fashion than their encomiasts do who employ song and verse. (Larue van Hook trans.)

Isocrates introduces the Greek moral philosophy in the fourth century B.C. to replace poetical elements, such as metres and myths, in the traditional funeral ἐγκώμιον. His creative invention shaped prose biography into a useful tool to present perfect virtues for Isocrates and other Greek philosophers. Its effect is more solid than abstract admonishment, and more credible than fictional poems.¹³ Isocrates' *Evagoras* chooses the Cyprian king Evagoras I as the hero and describes him as a noble, handsome, robust, modest, pious, wise, just, moderate, loving king who led his people to defeat the Persian army and offered his children good education. Together with his two other Cyprian writings, namely *To Nicoles*¹⁴ and *Nicoles*,¹⁵ Isocrates' *Evagoras* describes the ideal kingship in the minds of himself as well as other Greek intellectuals, expresses his hope that a powerful, mild, moderate and rational monarchy could defend the Greek world against the invasion of the Persian Empire and restore freedom, peace and prosperity for Greek poleis.

At the same time, another aim of the composition of the *Evagoras* is to produce a textbook of morality for the offsprings of Evagoras I. Isocrates wrote at the very end of the biography that

¹³ But Isocrates also drew many poetic elements from Pindar's works. See William H. Race, "Pindaric Encomium and Isocrates' Evagoras," *Transactions of the American Philological Association* (1974–2014), 1987, Vol. 117, p. 131, p. 155.

¹⁴ Isoc. *To Nicoles*, 9–11.

¹⁵ Isoc. *Nicoles*, 28.

ὦν ἕνεκα καὶ μᾶλλον ἐπεχείρησα γράφειν τὸν λόγον τοῦτον, ἡγούμενος καὶ σοὶ καὶ τοῖς σοῖς παισὶ καὶ τοῖς ἄλλοις τοῖς ἀπ' Εὐαγόρου γεγονόσι πολὺ καλλίστην ἂν γενέσθαι ταύτην παράκλησιν, εἴ τις ἀθροίσας τὰς ἀρετὰς τὰς ἐκείνου καὶ τῷ λόγῳ κοσμήσας παραδοίη θεωρεῖν ὑμῖν καὶ συνδιατρίβειν αὐταῖς. τοὺς μὲν γὰρ ἄλλους προτρέπομεν ἐπὶ τὴν φιλοσοφίαν ἐτέρους ἐπαινοῦντες, ἴνα ζηλοῦντες τοὺς εὐλογομένους τῶν αὐτῶν ἐκείνοις ἐπιτηδευμάτων ἐπιθυμῶσιν, ἐγὼ δὲ σὲ καὶ τοὺς σοὺς οὐκ ἄλλοτρίοις παραδείγμασι χρώμενος ἀλλ' οἰκείοις παρακαλῶ, καὶ συμβουλεύω προσέχειν τὸν νοῦν, ὅπως καὶ λέγειν καὶ πράττειν μηδενὸς ἧττον δυνήσει τῶν Ἑλλήνων. (Isoc. *Evag.* 76–77)

For these reasons especially I have undertaken to write this discourse because I believed that for you, for your children, and for all the other descendants of Evagoras, it would be by far the best incentive, if someone should assemble his achievements, give them verbal adornment, and submit them to you for your contemplation and study. For we exhort young men to the study of philosophy by praising others in order that they, emulating those who are eulogized, may desire to adopt the same pursuits, but I appeal to you and yours, using as examples not aliens, but members of your own family, and I counsel you to devote your attention to this, that you may not be surpassed in either word or deed by any of the Hellenes. (Larue van Hook trans.)

Besides establishing an ideal image of kingship and a perfect example for the children of Evagoras to study moral philosophy, as a writer familiar with the Cyprian affairs, Isocrates also inserted some reliable and valuable materials illustrating the political, economic and cultural developments of Cyprus in the fourth century B.C. They provide literary evidence for the important political, military and diplomatic role played by Cyprus between the Greek world and the Persian Empire, as well as the economic and cultural prosperity it enjoyed during the reigns of Evagoras I of the Salamis Dynasty and other political leaders. According to Isocrates, Evagoras restored his family's control of the cities in Cyprus by defeating Phoenicians. He also rebuilt city walls, organized a fleet, so as to make Cyprus into an important military power in the Mediterranean world.¹⁶

¹⁶ Isoc. *Evag.* 47–48, which could be partially confirmed by modern archaeological excavations Cf. E. Malcolm Davies, “The Problem of the Missing Harbour of Evagoras at

After his accession, Evagoras I encouraged the immigration from Greek poleis, as well as the adoption of Greek alphabet in Cyprus.¹⁷ Emigrants from Greece generally admitted that the government of Cyprus under the reign of Evagoras I was milder, more benevolent and more just than their hometowns.¹⁸ Together with the image of Evagoras I as an ideal king, the valuable information about ancient Cyprus left everlasting marks in the historical memory of the Western intellectuals.¹⁹

In ancient China and in the early fifth century B.C., which is not far from the reign of Evagoras I, King Goujian of Yue, a king of the traditional cultural frontier of Huaxia civilization at that time, defeated the powerful King Fuchai of Wu and attracted the attention from authors of *Guo Yu*, *Zuo Zhuan*, *Shi Ji*, *Yue Jue Shu* and *Wu Yue Chun Qiu*. He also serves as an important historical figure who witnessed the development of biographical history in ancient China.

In the strict sense, *Guo Yu*, which was perhaps the first work that shaped the image of King Goujian of Yue, is a compilation of speeches of famous historical figures instead of a mature biography. Nevertheless, the existence of biographical elements in *Guo Yu* is beyond any disputation. Book III and Book IV of *Jin Yu* can be, respectively, taken as the biographies of Duke Hui of Jin and Duke Wen of Jin. Book I of *Yue Yu* should also be taken as an excellent biographical narrative of the political career of King Goujian of Yue. It is noteworthy that the choice, organization and narrative of biographical materials in this work are already highly mature. The very beginning of the narrative successfully brings the reader into the first exciting highlight of Goujian's political career,

Salamis, Cyprus: a review of the evidence and pointers to a solution," *The International Journal of Nautical Archaeology*, 2012, 41.2: pp. 364–365. Many thanks for Dr. He Cheng in School of History and Culture, Huazhong Normal University, who shared this important information and offered many other valuable suggestions for the revision of this paper when she proofreads the manuscript for me.

¹⁷ Isoc. *Evag.* 49–50.

¹⁸ Isoc. *Evag.* 51.

¹⁹ Anna Satraki, "The Iconography of Basileis in Archaic and Classical Cyprus: Manifestations of Royal Power in the Visual Record," *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research*, No. 370 (November 2013), p. 123, p. 139.

越王勾践栖于会稽之上，乃号令于三军曰：“凡我父兄昆弟及国子姓，有能助寡人谋而退吴者，吾与之共知越国之政。”大夫种进对曰：“臣闻之贾人，夏则资皮，冬则资絺，旱则资舟，水则资车，以待乏也。夫虽无四方之忧，然谋臣与爪牙之士，不可不养而择也。譬如蓑笠，时雨既至必求之。今君王既栖于会稽之上，然后乃求谋臣，无乃后乎？”勾践曰：“苟得闻子大夫之言，何后之有。”执其手而与之谋，遂使之行成于吴。²⁰

King Goujian of Yue was trapped on the Mountain Kuaiji. He announced to his followers that “if anyone of my relatives can save me this time and defeat the army of Wu, I am willing to share my kingship with him.” Wenzhong, one of Goujian’s minister, answered him that “a good salesman stores clothes for winter in summer, clothes for summer in winter; he prepares boats in drought and vehicles in flood, so as to make preparation for potential opportunities and accidents in advance. Even if our country was in no crisis, you as the king still have to choose wise advisers and train competent generals. They are like raincoats and are necessary whenever it rains. You are already trapped on the Mountain Kuaiji and you begin to looking for advisers now, isn’t it too late?” Goujian answered that “as long as I can have such good advice from you, it is never too late.” Goujian took the hand of Wenzhong intimately and discussed with him, and finally persuaded Wenzhong to make peace with King Fuchai of Wu on behalf of him.

The very first sentence of the quotation, “King Goujian of Yue was trapped on the Mountain Kuaiji,” reveals the critical situation of the plot: Goujian was surrounded after military defeat and was facing the threat of capture and death. Goujian reluctantly promised to share of kingship with family members who could rescue the country, but received ironical comments from Wenzhong: a good king should take precautions against difficulty in advance, instead of searching for competent advisers when the situation is already despairing. At that time, King Goujian of Yue (or rather the author of Book I of *Yueyu*) exhibited the first valuable quality of a good king: patience and tolerance. Although he must have very bad mood, Goujian managed to refrain his anger, took Wenzhong’s hand and apologized to him, so as to persuade the latter to serve as the envoy to King Fuchai of Wu, and therefore saved the lives of Goujian and his followers.

After the immediate crisis, Goujian further exhibited his modest attitude and firm determination in front of common people of Yue,

²⁰ Yuangao Xu, *Collected Commentary to Guoyu*, Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company, 2002, pp. 567–568.

勾践说于国人曰：“寡人不知其力之不足也，而又与大国执讎，以暴露百姓之骨于中原，此则寡人之罪也。寡人请更。”于是葬死者，问伤者，养生者，吊有忧，贺有喜，送往者，迎来者，去民之所恶，补民之不足。然后卑事夫差，宦士三百人于吴，其身亲为夫差前马。²¹

Goujian told his people that “I did not recognize how incompetent I was, and came into war against a great power. The result is that dead bodies of our people are exposed on the battlefield. I have to take the responsibility for that and correct my behaviour.” Then he buried the dead, arranged medical treatment for the injured, took care of the survived. He showed sorrow in funerals and delight in celebration. He made proper preparation for the death of elderly people and the birth of babies. He removed unpopular policies and offered people what they are short of. Then he went to serve King Fuchai of Wu. He took 300 nobles to Wu with him, and worked in harness for Fuchai himself.

When Goujian obtained the trust of King Fuchai of Wu and managed to return to Yue and realize his political ambition, the author of Book I of *Yueyu* describes a perfect king in his mind by recording the government of King Goujian of Yue,

勾践之地，南至于句无，北至于御儿，东至于鄞，西至于姑蔑，广运百里。乃致其父母昆弟而誓之曰：“寡人闻，古之贤君，四方之民归之，若水之归下也。今寡人不能，将帅二三子夫妇以蕃。”令壮者无取老妇，令老者无取壮妻。女子十七不嫁，其父母有罪；丈夫二十不娶，其父母有罪。将免者以告，公令医守之。生丈夫，二壶酒，一犬；生女子，二壶酒，一豚。生三人，公与之母；生二人，公与之飧。当室者死，三年释其政；支子死，三月释其政。必哭泣葬埋之，如其子。令孤子、寡妇、疾疹、贫病者，纳宦其子。其达士，洁其居，美其服，饱其食，而摩厉之于义。四方之士来者，必庙礼之，勾践载稻与脂于舟以行。国之孺子之游者，无不餽也，无不歎也，必问其名。非其身之所种则不食，非其夫人之所织则不衣，十年不收于国，民俱有三年之食。²²

The territory of Goujian extends from Gouwu to Yu'er, from Qin to Gumie, which is very broad. Goujian assembled his family members and made an oath, “I hear that in the past people followed good kings like water in the waterfall. Although my government cannot be so successful, I will still try my best to increase the population of our country.” He ordered that young men should not marry old maiden, and old men should not marry young girls. Parents will violate the law if they do not arrange marriage for their daughters at 16 years old, and for their sons at 19 years

²¹ Yuangao Xu, *Collected Commentary to Guoyu*, pp. 569–570.

²² Yuangao Xu, *Collected Commentary to Guoyu*, pp. 570–571.

old. When a woman was about to give birth, Goujian would send a doctor to take care of her. If she gave birth to a boy, she would be rewarded two jars of wine and one dog; if she gave birth to a girl, she would be rewarded two jars of wine and one little pig. If she carried triplets, Goujian would send a baby-sitter to help her. If she carried twins, Goujian would send some food to reward her. If the eldest child of a family died, the family did not have to make tax payments in rice for three years; if another child of a family died, the family did not have to make tax payments in rice that year. Goujian would lament and organize burial for the dead child, as if he were Goujian's own son. He offered employments in his government for children without father or mother, or with unhealthy or poor parents. He provided clean houses, beautiful clothes, good food and rigid education for talents in the country. When scholars came from abroad, Goujian would meet them in the palace and offer them due honour, and accompanied with him on a boat with presents, such as rice and oil, to his destination. When a youth of Yue would go abroad to study, Goujian must treat him to dinner and record his name. Goujian only ate what he planted; he only wore the clothes his wife made. The government of Yue did not levy rice from the people in ten years; and every household had a storage of food for three years.

It is obvious that there is significant variety in language (ancient Greek and ancient Chinese), origin (funeral ἐγκώμιον and compilation of speeches), guideline (Greek moral education and the doctrine of the Legalists), social background (disorder among Greek poleis in the early fourth century B.C. and struggles for hegemony in the late Chunqiu Period). But it is noteworthy that the anonymous author of Book I of *Yueyu* (it is said that Ming Zuoqiu, a famous historian of Lu, compiled and revised the text of *Guoyu*; while the original source of Book I of *Yueyu* cannot be identified) emphasizes the importance of economy, culture, employment of talents and expansion of population, which is highly identical to the achievement of Evagoras in the context of Isocrates. Both Greek thinkers and Chinese historians adapted biography (or biographical elements in history) into an important tool to explain the political ideal of the author, which conveys similar modes of government operated by perfect kingship.

The image of King Goujian of Yue, which was already highly mature in Book I of *Yueyu*, was further developed in *Shiji* by Qian Sima. In the *Life of King Goujian of Yue*, Qian Sima further provides the depiction of the dark side (jealousy and ingratitude) of Goujian's character, which

makes the image of King Goujian of Yue more balanced (while he is still deemed as the representative of good kingship). Qian Sima records that,

范蠡遂去，自齐遗大夫种书曰：“飞鸟尽，良弓藏；狡兔死，走狗烹。越王为人长颈鸟喙，可与共患难，不可与共乐。子何不去？”种见书，称病不朝。人或谗种且作乱，越王乃赐种剑曰：“子教寡人伐吴七术，寡人用其三而败吴，其四在子，子为我从先王试之。”种遂自杀。²³

Fanli went away and wrote to Wenzhong from Qi that “when all birds are already hunted, the good bow would be discarded; when the swift hare is caught, the hunting dog might be killed and made into a dish. Goujian has a long neck and a jutting chin. Such people could cooperate with us in hard times, but would not share the booty with us after the victory. Why do not you leave, too?” Wenzhong read the letter and began to shun from Goujian, claiming that he was seriously ill. Other ministers made a false accusation that Wenzhong was preparing for a conspiracy. King Goujian of Yue sent a sword to Wenzhong and asked the envoy to tell him that “You offered seven pieces of advice for me. And I defeated Wu by only three of them. You still have four pieces of advice unused. Please go to the nether world to serve for my ancestors with them.” So Wenzhong was forced to kill himself by the sword.

Besides, Qian Sima also inserts the episode of Fanli’s success as a merchant after his retirement, so as to make *Life of King Goujian of Yue* more readable.²⁴ His final comment for Goujian admitted the fact that the image of Goujian had been taken as the representative of good kingship, and the role of biographical historiography to convey the political ideal by the depiction of perfect kingship was already generally realized among Chinese historians in the Former Han Dynasty (Qian Sima was born in 145 B.C.):

²³ Qian Sima, *Shiji*, Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company, 1959, pp. 1746–1747.

²⁴ Qian Sima, *Shiji*, pp. 1751–1755.

太史公曰：禹之功大矣，渐九川，定九州，至于今诸夏艾安。及苗裔勾践，苦身焦思，终灭彊吴，北观兵中国，以尊周室，号称霸王。勾践可不谓贤哉！盖有禹之遗烈焉。²⁵

As Taishigong comments, the achievements of Yu are really great. He stopped the floods of nine huge rivers, and provided peaceful life for the whole Huaxia world, whose security relies on his contribution up to now. His offspring, King Goujian of Yue, fought brilliantly and finally defeated the power of Wu. He led his army to the centre of China, honoured the dynasty of Zhou and established his own hegemony. Who can deny that Goujian is an excellent political leader? His success was due to the inheritance of Yu's virtues.

The biographical elements of King Goujian of Yue became even more detailed and dramatical in later relevant works, such as *Yuejueshu* and *Wuyuechunqiu*. His experience of rising after serious defeat gradually developed into the image of an idealized king in ancient Chinese intellectuals' cultural memory, and even to some extent became one permanent element of the spirit of Chinese culture.

²⁵ Qian Sima, *Shiji*, p. 1756.

3 CORRESPONDENCE AND VARIETY OF EVAGORAS I IN ANCIENT GREEK LITERATURE AND KING GOUJIAN OF YUE IN ANCIENT CHINESE HISTORIOGRAPHY

A common feature of the biographical images of Evagoras I and King Goujian of Yue is that they are both heroes from cultural frontiers (Cyprus between Greek civilization and the Persian Empire,²⁶ and Wu and Yue being absorbed into ancient Chinese civilization). Their achievements received the attention of writers from the central areas of the main civilizations (the Attic orator Isocrates and the historian Ming Zuoqiu from Lu), and left their marks in the development of biography as a genre. To some extent, this feature exhibits the tolerance and openness of ancient Greek and Chinese civilizations. Of course, the extant ancient Greek and Chinese documents contain certain biased and hostile narratives or comments of their frontier people as “the Other,” which should be recognized and criticized by modern scholars. But generally speaking, the outlook and historiography of both classical Greece and the contemporary China are healthy, positive, rational and objective. Herodotus, Ctesias, Xenophon, Isocrates and Confucius, Ming Zuoqiu can all evaluate the cities, empires, tribes and local cultures in the known world to them rationally and objectively. They heartedly admitted and appreciated the achievements of Evagoras I and King Goujian of Yue. Their healthy and positive outlook of the world is still valuable in this age of globalization.

Another similarity of the biographies of Evagoras I and King Goujian of Yue is that they were both borrowed by intellectuals and shaped into images of ideal kings, so as to convey moral and political doctrines of authors. Although the languages, moral categories and historical materials for the two heroes vary greatly, the images of the two kings show striking similarities: they were both tough in difficult situations and changed their destiny by great efforts; they both paid great attention to economic development and social justice, so as to provide positive social environment

²⁶ Giorgos Papantoniou, “Cypriot Autonomous Polities at the Crossroads of Empire: The Imprint of a Transformed Islandscape in the Classical and Hellenistic Periods,” *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research*, No. 370 (November 2013), p. 171; Eugene A. Costa, “Evagoras I and the Persians, ca. 411 to 391 B.C.,” *Historia: Zeitschrift für Alte Geschichte*, 1st Qtr., 1974, Bd. 23, H. 1 (1st Qtr., 1974), p. 43.

for their people; they both attracted foreign talents and population to their countries in order to develop native culture and military power and they were both good at diplomacy and led their people defeat powerful enemy by wisdom and courage. The governments of Evagoras I and King Goujian of Yue and the relevant historical memory appeared 300–400 years before the connection of the Silk Road. Obviously, they cannot imitate from each other. The similarity mentioned above is based on the pursuit of peace, justice, wealth and wisdom, as well as the appreciation of heroism and hard-working spirit by intellectuals and people in both the Mediterranean world and ancient China. These common feelings served as the psychological base of communication and cooperation among residents along the Silk Road.

On the other hand, we should also recognize that due to objective varieties of natural environments and historical traditions, the political ideals and images of good kings in the cultural contexts of the ancient Mediterranean world and the Huaxia world are also different from each other. Evagoras I in Isocrates is a typical “philosophy king” in the context of Plato and Xenophon; while the philosophical colour in historical narrative of King Goujian of Yue in *Guoyu* and *Shiji* is absent or hidden. The aggressive policy to encourage birth by Goujian reflects the unique social background of fierce population competition in the contemporary Huaxia world; a similar suggestion also appears in Plato’s *Republic*, but is much milder. Cultural difference is not always the obstacle to the equal communication in harmony among nations; it could also help each civilization to recognize its uniqueness and learn positive elements from others. This is what we can learn from the development of biography as a genre in ancient Greek and ancient Chinese contexts.

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The Contemporary “Belt and Road”:
An Empirical Perspective



China and Southern Europe: Relations and Prospects: A Stakeholder's Perspective

Yiannos Katsourides

China's relationships with a number of countries all over the globe have come under scrutiny in recent years and for many reasons. Scrutiny

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103

became more severe since the Asian giant announced its plans for the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) in 2013. This plan was met with ongoing concern by many Western countries, the European Union (EU) included. Their fear is that China, which is seen as a systemic rival, uses the BRI to provide funds to countries in need and in this way it's not only making inroads in the West but through this practice it renders the recipient countries dependent on funds from China. Simultaneously, China takes control of crucial infrastructure in Western and other countries. However, many countries see a number of benefits for their countries, particularly after the economic crisis of the mid-2000s and the lack of available funds for rebooting their economies.

The chapter utilizes a number of country reports regarding the relationships and prospects between China and Southern Europe, which were the research output of a survey conducted in Cyprus under the auspices of Prometheus Research Institute of which I served as the Director at the time of the survey. The country reports were not published per se because they were meant for internal analytical purposes. What is presented here is a synthesis of some of the major findings emphasizing the prospects for possible cooperation between China and countries of southern Europe in the context of China's BRI. For the purposes of this chapter the countries under consideration include Cyprus, Italy, and Spain.

The methodology of the survey was mainly based on expert surveys from a number of important societal and political stakeholders in each country. Analysis also utilized secondary literature where appropriate. The expert surveys were conducted via a semi-structured questionnaire which was the same for all countries. Experts in each country included among others: people from the Ministries of Finance and Foreign Affairs; of the major political parties; members of the parliament; trade union and employers' associations' officials; academics and researchers. The number of respondents ranged from 10–15 in each country based on availability and willingness to participate in the survey. All interviewees' identity is kept anonymous.

I CHINA AND THE CONTEMPORARY WORLD, CHINA AND THE EUROPEAN UNION

The BRI as this is proposed and implemented by the Chinese government in recent years, cannot be seen in isolation from wider developments taking place not only with regard to China but also all over the world.

Gigantic international projects, like the BRI, tend to upset existing international arrangements and thus invite resistance and opposition.

Since the late twentieth century, China's multifaceted rise has been significantly changing the world's trade and industry equilibrium.¹ China has now become one of the leaders in economic and technological growth.² Associated with China's economic rise has been a mounting assertiveness geopolitically³ that reflects China's growing hard⁴ and soft power capabilities⁵ and one that is profoundly remaking the world's political and economic landscape in a way that a multipolar world seems to be emerging; some even speak of a new bipolar world.⁶ However, China's rise does not go unchallenged with some Western countries (particularly the USA and the UK) questioning China's initiatives and intentions.⁷ U.S. Senator R. Menendez was very clear: "We are in a fierce competition with China. This competition is not only between two countries but one between visions of how we want the world to be".⁸

¹ Grosse, R., Gamso, J. and Nelson, (2021), "R.C. China's Rise, World Order, and the Implications for International Business", *Management International Review*, 61, pp. 1–26, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11575-020-00433-8>; International Monetary Fund (2020). GDP in Current Prices. <https://www.imf.org/external/datamapper/NGDPD@WEO/OEMDC/ADVEC/WEOWORLD>. Accessed 13 June 2021; Linggui, Wang & Zhao Jianguin (Ed.). *The Belt and Road Initiative in Global Context*. International Joint Study Report. China: National Institute for Global Strategy, CASS. Social Science Academic Press, 2017.

² World Bank (2020). *World Development Indicators*. [https://databank.worldbank.org/World-Exports-World-GDP-\(Current-US\\$-Billions\)/id/d1c0bbdb](https://databank.worldbank.org/World-Exports-World-GDP-(Current-US$-Billions)/id/d1c0bbdb). Accessed 12 May 2021.

³ Chang L., NC (2016), "The sources of China's assertiveness: The system, domestic politics or leadership preferences?", *International Affairs*, 92(4), pp. 817–833.

⁴ Robertson, P. E., and Sin, A. (2017). "Measuring hard power: China's economic growth and military capacity", *Defence and Peace Economics*, 28(1), pp. 91–111.

⁵ Shambaugh, D. (2015). "China's soft-power push: The search for respect", *Foreign Affairs*, 94(4), pp. 99–107.

⁶ Dempsey, J. (2012), "The United States and China: The Return of a Bipolar World", <https://carnegieeurope.eu/strategieurope/49969>, Accessed 7 April 2020.

⁷ Zhao, M. (2019), "Is a New Cold War Inevitable? Chinese Perspectives on US–China Strategic Competition", *The Chinese Journal of International Politics*, 12 (3), Autumn, 371–394.

⁸ R. Menendez (2021) interview in *Kathimerini*, 29 August 2021, <https://www.kathimerini.gr/opinion/interviews/561478102/mpomp-menentz-stin-k-pio-asfalisi-ellada-me-proedro-ton-mpainten/>, accessed 30 August 2021.

In this context the BRI has further unsettled the relationships between China and the Western world of which the EU is an integral part. China and the EU have established a strategic partnership relation, which is continually upgrading despite the frictions that occasionally appear, admittedly more often in recent years.⁹ Unlike the US, which opposed it from the start, the Europeans have shown interest in the BRI. All EU member states have joined the China-led Asia Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB), which is designed to lend financial support to BRI-related initiatives. Several projects supported by the AIIB are co-financed by the European Investment Bank (EIB) and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD). Still, in recent years the BRI has attracted criticism from many European capitals. Opinions regarding the BRI in the EU and within the member states are divided.

Some officials, stakeholders and analysts, see the BRI as an excellent opportunity to promote China–EU relations based on cooperation and aimed at fostering mutual respect, understanding, and beneficial interchanges. Others, see China pragmatically as a partner, but also almost everywhere simultaneously as a rival. Beyond economic issues that conceal issues of political dependency there are also other things that inhibit a mutual and honest cooperation between China and the EU: for example, different perceptions on democracy and human rights, institutional design, and international law.¹⁰ As a result, some agree that the EU needs to restrict Chinese investments in strategic sectors, underlining their growing wariness of overdependence and exposure to the political and economic risks emanating from Beijing.¹¹ This was vividly exemplified in a report signed by 27 of the 28 EU member state ambassadors in Beijing

⁹ Maull H. W. (2016), “The politics of the EU: China’s relationship with Europe”, *Asian Journal of Comparative Politics*, 2(1), pp. 55–69; European Commission and European External Action Service (EEAS) (2019), “EU–China—A Strategic Outlook” (JOIN/2019/5), 12 March, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/en/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A52019JC0005>.

¹⁰ Oertel, J. (2020), “The new China consensus: How Europe is growing wary of Beijing”, https://ecfr.eu/publication/the_new_china_consensus_how_europe_is_growing_wary_of_beijing/, Accessed 23 June 2021.

¹¹ Oertel, J. (2020), “The new China consensus: How Europe is growing wary of Beijing”, https://ecfr.eu/publication/the_new_china_consensus_how_europe_is_growing_wary_of_beijing/, Accessed 23 June 2021.

in 2018 (Hungary exempted) accusing the BRI of limiting free trade and providing subsidized Chinese companies with unfair advantages.¹²

Institutionally, both the US and the EU have acted to respond to China's BRI. Washington has created an agency, the US International Development Finance Corporation, which could invest up to 60 billion dollars to counter China's use of "debt-trap projects" to gain influence abroad. The EU has adopted its own connectivity strategy for the Euro-Asian region and an investment screening mechanism clearly aimed at Beijing.¹³ EU member states are grappling with the inherent conflict between short-term economic gains and long-term dependencies in the intensifying geopolitical competition between the US and China. Scholars and stakeholders in south European states acknowledge the complexity in the relationship between the two actors. Moreover, the BRI was announced in a period where the countries of the region were in deep need of financial assistance and funding because of the severe economic crisis of previous years.¹⁴ As the evidence from this survey suggests, the uneasy relationship between the US and China, and particularly the US opposition to further cooperation with China, is something that affects the countries under examination. In what follows I discuss, in brief, each of the three countries examined here, and then I summarize the findings and identify some common patterns and suggestions.

2 ITALY

Italy has shown a great interest for the Chinese initiatives being among the first Western countries to join the AIIB in 2015 and being the first G7 country to adhere to the BRI with the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU). Italy seeks more market access in China for Italian companies and products, as well as more Chinese investments in Italy. The current relations between Italy and China are built around a

¹² Heide, D., Hoppe, T., Scheuer, S. and Stratmann, K. (2018), "EU Ambassadors Band Together Against Silk Road", *Handelsblatt*, 17 April, <https://www.handelsblatt.com/23581860.html>.

¹³ Holslag, J. (2019), *The Silk Road Trap. How China's Trade Ambitions Challenge Europe*, Cambridge: Polity Press.

¹⁴ Morlino, L. and Sottiolotta, S. (2019), "Southern Europe and the Eurozone Crisis Negotiations: Preference Formation and Contested Issues", *South European Society and Politics*, 24:1, pp. 1–28.

solid framework of cooperation and reciprocal exchanges both at the institutional and economic levels.¹⁵ In the background of a technological and commercial rivalry between China and the US, Italy has demonstrated a good degree of openness towards China and the BRI.

The instability of the Italian coalition governments, however, represents an obstacle to further cooperation as it prevents Italy to develop a consistent and coherent over time strategy towards China. There are also important geo-strategic implications to consider since the openness of Italy towards the Chinese initiatives has to be considered within the wider framework of Italian foreign relations.¹⁶ Italy is a member of the EU and as such, it operates under market economy rules and must also comply to the EU competition policies. Additionally, Italy, is a member of NATO and as such, it favors security relations with the Atlantic axis sharing Western concerns on critical issues such as the conditions of human rights and issues of technology security such as the 5G. Italy is concerned with the share of its technologies that could be exposed to cyber-attacks and industrial espionage.

Regardless of the above contextual limitations, the trade exchanges between the two countries are well developed. However, Italy finds itself in a trade deficit, with imports from China surpassing by a great margin its exports to China. In the last decade, Italy has been among the main recipients of Chinese investments together with the United Kingdom and Germany. In 2015, ChemChina's acquisition of Pirelli placed Italy among the top beneficiary of Chinese outflow investments of the year. At the same time, portfolio investments also increased.¹⁷

Italy suffered enormously from the economic crisis. The policies undertaken in the aftermath—largely in the context of austerity—to alleviate the consequences have produced limited results and have created a sense of hostility in the population towards the process of globalization and the

¹⁵ Valeriani, M. (2019), “Southern Europe and the Belt and Road Initiative: the case of Italy”, Unpublished Report.

¹⁶ Valeriani, M. (2019), “Southern Europe and the Belt and Road Initiative: the case of Italy”, Unpublished Report.

¹⁷ Casarini, N. (2016), “When All Roads Lead to Beijing. Assessing China's New Silk Road and its Implications for Europe”, in *The International Spectator*, Vol. 51, No. 4 (December), pp. 95–108.

EU.¹⁸ Following the exit from the crisis, the country has looked for new strategies to boost economic growth and to relaunch its businesses. In this context, the opportunities provided by the BRI resonated well with Italian political and economic actors. The BRI represents important opportunities for Italy in different fields ranging from infrastructure investments to people-to-people exchanges. Chinese investment is seen as facilitating for Italy to come out from its long-lasting stagnation and create a preferential access to the Chinese market through the creation of new economic corridors and the consequent increase of export. The main opportunities are seen to lie in the logistic field with a specific focus on ports and railways infrastructures.

The prospects under the BRI umbrella transcend the economic sphere though, also including important collaborations in the field of culture, environment, and technology.¹⁹ As data show, in 2018 Italy was the third most visited country by Chinese tourists, recording an average of 5 million visitors per year, whereas in the academic year 2017–18, Chinese students accounted for 9% of total foreign students studying in Italy.

Interviews with different stakeholders in Italian society have shown that the “system” is generally in favor of opening to China. At the same time, it is interesting to note that there is a difference between those that “know” about China and those who don’t. Interviewees that can be considered experts on China (such as academics) have shown awareness and were generally familiar with the BRI and what this bears with it. These people generally have a positive attitude towards the opportunities presented by the BRI. People with less or no experience in relation to China were unable to answer most of the questions posed to them and appeared to be more skeptical.

People who work in the various business sectors are aware that the recent worsening of the trade relations between China and the US has opened a window for Italy (and Europe at large) to acquire a more relevant position in trading with China. Business stakeholders have a generally positive attitude towards China and the BRI, seeing China as a market where they can invest and obtain good profits. They also understand the

¹⁸ Valeriani, M. (2019), “Southern Europe and the Belt and Road Initiative: the case of Italy”, Unpublished Report.

¹⁹ Casarini, N. (2019). *Rome-Beijing: Changing the Game Italy’s Embrace of China’s Connectivity Project, Implications for the EU and the US*, Istituto Affari Internazionali (IAI), p. 10.

importance of cultural exchanges as a key element to improve the relations between the two countries. Experts and researchers usually have contacts with their Chinese fellows although it is usually limited to the educational sector. The latter seems to be the sector where relationships develop more, even at an informal level. Educational exchanges and joint programs are seen as the best route to create higher engagement between the two societies, especially in the long run. Investments in cooperation at the civil society level are also deemed essential for the further development of cooperation between the two countries. China and Italy have already established cultural institutes and initiatives in this sector. However, there seems to be space for improvement through newly developed programs.

Cultural diplomacy is highlighted as a key component in the two countries foreign policy. The Chinese community in Italy is viewed as an important asset for China in this respect, since they can provide information on Italian laws, politics, society, and culture. The presence of the Confucius Institute for Chinese language and culture courses has also been recognized as a successful tool to increase awareness of China in Italy. However, direct control of Beijing over this institute creates doubts about the partiality of the Chinese image provided.

Italy's eagerness to attract new investment and benefit its economy from the BRI presents the country with a host of opportunities. However, these opportunities are not risk-free as some of the stakeholders pointed out, because Chinese investment might be directed towards strategic sectors that could jeopardize the security of Italy and its allies, as in the case of 5G.²⁰ In this context, most of them believe that China should provide reassurances both to Italy and its allies on these issues. These reassurances should come in the form of specific clauses in future agreements. Likewise, the importance of cultural understanding is crucial for the development of future cooperation. In this regard, China should increase its investments in cultural promotion in Italy, starting from the institutes and the projects already active and promoting new ones. At the same time, it should also favor similar initiatives in China promoted by Italian partners.

Overall, most of the stakeholders identified four areas where the main opportunities for cooperation between China and Italy within the BRI framework lie: infrastructure, technology, environment, and education.

²⁰ Valeriani, M. (2019), "Southern Europe and the Belt and Road Initiative: the case of Italy", Unpublished Report.

3 SPAIN

Since their establishment in 1973, Spain–China relations have developed within a rapidly evolving bilateral and international framework but have always been pragmatically contextualized by both governments. Moreover, they have always been more political than economic. The contrast between this close political understanding and the lackluster economic exchanges have been sarcastically underlined in Spain by many who complain that “we may be friends, but we are not partners”.²¹ The 2008 financial and economic crisis and China’s economic development, have encouraged economic, political, and cultural ties between both states, while new features, like the BRI and the US opposition to this, raise crucial questions on the future of these relations.²²

As a result of the economic crisis, Spain–China trade and financial bilateral relations developed in three different ways. First, as a result of the downgrade of the Spanish public credit rating and banking sector, China emerged as a welcome source of financing becoming Spain’s second international lender, behind France.²³ Second, the crisis consolidated trade relations between both countries with China becoming Spain’s third import provider and its 11th export market. Third, it fostered Spain–China financial relations; China’s FDI to Spain increased. China is also the second biggest holder of Spanish treasury bonds.²⁴

Yet, following the recovery of the Spanish economy since 2014, public authorities tend again to favor traditional diplomatic partners. Economic recovery was followed by a loss of momentum in the bilateral relations and this should not come as a surprise since Spain’s access to foreign funding improved. However, China–Spain relations could continue to develop, bolstered by China’s increasing role within the international system and economy. Spain wants to bring forward trade opportunities, to sustain its exports and seeks to attract foreign investment. In this

²¹ Esteban, M., “Spain’s Relations with China: Friends but not Partners”, *Chinese Political Science Review*, 1, pp. 373–386.

²² Esteban M., & Armanini, U., “Spain–China relations: A renewed momentum under the Belt and Road Initiative?”, Unpublished report.

²³ Otero-Iglesias, M. (2014), “How much Spanish sovereign debt does China hold?”, Madrid, Real Instituto Elcano.

²⁴ Esteban, M. (2016), “Spain’s Relations with China: Friends but not Partners”, *Chinese Political Science Review*, 1, pp. 373–386.

context, the BRI's promises of enhanced connectivity and trade, backed by massive-scale investments, might appear as a new window of opportunity. As most stakeholders acknowledge, opportunities lie mostly in the fields of infrastructure, technology (5G), and tourism, as well as in the markets of Latin America. The 2018 Joint Declaration between China and Spain on strengthening the Comprehensive Strategic Partnership in the new era highlighted their mutual goal to expand and strengthen their political and economic ties. As a tangible progress, several institutional and commercial agreements were signed.

Spain and the BRI's scope intersect both in the Iberic peninsula, as reflected by the completion of the Madrid-Yiwu railway line, but also increasingly in traditional areas of Spain's external action, mainly North Africa, and more recently, Latin America. However, Spain did not officially endorse the BRI, a signal that they prefer bilateral relations to evolve in a different framework. What seemed to have determined this approach is the fear of increasingly asymmetrical relations between the two countries and lack of reciprocity, echoing a similar perception at the EU level.²⁵ Moreover, it is possible that they are disturbed by third factors, mostly the evolving trade and geopolitical conflict between China and the US.²⁶

The BRI has been positively considered by Spanish authorities, leading to high-level participation at the two first Belt and Road Forums for International Cooperation. Official interest for the BRI is not limited to central government, and ministries; regional and local authorities have also shown significant interest in the economic opportunities provided, but this has not materialized into specific projects. Beside official perceptions, Spanish national media also tend to have a positive image of Chinese investments as they do not convey any negative coverage. Overall, the same goes for Spain's public opinion, which shows a generally positive image of China and Chinese investments, even if it favors more traditional partners, like the EU, the US, or even Japan.²⁷

²⁵ Esteban M., & Armanini, U., "Strategic autonomy in a new era: a Cold-War risk assessment of China's involvement in the EU's 5G networks", Madrid, Real Instituto Elcano, pp. 127–128.

²⁶ Esteban M., & Armanini, U., "Spain-China relations: A renewed momentum under the Belt and Road Initiative?", Unpublished report.

²⁷ Esteban M., & Armanini, U., "Spain-China relations: A renewed momentum under the Belt and Road Initiative?", Unpublished report.

The two countries' relations could be further strengthened building on the substantial cultural and interpersonal ties already existing, as well as on the positive image that each country enjoys in the other. On the cultural field, relations have been institutionalized for more than a decade. In 2007, a Cervantes Institute opened in Beijing, whereas Spain hosts six Confucius Institutes, nine Confucius Classrooms, as well as China's Cultural Center in Madrid. Academic exchanges and agreements have increased. Spain–China relations can also take advantage of the significant Chinese diaspora in Spain, which constitutes the second non-EU foreign community in Spain, with more than 180.000 Chinese migrants, adding to nationalized Chinese citizens.

Yet, despite the formally convergent interests elaborated in official statements and publications, the BRI's concrete manifestation proves more problematic and less cooperation-prone. Stakeholders' views and analysis are very telling on this. It seems that in its current form—mostly a sum of bilateral projects and agreements—is limiting the participation of non-Chinese actors and this is something that puzzles both the Spanish authorities and the business actors. Despite financial and connectivity prospects, the BRI has yet to attract significant investments and foster infrastructure development in Spain. Although Spanish firms possess high experience in infrastructure and engineering projects, China's bilateral approach seems to restraint their contractual opportunities. In addition, China's firms benefit from unmatched levers of public funding which would make it difficult for Spanish firms to compete with them. This preferential framework undermines competition at the international level, resulting most of BRI's projects being implemented by Chinese firms. To fulfill expectations, the BRI would require moving towards more transparency and openness. An improved multilateral framework could provide a significant achievement in this direction. Hence, the development of the AIIB is a welcome one by business stakeholders.

Beyond limited opportunities for Spanish companies, the BRI's synergy with other initiatives would prove more fitted to Spain's interests. Among others, the EU Strategy on Eurasian connectivity built upon “sustainable connectivity” through transparency, good governance, and level-playing field competition. The EU strategy on connectivity would offer a more efficient level of inclusiveness, through higher commitments to competition and open public procurements.

Another factor of constraint for Spain's endorsement of the BRI is the promotion of a common and coherent foreign and security policy, and

the country's caution not to jeopardize political consensus with France and Germany particularly after Brexit seeking to gain more influence. Spain has been reluctant to back China's sub-regional forum for Mediterranean countries, along the lines of the Cooperation between China and Central and Eastern European Countries initiative (17 + 1 Forum). In the field of defense, Spain has recently joined the France-Germany *New Generation Fighter Project*, aiming at developing a future European sixth-generation jet. Regarding external policy, Spain would side with France and Germany's approach to promote, and defend, a coherent EU-level policy towards China, avoiding bilateral initiatives like the endorsement of the BRI.²⁸

For Spain, it remains relevant to keep looking for further Chinese investments, but Spanish officials and stakeholders consistently underline that adhesion or endorsement of the BRI should be done in a constructive manner, without renouncing a critical analysis of the initiative, and without jeopardizing EU's policy unity and coordination. Eventually, for Spain, the more concrete and promising feature of the BRI might turn out to be China's involvement in 5G networks and infrastructures. Yet, this process does not seem to have been officially linked to the BRI, and it mostly results from private actors' initiatives. Further expansion of the Digital BRI in Spain would have to take into consideration Spanish strategic interests, assess potential risks, and mitigate or contain them. This should be done according to EU's future guidelines.

BRI's grand objectives may echo Spain's economic interests and potentially make substantive contributions to cherished international agreements. Nevertheless, in its current format, the BRI is being implemented in a way that limits substantially its beneficial potential on the Spanish economy and its alignment with the norms and values endorsed by Spain in the international arena. Thus, the Spanish authorities have adopted a cautious stance and postponed any potential explicit political endorsement of the BRI. This position could be transformed into more enthusiastic support if the BRI would become a multilateral and inclusive initiative aligned with market principles and committed with economic, social, and environmental sustainability.

²⁸ Esteban M., & Armanini, U., "Spain-China relations: A renewed momentum under the Belt and Road Initiative?", Unpublished report.

4 THE REPUBLIC OF CYPRUS

The Republic of Cyprus (RoC) presents another ambiguous case regarding the relationships between China and south Europe, particularly in the context of the BRI. Ambiguity stems clearly from political reasons and not the economy. Cyprus' Western orientation and particularly its membership in the EU,²⁹ along with the traditional strong ties with the UK and the USA present an obstacle to the full realization of a potential cooperation. Cyprus membership in the EU has defined the overall course of Cyprus international orientation, economic model, and alliances regardless of what different political actors wish or want. Moreover, and following the recent economic crisis both the EU and the USA have targeted non-Western economic transactions and deposits (mostly Russian),³⁰ which makes it even more difficult to cooperate with countries outside the "Western" framework.

The EU and particularly certain countries within the union but also the USA fear that the further strengthening of the cooperation between the RoC and China and given the imbalance of power between the two countries in all respects will result in an unequal relationship, in which Cyprus will hugely depend on China. This is hypothesized to create problems within the EU, since Cyprus' dependency will mean that Cyprus will serve Chinese interests in the EU. These fears are voiced in the local press,³¹ but they were also expressed by some of the Cypriot stakeholders during the survey.

Beyond political issues, problems of organizational nature were also identified in the structuring and implementation of the cooperation between the two countries. While BRI objectives and the RoC's interests may converge, at least in some respects, there is no clear plan from the Cypriot government or other official bodies and organizations how to make use of this project to Cyprus benefit. There are scattered private

²⁹ Nugent, N. (2006), "Cyprus and the European Union: The Significance of its Smallness, Both as an Applicant and a Member", *Journal of European Integration*, 28(1), pp. 51–71.

³⁰ Stamouli, N. and Hinshaw, D. (2018), "U.S. Takes on Russia's Favorite Money Haven: Cyprus", *The Wall Street Journal*, 30 September, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/u-s-takes-on-russias-favorite-money-haven-cyprus-1538316001>, accessed 12 June 2021.

³¹ Krentos, J. (2021), "EU clash looms over China's role in Cyprus", *The Cyprus Mail*, 26 May, <https://cyprus-mail.com/2021/05/26/eu-clash-looms-over-chinas-role-in-cyprus/>, accessed 12 June 2021.

initiatives in sectors such as the real estate based on the Cypriot citizenship program, which is now terminated,³² but what lacks is a clearly defined strategy that will put all the pieces together. Moreover, and this was very surprisingly, most stakeholders, including the Ministry of Finance, were not adequately aware of the basic targets of the BRI and how these may converge with the RoC' plan for development. In sectors such as tourism, for example, there is a perception that Cyprus is too far for Chinese tourists and therefore no concrete plans are devised on how to promote further collaboration in this field. Although China is acknowledged as a potential market for tourists, it is not utilized as such. The flow of tourists from China to Cyprus before the pandemic was negligent (a bit more than 6000 in 2019).³³ Failure to invest in reciprocal relations is also reflected in the economic transactions between the two countries. The data reveal that the overall ratio of China's exports to Cyprus approximates less than 0.5% of Cyprus' total imports.

The economic crisis was a game changer in all respects for the RoC.³⁴ All interviewees agreed that since the crisis, and particularly following the 2013 bail-in, Cypriot governments are now more accountable to international creditors than they are to their voters. Although in great need for funding, Cyprus did not seem to exploit the possibilities presented by the Chinese initiative. Cyprus dependence from Western creditors and the links between Cyprus banks with US banks also places severe constraints on the economic independence of Cypriot governments to pursue different economic projects such as the BRI. Given their dependence on Western financial sources this option becomes even more difficult. However, during the interviews some stakeholders argued that it was the Chinese reluctance that averted the inflow of investment and/or loans at the time.

Interviews with various stakeholders in the economy (e.g., the employers association) society (e.g., trade unions, academics) and politics (e.g., government officials and political parties) reveal four things. First,

³² Kambas, M. (2020), "After outcry, Cyprus suspends its citizenship for cash programme", Reuters, 13 October, <https://www.reuters.com/article/cyprus-citizenship-int-idUSKBN26Y17D>, Accessed 12 June 2021.

³³ <https://www.statista.com/statistics/875789/cyprus-tourist-arrivals-from-china/>.

³⁴ Katsourides, Y. (2019), "Cyprus and the financial crisis: a case of institutional inertia and ignorance", in L. Morlino and C. Sottolotta (Eds) *The politics of the Euro crisis in Southern Europe: an empirical reappraisal*, Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 27–56.

that there is a unanimous (verbal) willingness to further promote the relationships between the two countries in all respects, and in every possible field. They all acknowledge that there are plenty of opportunities for developing bilateral economic relationships but the majority does not see this happening in the infrastructure sector but rather in the commercial and cultural/educational/research sectors. Second, all acknowledge the problems posed by the Western orientation of Cyprus and the pressures from some Western countries not to depend too much on China.

Third, there seems to be a huge lack of knowledge/awareness regarding the BRI and what opportunities this might present for Cyprus on all levels. The people who are knowledgeable are very few. Among those who seem to have a certain degree of knowledge there is a shared belief that Cyprus does not form a significant part of the BRI since it is implicated only in the maritime pillar of the plan, which is not so promising given the small size of the country and the limited number of ports; there are only two ports with the larger already being given for private management. Finally, there is no comprehensive strategy in place in order to attract and manage investment opportunities from China.

Putting all the above in perspective and drawing from the insights of the stakeholders' opinions it seems that the two countries could benefit more if they invest in tools of soft power in furthering their cooperation. This amounts to an investment in cooperation at the civil society level to further increase awareness levels regarding the opportunities the BRI presents for the RoC and to create bottom-up pressures for advancing collaboration. This would create a more favorable societal context to promote cooperation between the two countries. In this regard, exchange programs for various vocational, academic, student, and other groups are a useful practice that should be further enhanced.

Beyond awareness campaigns, areas such as culture, education, and research were identified as more crucial in the long run. While the activities of Confucius institute and other initiatives for student exchanges are highly appreciated, there is a lack of more structured exchanges and programs for post-graduates and academics. Such "investment" could take the form of establishing a research promotion agency with the aim of engaging researchers, academics, and students via funding in various research programs. Such programs could include goals such as: promoting peace in the Mediterranean; dialogue between cultures and religions; cooperation between social and political actors in the region; protection

of the environment; reducing the possibilities of conflict in the countries and the region; use of new technologies, etc. Some stakeholders also pointed to a further institutionalization of China's presence in Cyprus that could be directed towards such fields as (institutes for) technology, the environment (e.g., renewable sources of energy), religious dialogue, etc.

Overall, though, the RoC seems to be bound by the complexities of a small, divided island and membership in a profoundly Western organization, the EU. Similar to the case of Spain, cooperation is probably easier to be implemented in a wider and multilateral framework than the bilateral.

5 DISCUSSION: POLITICAL AMBIGUITY AND ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES

The above presentation reveals that relations between China and southern European countries are characterized by both commonalities and divergences in the pattern of constraints and opportunities. The first thing that comes out, regardless if pointed specifically or not, is that size matters and, in this case, size counts as a constraint. All stakeholders from southern European countries seem to be a little cautious towards full collaboration because they are afraid that this relationship might be—at least to some extent—unequal given the size and capabilities of China in all respects compared to their own countries. This feeling seems to have been heightened because of the severe economic crisis the majority of these countries went through in recent years. Although they acknowledge the big opportunity laid before them by the BRI project they are at the same time afraid because they fear that this cooperation might result in surrendering to China significant sectors of their infrastructure and/or economic activity, thus increasing dependency. This is reflected in their preference towards more multilateral frameworks of cooperation.

A common limitation flagged by many stakeholders is the political constraints imposed on all southern European countries because of their membership in the EU, which suggests a Western orientation and close relations with the USA. This in turn, is reflected in the belief held by a significant part of the EU elites and some particular countries (e.g., the UK) that the EU is a significant commercial and economic competitor

of China. All these present a substantial obstacle for bilateral cooperation and outside an EU frame of cooperation since none of the countries examined is in a position to defy pressures from the EU and the USA.

Another common pattern was reflected in a certain degree (which was quite big on some occasions) of lack of knowledge about the BRI and particularly how this is related to the developmental needs of each country. Not only is the public at large believed to be unaware about the BRI but certain key stakeholders were found to be only partially aware (or even totally unaware) too, even in key areas of economic activity. Related to this, is the identification that in most countries the governments have not prepared a solid and clear plan to take advantage of the opportunities presented by the BRI-some countries lack a clear developmental plan altogether.

Having said the above, the majority of the stakeholders in the countries analyzed seem to highly appreciate the BRI project and the opportunities it presents for revitalizing their national economies. Most stakeholders acknowledge that the BRI offers significant opportunities for infrastructure funding, job creation, cultural and education (research) cooperation, commercial networking, and tourism. Moreover, some stakeholders expressed the opinion that China should encourage dialogue, particularly in the Eastern Mediterranean region, between religious and political forces with the goal of promoting regional peace and conflict resolution.

The tourist industry seems to be more advantageous for bigger countries such as Spain, Italy, and Greece (for different reasons in each country) but not for smaller countries like Cyprus (or Malta) that do not seem to enjoy any comparative advantage over the other countries in the region and additionally they are thought to be far-distanced. The technology sector (e.g., the 5G) is another highly promising area of potential cooperation between China and the countries of the region. However, it also raises a number of security concerns, which must be addressed specifically in each country. Finally, in almost all countries increased investment in civil society, education, and research is deemed necessary in order to promote further the societal relations between the two countries. Most researchers and stakeholders interviewed believe that it would provide the much-needed favorable societal context for furthering the cooperation.

6 CONCLUDING REMARKS

The chapter tried to analyze the prospects for cooperation between a number of southern European countries and China in the context of the BRI. Analysis was based on a stakeholder's perspective in these countries. The findings reveal an ambiguous picture where prospects and opportunities coexist with obstacles and constraints. The latter, are more often than not related with external to these countries variables and particularly their incorporation into the Western system of alliances. It is largely because of this and the difference in size that most stakeholders, believe that a more equal relationship between the countries of the south of Europe and China could be developed within a multilateral framework that would involve the EU than at the bilateral level. This could come in the form of an agreement with the EU for the entire region of south Europe, thus providing some security to south European countries that fear that the BRI will only enhance the uneven bilateral power equilibrium between China and their countries. Part of this multilateral cooperation could include ideas such as the creation of an agency for south Europe responsible for coordinating investment and other projects of cooperation in the region.

The BRI is mostly targeting hard infrastructure development projects (ports, roads, etc.). The case of south Europe seems to be more a case of further developing cooperation in areas of "soft politics" such as education, research, culture, etc. Already part of the BRI these aspects could be developed further. This could be done via the creation of a number of institutes (e.g., branches of already existing or new ones) or via the creation of a south-European-wide institute with branches in these countries with the aim of cooperating with other institutes and universities and/or provide funding for joint research schemes, projects, etc. This would engage a number of actors like students, academics, activists, civil society organizations, etc., into areas/fields of cooperation that promote universal values and goals: the environment; technology; promoting peace and conflict resolution in the Mediterranean; immigration, etc. At the same time, such an investment would, in the long run, socialize many actors into friendly and positive perceptions and attitudes towards China. The results of such an investment are more medium and long rung than immediate.

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The “Belt and Road” Initiative and Eurasian Regional Cooperation

Guangcheng Xing

The BRI is an important public goods and cooperation plan proposed by China for the sustainable development of the world, and the Eurasian region is an important area for the implementation of BRI. Therefore, how the BRI builds synergy with the Eurasian countries and organizations is a matter of concern.

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1 THE EURASIAN REGION IS AN IMPORTANT COOPERATION SPACE FOR THE BRI

In the “Vision and proposed actions outlined on jointly building Silk Road Economic Belt and 21st-Century Maritime Silk Road” issued by the Chinese government, it is clearly stated: “The Belt and Road run through the continents of Asia, Europe, and Africa, connecting the vibrant East Asia economic circle at one end and developed European economic circle at the other, and encompassing countries with huge potential for economic development”. Europe is an important terminal of the Silk Road Economic Belt. There are two important routes. One starts from China, runs through Central Asia and Russia, and ends at northern Europe—the Baltic Sea. The other one starts from China, runs through Central Asia, West Asia, and Persian Gulf, ends at Southern Europe—the Mediterranean. The 21st-Century Maritime Silk Road also orients toward Europe, that is, starts from China’s coastal ports, crosses the South China Sea and Indian Ocean, and extends to Europe.¹ This demonstrates that Europe is an important part of the BRI. As Europe is an economically developed region and Asia is a region with extremely thriving economic activities, the two continents need institutional arrangement for in-depth cooperation, and the BRI provides a very suitable one for such cooperation.

After the Cold War, the economic globalization tide has been moving forward, bringing opportunities for global development. In the face of economic globalization tide, regional cooperation across the Eurasian continent is moving in-depth. The Asian regional economic cooperation is very prominent, marked by the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP), the advancement of China-Japan-Korea free trade mechanism, Eurasian Economic Union (EEU), as well as the establishment and development of the European Union (EU). Although the United Kingdom left the EU, this cannot reverse the trend of Eurasian regional economic cooperation. Therefore, the BRI is in line with the tides of global economic globalization and Eurasian regional economic cooperation. Although some countries are trying to obstruct

¹ 推动共建丝绸之路经济带和 21 世纪海上丝绸之路的愿景与行动 国家发展改革委 外交部 商务部 (经国务院授权发布) 2015 年 3 月 <https://www.yidaiyilu.gov.cn/wcm.files/upl oad/CMSydy/gw/201702/201702070519013.pdf>. https://language.chinadaily.com.cn/2015-03/30/content_19950951.htm.

the economic globalization tide, but such a grand trend will not remain stagnant. The BRI has received very strong responses in the Eurasian space.

After several years of practice, the BRI has received positive responses worldwide, and has become an important platform for global cooperation and an approach of global governance. The BRI is an open cooperation plan. China welcomes any country and international organization that is willing to cooperate with it under the BRI. Therefore, the BRI has global significance. However, the global nature of the BRI does not repel its regional focus, and the Eurasian continent is a very critical space for BRI cooperation and implementation.

Within the BRI framework, three areas in the Eurasian regional cooperation space play an important supporting role and require special attention, namely Asia, Eurasia, and Europe. In Asia, China/Japan/South Korea + India + ASEAN have been underpinning Asian prosperity, while Europe, with the EU as the main carrier, is a developed region of the world economy. The BRI has also created a new cooperation platform in Europe—the “17 + 1” mechanism. The Eurasian economic development and cooperation space dominated by Russia is an important convergence area between thriving Asia and developed Europe.

Therefore, the six economic corridors in the Silk Road Economic Belt and the important cooperation directions of the 21st-Century Maritime Silk Road, are all closely related to the above-mentioned Eurasian cooperation space, and are important links for Eurasian regional cooperation. It can be argued that the BRI is a cooperation plan for China’s in-depth strategic interaction with the world, an important platform for multi-level cooperation between China and the Eurasian region, and an effective carrier for building a community of shared future in the Eurasian region.

2 DEEPLY TAPPING THE HISTORICAL VALUE OF THE ANCIENT SILK ROAD

The ancient Silk Road is a road of ancient civilizations connecting the three continents of Asia, Europe, and Africa. The ancient Silk Road played a very important role in communicating the trade between the East and the West. According to archaeological records, Greece had introduced silk from China between the sixth century BC and the fifth century BC. The economic and trade exchanges between Europe, Central Asia, West Asia, and China promoted the prosperity of the ancient Silk Road. It

should also be noted that the Persian Empire, which spanned three continents of Asia, Europe, and Africa, laid the foundation for economic and cultural exchanges between the East and the West in the middle of the sixth century BC. In 334 BC, Alexander marched eastward, and a large number of Greeks and Macedonians joined him in Central Asia. This promoted the exchanges between ancient Europe and Asia and fostered the extension of the Silk Road. In 138 BC, Emperor Wu of the Han Dynasty dispatched Zhang Qian as an envoy to the Western Regions (*Xiyu*), opening a passage to the Western Regions. Since then, the Silk Road has become an important channel for exchanges between the East and the West. Gan Ying was dispatched by Ban Chao to Daqin (Roman Empire) in 97 AD, and arrived at the coast of the West Sea (i.e. the Persian Gulf). Although he failed to reach Daqin, he learned a lot about the Roman Empire during the journey. At the same time, merchants from the Roman Empire arrived at Luoyang, the capital of the Eastern Han Dynasty, through the Silk Road. These records indicate that the Silk Road served as a convenient channel for economic and cultural exchanges across Eurasia in ancient times. The ancient Silk Road survived more than 2000 years and included both the land Silk Road and the Maritime Silk Road. In ancient times, the Land Silk Road was often called the “Fur Road”, “Jade Road”, “Jewelry Road”, and “Spice Road”.

The term “Silk Road” was invented in 1877 by German geographer Ferdinand Von Riehehofen. This shows that silk was an important token commodity for East–West cultural exchanges at that time. Certainly, the commodities transported through the ancient Silk Road were more than silk. Flax, walnuts, pomegranates, grapes, amber, etc. were introduced from the West to China, while silk, tea, porcelain, lacquer, etc. were introduced from China to the West. But silk is indeed the most representative commodity in East–West trade exchanges. In Central Asia, Sogdian merchants were engaged in silk trading activities.

The Silk Road was also an important route for cultural exchanges between ancient Europe and Asia. The “Four Great Inventions” of ancient China were introduced to the West one after another through the Silk Road. The urban architecture of the Sassanid Empire was characterized by a mixture of Eastern and Western cultures. The cultures of Central and Western Asia had a great influence on the culture of Tang Dynasty. In the Ming Dynasty, Zheng He made seven voyages to the West, spreading Chinese culture and promoting the economic and cultural exchanges between China and South Asia, West Asia, Europe, and North Africa.

The ancient Silk Road facilitated the spread and exchange of multiple religions. Buddhism, Zoroastrianism, Christianity, Manichaeism, and Taoism all spread in areas along the Silk Road. Tang Xuanzang went on a pilgrimage to the West for Buddhist sutra, helped the exchanges between the Tang Dynasty and the Western Regions and India. With the rise of the Arab Empire, Islam gradually expanded its influence eastward.

The ancient Silk Road embodies important historical and cultural merits, revealing the historical clues of exchanges between different civilizations in Europe and Asia. Therefore, countries in the Eurasian region should further tap the historical and cultural merits of the ancient Silk Road, uphold the fundamental value of exchange and integration of the ancient Silk Road, and promote cultural integration in the Eurasian region. It should also be noted that the Western Han Dynasty was an important period for exploring the Western Regions, and the opening and prosperity of the ancient Silk Road played an important role in promoting exchanges and mutual learning between Eurasian civilizations. The BRI proposed by China today has historical continuity and logic. After the Cold War, some European and Asian countries, such as Kyrgyzstan and Turkey, have put forward proposals for reviving the ancient Silk Road. The United States also put forward the idea of “New Silk Road” in 2011. In 2013, China officially proposed the BRI, which has a profound historical background and realistic motivation. Although the mankind is now in the twenty-first century, the construction of a modern Silk Road still requires the cooperation of European and Asian countries.

3 CONNECTIVITY IN THE EURASIAN REGION

A very important concept of the BRI is “connectivity”. “Facilities connectivity” is one of the important contents of the “five-pronged approach” of BRI. The connectivity of infrastructure and facilities is a priority area for BRI construction.

Why construct facilities connectivity at the Eurasian region? It is because that since humankind has entered the twenty-first century, science and technology have recorded rapid advancement, the economic globalization and regional cooperation continue to develop in-depth, however, so far, the Eurasian continent does not have a standardized expressway or high-speed railway that traverses the Eurasian continent. The infrastructure connectivity of the sub-regions in the Eurasian continent remains to be improved, and the low connectivity degree seriously hinders the

connection and communication within the Eurasian region. The existing infrastructure in the Eurasian region is not yet unobstructed, which restricts the economic cooperation in the region. These problems need to be resolved through the cooperation of countries in the Eurasian space. China's BRI contains ways and solutions to these problems.

The BRI proposes the construction of six economic corridors, namely the New Eurasian Land Bridge, China-Mongolia-Russia, China-Central Asia-West Asia, China-Pakistan, Bangladesh-China-India-Myanmar, China-Indochina Peninsula economic corridors. These corridors aim at improving the infrastructure of Eurasian region, building the land, sea and air passage networks, and lifting the connectivity of the Eurasian continent to a new level.

The BRI takes the key passages, key nodes, and key projects of transportation infrastructure as priorities, opens the missing sections and unblocks the bottleneck sections. At the same time, it will improve the road safety facilities and traffic management facilities, in order to raise the level of road access between regions. This means that BRI countries will need in-depth cooperation in infrastructure planning and technical standard system coordination, jointly promote the construction of Eurasian international trunk routes, and gradually advance the infrastructure network connecting various Asian sub-regions. In terms of building infrastructure connectivity within the BRI framework, it is also necessary to match the physical connectivity with corresponding "software" connectivity, establish a unified transportation coordination mechanism, and promote synergies in international customs clearance, reloading, and multimodal transport within Eurasia. It is necessary to improve compatible and standardized transportation rules, and improve the facilitation of international transportation. Moreover, green and low-carbon construction and operation should be taken as a principle in the process of strengthening infrastructure construction in the Eurasian region,

In terms of building the infrastructure connectivity of Eurasian region, it is necessary to promote the construction of ports in multiple countries, promote the joint construction of node ports, dredge inter-regional land-water transport channels, increase the number of maritime routes and shifts, and deepen the cooperation in maritime logistics informatization and digitalization. It is also necessary to gradually establish a comprehensive cooperation platform and mechanism in civil aviation, and continuously improve the aviation infrastructure. There is huge potential

for energy infrastructure connectivity cooperation in the Eurasian region, and the task of jointly maintaining the security of transportation channels, such as oil and gas pipelines, is also very important. Promoting the construction of cross-border power and transmission channels in the Eurasian space, and cooperating in power grid upgrading, are very necessary and urgent. It should also be noted that the promotion of Eurasian connectivity cannot overlook the construction of cross-border optical cables and other communication backbone networks, and the level of international communication connectivity should be continuously improved. The concept of “Information Silk Road” is necessary in BRI construction. Therefore, the Eurasian region should continue to promote the construction of bilateral cross-border optical cables, the construction of Eurasian space and intercontinental submarine optical cables between Eurasia and other regions, improve the air information channel and expand the space and scope of information exchange and cooperation.

4 FACILITATION OF TRADE AND INVESTMENT IN THE EURASIAN REGION

The facilitation of trade and investment is a key component of BRI construction.

Although the economic globalization tide is unstoppable, from a reality point of view, investment and trade barriers in the Eurasian region are still serious problems. The business environment of some countries still needs improvement, the transparency of trade policies and the level of trade liberalization and facilitation are low. The trade in the Eurasian region takes place in a small number of areas, and the structure remains to be optimized. There is a lack of new growth points for trade, and the problem of trade imbalance is prominent. BRI countries have many problems in information exchange and mutual recognition of regulations, and in communication of inspection and quarantine, certification, accreditation, standards, measurements, and statistics. If measures are not taken to solve these problems, they will hinder the Eurasian economic cooperation and growth.

Because of this, the BRI highlights the issue of trade and investment facilitation, focuses on solving the problem of non-facilitation by proposing targeted solutions.

First, Eurasian countries should reduce customs clearance costs and improve customs clearance capabilities. The point is about improving their

border port customs clearance facilities and speeding up the construction of the “single window” at border ports. Second, Eurasian countries should strengthen cooperation in supply chain security and facilitation, coordinate cross-border supervision procedures, build the Internet of inspection and quarantine certificates, and apply the “Authorized Economic Operator” mutual recognition model. Third, BRI countries should innovate trade modalities, comply with the investment facilitation process, eliminate policy and institutional barriers in the investment field, improve the service trade promotion system, focus on the development of modern service trade on the basis of expanding the scale of traditional trade, and develop new business forms and encourage cross-border e-commerce. Fourth, BRI countries should sign bilateral investment protection agreements to avoid double taxation and protect the legitimate rights and interests of investors. Partner countries should conduct in-depth cooperation in related investment fields, integrate investment with trade, and use investment to boost trade development. Fifth, BRI countries should form a relatively complete industrial chain, which integrates upstream and downstream sectors of energy and natural resource industries. They should strengthen all-round cooperation in the fields of energy deep-processing technology, equipment, and engineering services. Sixth, BRI countries should strengthen cooperation in new-generation information technology, biology, new energy, new materials, and other emerging industries, optimize the division of labor in the industrial chain, coordinate the development of upstream and downstream industrial chains and related industries, and enhance regional industrial supporting capabilities and comprehensive competitiveness. Seventh, BRI countries should explore new models of investment cooperation and collaborate in building industrial parks such as economic and trade cooperation zones and cross-border economic cooperation zones to promote the development of industrial clusters. Eighth, BRI countries should pay attention to the concept of ecological civilization and jointly build a green Silk Road. Ninth, the BRI should assist the World Trade Organization and proactively promote the entry into force and implementation of the organization’s “Trade Facilitation Agreement”.

In terms of promoting trade and investment facilitation, China and Eurasian countries have carried out fruitful and tireless exploration. The opening and continuous operation of the China Railway Express is the most typical case of such exploration. In the absence of major changes in Eurasian infrastructure, China helped produce huge economic and social

effects through integrating and collaborating with relevant Eurasian countries in terms of systems, rules, conditions, and ideas. Now, the China Railway Express has become an important approach to promote in-depth cooperation in the Eurasian region, and played a very important role in helping the Eurasian countries fight against the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020.

5 THE IMPORTANCE OF PEOPLE-TO-PEOPLE BOND

The BRI intends to inherit the friendship and cooperation spirit of the ancient Silk Road, focuses on cultural exchanges, academic exchanges, and scientific and technological cooperation with the encompassed countries, so as to consolidate the civil foundation for Eurasian cooperation. In the “Vision and proposed actions outlined on jointly building Silk Road Economic Belt and 21st-Century Maritime Silk Road”, it is clearly stated that China will expand the scale of mutual exchange of students and provide 10,000 government scholarships to BRI countries every year. China will work with BRI countries on holding culture years, arts festivals, etc. and jointly apply for World Cultural Heritage sites. They will deepen cooperation in tourism, jointly create competitive international tourist routes and products with Silk-road features. The document also states that it is necessary to “strengthen cooperation with neighboring countries on epidemic information sharing, the exchange of prevention and treatment technologies and the training of medical professionals, and improve our capability to jointly address public health emergencies”. In facing the spreading of COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, this proposal is very farsighted.

People-to-people bond must also focus on improving the level of scientific and technological cooperation in BRI countries, jointly building international technology transfer centers, and cooperating in making major S&T breakthroughs to enhance S&T innovation capabilities. It is equally important to integrate resources in the Eurasian region, provide assistance for youth employment and entrepreneurship, and develop vocational skills.

It is proposed to strengthen exchanges between political parties, parliaments, legislative bodies, major parties, and political organizations in BRI countries. It is necessary to strengthen in-depth exchanges between China and important BRI cities, establish sister cities, and place cultural

exchanges at an important position. It is encouraged to strengthen collaborative research and cooperation between think tanks in China and BRI countries, strengthen the exchange and cooperation between non-governmental organizations in BRI countries, strengthen international exchanges and cooperation on culture, and foster harmonious and friendly cultural environment and public opinion.

The BRI is an important carrier for building the “community with a shared future for mankind”. The construction of people-to-people bond must follow two important principles. One is to respect the diversity of world civilizations, and the other is to promote the mutual integration and learning of diverse civilizations. If people in Eurasian countries are not connected with each other, are divided and suspicious with, and even oppose each other, despite the physical infrastructure is unobstructed, the favorable outcome will not be achieved. In fact, in the “five-pronged approach”, the people-to-people bond is the most important and the most difficult to take place, which requires long-time efforts. Due to this, the “Chinese Social Organizations’ Action Plan for Stronger People-to-People Connectivity along the Belt and Road (2017–2020)” issued at the first BRI forum puts forward a road map and work plan for people-to-people bond, which provides the policy support for further advancing the work of people-to-people bond.

To foster people-to-people bond, in addition to giving full play to government’s leading role, it is also necessary to empower the non-governmental actors in the Eurasian region, to create favorable public opinion with the help of various non-governmental organizations and think tanks, and to put the creation of opportunities for Eurasian nations to know one another as the key. Without mutual knowing, there is no mutual understanding; without mutual knowing, it is difficult to achieve mutual trust; without mutual knowing, the “estrangement” cannot be removed. Therefore, we must transcend narrow nationalism and even populist concepts, and cooperate to enhance mutual exchanges among people. In this regard, tourism is very important, and various think tanks and universities in the Eurasian region should also play an active role.

To foster Eurasian people-to-people bond, we must also strive to overcome political, cultural, and ideological prejudices. In international relations, we must not interfere in the domestic affairs of other countries, let alone using “human rights” and “democracy” as excuses to promote Western values and ideologies, and engage in a “color revolution”. The

Eurasian people-to-people bond can be achieved at a deeper level, only when the political, cultural, and ideological prejudices are transcended.

6 THE SYNERGY BETWEEN BRI AND THE EEU

On May 8, 2015, China and Russia signed the “Joint Statement on Cooperation on the Construction of Joint Eurasian Economic Union and the Silk Road Projects”. The first article of the statement expressed the following implications. First, Russia supports the construction of the Silk Road Economic Belt and is willing to work closely with China to promote the implementation of the initiative. Second, China supports Russia in actively promoting the EEU integration, and will initiate the negotiation on economic and trade cooperation agreements with the Union. Third, the two parties will negotiate and strive to coordinate the construction of the Silk Road Economic Belt and the EEU to ensure the sustainability of regional economic growth, strengthen regional economic integration, and maintain regional peace and development. Fourth, the two partners will uphold the principles of transparency, mutual respect, equality, complementing various integration mechanisms with each other, and opening to relevant parties in Asia and Europe, cooperate through bilateral and multilateral mechanisms, especially the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO).²

China and Russia reached several consensuses. First, initiate a dialogue mechanism between China and the EEU to connect the Silk Road Economic Belt construction and Eurasian economic integration. Second, organize experts and scholars from both sides to discuss cooperation on opening up a common economic space. Third, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the two countries will take the lead in establishing a working group for cooperation. Fourth, the work will be supervised through the regular meeting mechanism between the Chinese and Russian prime ministers and other bilateral cooperation mechanisms.

The “Agreement on Trade and Economic Cooperation between the People’s Republic of China and the Eurasian Economic Union” signed on May 17, 2018 has come into effect. China and the EEU have raised the level of trade on the basis of the non-discrimination principle, and

² 中华人民共和国与俄罗斯联邦关于丝绸之路经济带建设和欧亚经济联盟建设对接合作的联合声明。 https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/web/gjhdq_676201/gj_676203/oz_678770/1206_679110/1207_679122/t1262143.shtml.

implemented “inclusive, participatory, open, continuous and predictable trade policies”. The agreement is another important measure to realize the synergy between the BRI and the EEU, and will help promote the coordination of the BRI and the Greater Eurasian Partnership Initiative.

The in-depth cooperation between China and the EEU within the BRI framework has a profound background. The EEU is composed of Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyz Republic and Russia. In 2013, President Xi Jinping first put forward the initiative of Silk Road Economic Belt in Kazakhstan. Subsequently, the “Bright Road” plan was proposed by Kazakhstan to link up with China’s Silk Road Economic Belt, which fully demonstrated the two partners willingness of promoting regional economic cooperation. China and Belarus are also implementing in-depth cooperation within the BRI framework, and the China-Belarus “Great Stone” Industrial Park is making solid progress. It should also be pointed out that the development and deepening of the China-Russia comprehensive strategic partnership in the new era is an important driver of promoting Eurasian regional cooperation. The China-Russian Foreign Ministers’ joint statement released in 2020, clearly stated that China and Russia will continue to build synergy between the BRI and the EEU, to promote Eurasian regional connectivity and economic development. The two sides reaffirmed their commitment of coordinating the advancement of the BRI and the “Greater Eurasian Partnership” in parallel.³

In the face of COVID-19 pandemic, on the one hand, Eurasian countries need to work together to fight against the pandemic, on the other hand, they need to join hands to curb the economic downturn caused by the pandemic, and adopt a more active cooperation attitude to jointly foster economic recovery and growth. Only in this way, can the Eurasian region maintain stability and prosperity.

7 THE PLATFORM ROLE OF SCO

The SCO is an important platform for the implementation of BRI. The member states of the organization are committed to strengthening cooperation in the fields of telecommunications, information technology, and innovation, and to creating favorable conditions for economic, trade, and investment cooperation in the region, and to creating conditions to

³ 中华人民共和国和俄罗斯联邦外交部长联合声明。 https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/web/gjhdq_676201/gj_676203/oz_678770/1206_679110/1207_679122/t1814218.shtml.

realize the free flow of goods, finance, services, and technology within the organization. The “Joint Statement by Heads of State of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization on Simplifying Trade Procedures” signed on June 10, 2018, aims to solve the problem of trade facilitation in the region, and provides policy support for cooperating on trade, production capacity, transportation, energy, finance, investment, agriculture, customs between member states.

Most of the member states support the BRI and the synergy between the initiative and the EEU. They also believe that the potential of regional countries, international organizations, and multilateral mechanisms should be exploited to build a broad, open, mutually beneficial, and equal space for collaboration in the Eurasian region in accordance with international law, especially the principles of equality, mutual respect and consideration of national interests.

The signing of the “Program of Multilateral Trade and Economic Cooperation” among the SCO member states is of great significance. It shows that the organization bears huge potential for economic, trade, and investment cooperation. The organization’s “Conceptions on Cooperation in the Fields of Digitalization and Information and Communication Technologies”, “Conceptions on Cooperation in the Development of Remote and Rural Areas in the Digital Age”, and “Statement on Strengthening Cooperation in the Field of Digital Economy” are of great practical significance, which shows that the organization is concerned about the development trend of digital economy.

The SCO has shown great interest in the fields of investment and finance. The member states welcome the discussions on establishing the SCO Development Bank and Development Fund (special account), and the adoption of the “Common Position on Expanding the Use of Local Currency in the SCO Region”. The SCO Business Council and the Banking Consortium support industry cooperation initiatives and regional cooperation projects in the areas of finance, advanced technology, infrastructure connectivity, energy, and investment. In 2020, the SCO countries cooperated in fighting the pandemic and signed the “Road Map on Overcoming the Economic Impact of COVID-19 on SCO Member States”, which shows that the organization is fighting the pandemic while working hard to facilitate economic cooperation of the region.

The “Framework Agreement between the Governments of the SCO Member States on the Establishment and Operation of an Integrated Transportation Management System” clearly states the interests of the

region in terms of transportation, and shows that the organization is committed to transportation integration. What needs to be emphasized is that the SCO Secretariat and the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe co-hosted the roundtable meeting—“Implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development along the Trans-Continental Eurasian Transport Corridors” on February 27, 2020. This shows that the construction of Eurasian transport corridor has received the attention it deserves. In order to improve the transportation connectivity within the SCO region, member states support the construction and transformation of existing international multimodal transport logistics centers in the region. Uzbekistan has paid close attention to the issue of connectivity in Central Asia in recent years. Uzbekistan’s initiatives to establish a “Regional Centre for the Development of Transport and Communications Connectivity in Central Asia” under UN aegis, to draft a strategy for cooperation between SCO member states in promoting transportation connectivity, all show that the country attaches importance to the connectivity issue in Central Asia. The SCO member states have shown great interest in Uzbekistan’s initiatives.

The BRI aims to deepen Eurasian economic cooperation and people-to-people exchanges, and build a community with a shared future in the region. On November 10, 2020, President Xi Jinping called on the 20th meeting of the Council of Heads of State of the SCO to carry forward the “Shanghai Spirit”, deepen solidarity and collaboration, and build a stronger community with a shared future. President Xi emphasized that countries should strengthen anti-epidemic cooperation, join hands to build a community of health, a community of security, a community of development, and a community of cultural exchanges, and explore to build a community with a shared future for mankind.

In sum, the BRI requires in-depth cooperation among relevant countries and organizations in the Eurasian region, and contributes to the development and prosperity of the region. In times of COVID-19 and the post-epidemic era, the Eurasian region is facing a number of new situations and problems. This requires the proactive cooperation of stakeholders to build a community with a shared future in Eurasia.

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The Characteristics of the Legal Risks of “One Belt One Road” and Their Preventive Measures

Mo Jihong and Sun Nanxiang

In 2013, Chinese President Xi Jinping put forward the proposal of jointly building the “Silk Road Economic Belt” and the “21st Century Maritime Silk Road”, which received extensive attention and positive responses from the international community. In the past 7 years, the inter-connection framework of “six corridors, six routes, multiple countries, and multiple ports” under the “Belt and Road” initiative has basically taken shape, and the “Belt and Road” initiative has become increasingly

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popular. As of the end of October 2019, China has signed 197 “Belt and Road” cooperation documents with 137 countries and 30 international organizations.¹ The countries of the “Belt and Road” initiative have been extended from Asia and Europe to Africa, Latin America, South Pacific, and other regions. Active participants of the “Belt and Road” initiative include not only developed countries and developing countries, but also the least developed countries and a group of multinational enterprises and financial institutions that cooperate with our country to develop third-party markets.

The “Belt and Road” initiative has become a smart solution provided by China for world economic development and global governance. Whether it is evaluated from the scale of development and coverage, or from its international influence, the “Belt and Road” initiative has become the main driving force of current global economic development. In 2019, the total value of imports and exports between China and countries along the “Belt and Road” reached 9.27 trillion yuan, a year-on-year increase of 10.8%.² Even in the first three quarters of 2020, Chinese companies invested USD 13.02 billion in non-financial direct investment in countries along the “Belt and Road”, a year-on-year increase of 29.7%. The value of contracted projects signed was as high as 83.71 billion US dollars.³

Chinese President Xi Jinping pointed out that countries along the “Belt and Road”, in particular, surrounding areas are of extremely important strategic significance to our country in terms of geographic location, natural environment, or mutual relations.⁴ Economically, the surrounding areas are China’s primary partners for interconnection cooperation and economic development, and it is also a key and demonstration area for the “Belt and Road” initiative to build a “community with a shared future for

¹ Xinhuanet: “China has signed 197 ‘Belt and Road’ cooperation documents with 137 countries and 30 international organizations”, www.xinhuanet.com/fortune/2019-11/15/c_1125237972.htm, last access time: January 14, 2021.

² China One Belt One Road Network: “In 2019, our country and the countries along the ‘One Belt One Road’ import and export growth of 10.8%”, visit the website: <https://www.yidaiyilu.gov.cn/xwzx/gnxw/115426.htm>, last visit time: January 14, 2021.

³ Ministry of Commerce: “The head of the Department of Foreign Investment and Economic Cooperation of the Ministry of Commerce talks about my country’s foreign investment cooperation from January to September 2020”, www.mofcom.gov.cn/article/i/jyj/1/202010/20201003008782.shtml, Last visit time: January 14, 2021.

⁴ Xi Jinping: “Xi Jinping on State Administration”, Foreign Languages Publishing House, 2014, pages 296–297.

mankind”. *This article focuses on the legal risks of Chinese companies in the countries along the “Belt and Road”, especially in the surrounding areas, in their investment, project contracting, and economic and trade activities. The paper will find out the main legal risks and propose specific targets. This is to provide useful references and suggestions for effectively promoting the implementation of the “Belt and Road” initiative and establishing a legal order that will help China to effectively interact with countries along the “Belt and Road” region in economic and trade exchanges.*

I THE MAIN LEGAL RISKS CURRENTLY AFFECTING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE “BELT AND ROAD” INITIATIVE

The countries and regions along the “Belt and Road” cover nearly 5 billion people, and the total economic volume is about 39 trillion US dollars.⁵ The “Belt and Road” Initiative jointly built by China and countries along the “Belt and Road” region has huge potential for economic development. However, along with economic interests, the promotion of the “Belt and Road” construction also has a certain degree of legal risk. Studies have shown that among the 1674 infrastructure projects that China has announced to invest in 66 countries along the “Belt and Road”, since 2013, about 14% of the projects (234) have so far encountered disputes, large or small.⁶ Among them, legal disputes are the main type of disputes for Chinese-funded enterprises in transnational businesses.

On the one hand, legal risk is the main link between internal and external risk factors of an enterprise. In the context of major changes unseen in a century, many political and economic risks are manifested through legal risks. On the other hand, some countries are in the transition period of the rule of law. As an important tool of national governance, the frequency of law updates is relatively fast. In fact, legal risks are risks that enterprises could “see, touch, and resolve”, and their

⁵ Zeng Saixing and Lin Han: “China’s Responsibility for ‘One Belt One Road’ Infrastructure Construction”, *Guangming Daily*, April 25, 2017, 14th edition.

⁶ *Financial Times*: “89% of ‘One Belt One Road’ contractors are Chinese-funded enterprises”, <http://www.ftchinese.com/story/001076078:archive>, last accessed: January 14, 2021.

prevention effectiveness is strong. Therefore, in advancing the construction of the “Belt and Road”, the analysis and judgment of investment legal risks related to the target countries are very important.

1.1 Risks at the Legal System Level

The challenges of Chinese overseas investment in the legal system are reflected in the fact that there are legislative gaps in the trade and investment fields of some countries, the relevant laws and policies of some countries are obviously lagging behind, the relevant laws of some countries lack implementation rules and are difficult to implement, and the openness of laws and regulations in some countries is insufficient. For example, some of the laws and regulations formulated by Myanmar are not made public, the laws and regulations are rarely translated into English, and there are fewer Chinese. Most of the Chinese versions of Burmese laws that the public can find have been revised or invalidated. This has brought Chinese enterprises to comply with the local legal system with a lot of trouble. In addition to the above-mentioned common legal challenges, the legal system risks of Chinese’s investment in countries along the “Belt and Road” region are prominently reflected in the following three aspects.

1.1.1 Risks Arising from the Inconsistency of Legal Standards

Overseas investment should comply with local laws and regulations, government policies, and social customs. However, the legal systems of countries along “Belt and Road” region are very complicated. They involve at least three major legal systems including Islamic law, common law, and civil law, as well as Hindu law, Buddhist law, Soviet law, ASEAN law, and WTO law.⁷ As the legal systems and legal concepts of countries along the “Belt and Road” region are different from ours, this increases the risks and costs of economic and trade cooperation. For example, in recent years, at least nearly 90 countries and regions around the world have formulated new personal information protection laws and regulations, which has brought new legal identification tasks for Chinese technology companies to “go overseas”.

⁷ He Jiaxin: “The ‘Belt and Road’ Initiative and the Genealogy Analysis and Path Selection of Legal Globalization”, *Law Science*, Issue 6, 2017, p. 92.

The commercial legal systems and norms of countries along the “Belt and Road” region are not consistent with ours, which will lead to inconsistencies in the application of specific norms and standards. Some overseas engineering contracting project owners even refused to sign subcontracting contracts and equipment supply contracts with Chinese subcontractors and suppliers, which may cause Chinese enterprises to fail to perform the contracts on time. The risk of contract performance has become a severe challenge facing Chinese overseas companies. In this context, many companies invoke “force majeure”⁸ and “changed circumstances” and other legal rules against rights’ claim.

It is worth noting that the interpretation and application of “force majeure” are not consistent across countries.⁹ The invocation of force majeure should first examine the terms and conditions determined in the foreign economic and trade contracts, and should incorporate objective facts such as the interpretation of force majeure in each country. In practice, it is also difficult to invoke force majeure.¹⁰

⁸ In view of the fact that this epidemic may cause a large number of foreign trade contracts to fail to be fulfilled as agreed, the China Council for the Promotion of International Trade may issue a force majeure factual certificate in accordance with the “Articles of the China Council for the Promotion of International Trade” approved by the State Council. In addition, the Chambers of Commerce of China Textile, Light Industry, Minmetals, Foodstuffs, Electrical and Mechanical Services, Medical Insurance, etc. can also apply for evidence of force majeure.

⁹ “Force majeure” generally refers to unexpected events that cannot be foreseen, unavoidable, and uncontrollable by the parties when the contract is concluded after the conclusion of the contract, which causes the contract to be unable to be performed or cannot be performed on schedule.

¹⁰ According to the United Nations Commission on International Trade Law on the “United Nations Convention on Contracts for the International Sale of Goods” (United Nations Convention on Contracts for the International Sale of Goods) case law summary, the parties frequently invoke Article 79 of the “United Nations Convention on Contracts for the International Sale of Goods” in litigation, but there are not many successful examples. In 5 cases, the seller successfully asked for exemption from liability for unfulfilled obligations, but in at least 27 other cases, the court rejected the seller’s exemption request. The buyer also 4 times was granted exemption from liability in accordance with Article 79, but such requests were rejected in at least 14 other cases. See Zhejiang International Chamber of Commerce: “Fighting the epidemic, Zhejiang International Chamber of Commerce Legal Committee will come to ‘intelligent assistance’-can foreign-related companies invoke force majeure defenses under the ‘new crown epidemic?’”, <http://www.ccpitzj.gov.cn/article/12970.html>, last access time: January 14, 2021.

1.1.2 Legal Risks Arising from Changes in Foreign Investment Legal Rules

In recent years, major economic entities represented by the United States and Europe have strengthened the security review of foreign investment in the name of national security.¹¹ Under the influence of Western trade protectionism, some countries along the “Belt and Road” region have revised their foreign investment legal systems, imposing stricter regulations on foreign investment, and even a very few countries have tried to “target” restrict my country’s investment activities.

In November 2019, Japan passed amendments to the Foreign Exchange and Foreign Trade Act. It reduces the pre-declaration standard for foreign investors’ mergers and acquisitions of Japanese listed companies from a 10% shareholding to 1% shareholding, and incorporates the actual control situations such as foreigners’ management of Japanese companies into the scope of pre-declaration. Key industries related to Japanese regulations include weapons and equipment, aircraft, space development, nuclear energy, petroleum, electricity, gas, communications, broadcasting, heating, railways, transportation, network security, and other fields. In fact, Japan’s “Foreign Direct Investment Law” sets abstract standards for the review of foreign mergers and acquisitions, while Japan’s “Foreign Exchange and Foreign Trade Law” further restricts the difficulty for foreign companies to invest in high-end technology fields.

Coincidentally, the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade of India revised its foreign investment policy in April 2020. In the name of “preventing foreign speculative acquisitions of Indian companies during the epidemic”, India requires that all investments (entities and natural persons) from countries bordering India’s land must pass government approval to achieve investment in India. If the actual controller of the investment is located in the aforementioned

¹¹ For example, after the United States passed the Foreign Investment Risk Review Modernization Act in August 2018, it formally implemented the implementation rules of the Foreign Investment Risk Review Modernization Act in February 2020, which requires to review investment behaviors such as in a bid to influencing American companies to make decisions and obtaining substantive rights to key technical data. The Framework for Screening of Foreign Direct Investments into the European Union promulgated by the European Union in April 2019 established a framework for the review of foreign direct investment. Companies investing in sensitive areas such as EU energy, public health and robotics are subject to strict review.

country, then the investment is also subject to the above restrictive regulations. In short, in addition to the original foreign investment restricted industries, China, Nepal, Bhutan, Myanmar, and other countries have invested in other areas in India from the previous “automatic approval path” to “government approval path.”¹² The restriction is previously only applied to Pakistan and Bangladesh. Therefore, this investment policy has a significant impact on Chinese investment and is even regarded as a legal document “tailored” for Chinese investment.

1.1.3 The Risk of Temporary Restrictions Caused by the emergent situations

On January 31, 2020, the World Health Organization announced that the new virus epidemic constituted a “public health emergency of international concern”. The outbreak of the new epidemic has led to changes in the foreign economic and trade laws and policies of neighboring countries. Many countries along the “Belt and Road” region have promulgated a batch of temporary laws, decrees, and regulations and adopted related administrative measures out of fears about the epidemic. This poses challenges to the normal overseas economic and trade activities of Chinese enterprises. For example, on January 31, 2020, India officially issued a document restricting the export of personal protective materials such as masks. However, on February 8, India issued a notice again, lifting the ban on the export of medical disposable masks, medical surgical masks and all types of gloves except NBR gloves, but still prohibits the export of all medical protective equipment except the above items, including personal Protective clothing and N95 mask. The frequent changes in economic and trade restriction policies threaten the stability of the international economic and trade order.

Economic and trade restrictions related to the new epidemic have adversely affected the normal performance of Chinese enterprises. To take immigration control measures as an example, Indonesia has suspended visa-on-arrival and visa-free policies for mainland Chinese citizens, and suspended the issuance of related visit visas and residence visas. This

¹² There are two ways for foreign direct investment to enter India, namely “automatic approval path” and “government approval path”. The “automatic approval path” refers to direct investment in related industries without government approval; the “government approval path” requires the approval of the Indian government before investing.

measure has an impact on projects under construction and new development projects. For projects under construction, some Chinese managers, technicians, or laborers cannot enter Indonesia, which affects the progress of the project. For new development projects, entry restrictions will affect the on-site inspections or bidding and negotiation of overseas projects by technicians and business personnel. In view of this, the global outbreak of the new crown epidemic has caused legal challenges and threats to the normal economic and trade activities of China and its neighboring countries.

1.2 Risks Arising from Law Enforcement

In terms of law enforcement mechanisms, compared with China, the administrative management systems of some countries along the “Belt and Road” region are generally inefficient, less active in handling matters, and various approval and licensing procedures are more cumbersome and lengthy, which brings higher levels of time cost and potential risks to corporate investment and project operations. For example, during the COVID-19 pandemic, certain countries imposed an unnecessary quarantine on materials from China, and the ports of entry adopted measures such as requesting suspension, postponement, or denial of entry. Of course, although in recent years the problem concerning openly asking for bribes by law enforcement officials from surrounding countries has been alleviated, there are still some gray areas in the fields of environmental protection law enforcement and labor policy, which have become a source of risks for Chinese enterprises to face unfair law enforcement.

First, the Inconsistency and Ambiguity of Environmental Law Enforcement Standards Pose Legal Challenges to Chinese Enterprises

In recent years, environmental issues have attracted more and more attention and attention from countries along the “Belt and Road” region. Chinese enterprises will face greater risks in terms of ecological and environmental protection at present and in the future. As Chinese enterprises mostly involve in foreign underwriting projects and investments in the construction of the “Belt and Road”, the former, such as highways and railways and other infrastructure construction, account for up to 65%, and the latter, such as the new construction or acquisition of steel, chemical and other heavy industrial enterprises and general manufacturing companies account for 25%. Therefore, Chinese-funded companies will

inevitably need to communicate and negotiate with the host country's ecological and environmental protection departments, non-governmental organizations, and local community residents on environmental issues. Poor communication and consultation are prone to many problems, such as humble pollution incidents leading to large-scale mass incidents.¹³

According to reports, in February 2020, Chinese investment project to build a trade and logistics center in Kyrgyzstan was announced to be suspended due to protests by local residents. Allegedly, local residents worried that Chinese investment will encroach on local land interests and damage the ecological environment. Not only that, individual hydropower projects in cooperation between China and Mongolia on Lake Baikal have been suspended. The reason is that Chinese-funded companies cannot obtain real information about local environmental and social risks before the project is invested. After the project started, local people opposed the project construction because of concerns about environmental protection.

The inconsistency and ambiguity in the ecological environment standards of countries along the “Belt and Road” region is one of the main reasons for the risks of ecological environment protection in China. Taking infrastructure construction as an example, Chinese-funded companies usually need to build auxiliary roads and auxiliary buildings during construction. However, some countries' permits for the construction of auxiliary facilities and whether they should be demolished and restored to their original state are not clear. This will bring uncertain risks to construction companies. For the operation of industrial enterprises, in practice, although the local government of the host country has reached an environmental protection agreement with a Chinese-funded enterprise to achieve comprehensive environmental management in stages, the environmental protection department of the host country requires the Chinese-funded enterprise to comply with its ecological environment law in the phenomena which reasonable completion of the rectification requirements within a time limit has emerged. The uncertainty of environmental law enforcement has become one of the biggest legal risks for Chinese companies overseas.

¹³ Mo Jihong, Liao Fan, Sun Nanxiang: “The ‘Belt and Road’ Initiative Legal Risk Prevention and Legal Mechanism Construction”, China Social Sciences Press, 2019, pp. 23–24.

Second, the Particularity and Sensitivity of Labor Law Issues Pose Legal Challenges to Chinese Enterprises

The labor regulations in many countries along the “Belt and Road” region are quite different from those in China. In the overseas investment practice of Chinese investors, due to insufficient experience, insufficient preparation, and even wrong strategic positioning, they are not good at dealing with and solving labor issues in overseas investment. In this context, labor disputes between some Chinese investors and local laborers occur from time to time, and a slight difference can easily lead to group behaviors, such as strikes and demonstrations.¹⁴

Specifically, on the one hand, due to the imperfect labor legal mechanisms of some countries along the “Belt and Road” region, individual companies do not sign labor contracts with workers in practice, or only make verbal agreements. This approach is likely to cause compliance risks and make companies in an unstable situation in labor disputes, the situation is not stable. When Chinese-funded enterprises sign labor contracts with local workers, if they fail to pay attention to and strictly follow the mandatory provisions of the host country’s legislation on the signing and performance of labor contracts, corresponding legal risks will arise. There are also companies that fail to fully understand the host country’s minimum labor localization requirements, restrictions on the proportion of foreign labor hired, and foreign labor visa approvals, which leads to the risk of legal penalties in the host country. Furthermore, compared to our country, most of the foreign trade union organizations can influence the daily business activities of enterprises, and even play a pivotal role in labor strikes and protests. However, in China’s practice, many companies have not built a platform for effective communication with foreign trade unions and other organizations. Therefore, simple labor disputes often turn into more influential protests. In November 2019, the Vietnamese government revised the labor law to stipulate that starting from 2021, Vietnamese workers can organize their own trade unions. Therefore, establishing a communication mechanism with trade unions is an effective method for Chinese enterprises to solve labor risk challenges.

On the other hand, some Chinese-funded enterprises simply apply domestic labor management systems and corporate culture to local workers, causing labor legal risks. Labor management is greatly influenced

¹⁴ Zhang Xiaojun and Sun Nanxiang: “Non-Governmental Obstacles to Enterprises’ Overseas Investment and China’s Countermeasures”, *Modern Law*, 2016, Issue 1, p.144.

by local culture, but individual companies enforce our country’s management methods. In terms of enterprise labor management, a few Chinese-funded enterprises have the practice of working overtime, which is also supported by the Confucian culture and collectivism tradition that advocates working hard. However, the local cultures of some countries along the “Belt and Road” region are different. They emphasize the distinction between work and life and the protection of personal space. The local social consensus is more inclined to enjoy personal life rather than overtime work. For example, in Myanmar, even if local incomes are generally low, many local workers still tend to refuse to work overtime when Chinese companies propose double or triple overtime wages.

1.3 *Risks at the Dispute Resolution Level*

In 2019, a total of more than 27,500 domestic investors in China set up 44,000 foreign direct investment enterprises in 188 countries (regions) around the world.¹⁵ However, compared with the huge overseas economic interests, China’s traditional international economic and trade dispute settlement concepts and rules are backward and increasingly endanger the security of Chinese-funded enterprises’ overseas interests. In fact, Chinese companies’ main investment areas in neighboring countries are infrastructure construction and energy resources, and most of the negotiation objects are the host government or state-owned enterprises representing the government. The latter may play the dual role of referee and athlete in dispute resolution. Once legal disputes occur, Chinese-funded enterprises are in a very disadvantaged position. According to statistics, 90% of Chinese overseas disputes are resolved overseas, and 90% of the cases are lost overseas.¹⁶

According to the “Global Business Environment Report 2020” released by the World Bank, China’s neighboring countries Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, Bangladesh, Afghanistan, etc. are at a “lower level”;

¹⁵ General Administration of Customs: “The total value of imports and exports of our country’s trade in goods in 2019 increased by 3.4% year-on-year”, <https://finance.people.com.cn/n1/2020/0114/c1004-31547735.html>, last access time: January 14, 2021; Ministry of Commerce: “Ministry of Commerce and Other Departments Jointly Issue the < 2019 Statistical Bulletin of China’s Foreign Direct Investment >”, <https://hzs.mofcom.gov.cn/article/date/202009/20200903001523.shtml>, last access time: January 14, 2021.

¹⁶ Liu Dongfang: “Causes and Countermeasures for Over 90% of Chinese Enterprises’ Failure in Overseas Arbitrations”, *Economic Circle*, Issue 3, 2015, p. 25.

Vietnam, Indonesia, Kyrgyzstan, Mongolia, Nepal, the Philippines, Tajikistan and others are at “average level”.¹⁷ This shows that the legal systems of countries along the “Belt and Road” region are relatively incomplete, and the business environment needs to be improved. In view of this, if Chinese-funded enterprises and citizens have disputes in neighboring countries, their dispute resolution methods and legal remedies are relatively few, which constitutes a risk factor for Chinese enterprises in the settlement of transnational or international legal disputes.

At the level of international mechanisms, individual countries along the “Belt and Road” region have not yet joined the WTO, and the laws and policies of these countries are not subject to the WTO’s international trade arbitration system. Some countries along “Belt and Road” region are not yet parties to the New York Convention (Convention on the Recognition and Enforcement of Foreign Arbitral Awards). If there is a situation that requires international arbitration, even if the arbitration result is beneficial to China, these countries may refuse to recognize or enforce it. The “Washington Convention” (Convention on the Settlement of Investment Disputes Between States and Nationals of Other States) is the most effective legal document for dispute settlement in the field of international investment, but different countries have very different attitudes and implementation levels of the Convention.

In the judicial practice of the host country, the lengthy litigation process and the inconsistent judgment standards are stubborn faults of the judicial systems of some countries. To take the Laos’ judicial system as an example, according to research, on the one hand, due to the tradition of judicial procrastination and the serious loss of judges, it is difficult for Laos’ foreign-related litigation cases to be closed within the legally prescribed time limit. Delays for several months are the norm. On the other hand, when adjudicating cases, different courts in Laos often give different interpretations of relevant legal provisions, even in cases with similar facts and relatively simple cases.

In order to resolve the unfair and unreasonable issues of the host country’s dispute resolution, it is suggested to explore and build a more reasonable dispute resolution mechanism with countries along the “Belt and Road” region. On October 15, 2020, as one of the results of the second “Belt and Road” International Cooperation Summit Forum, the

¹⁷ World Bank, *Doing Business 2020*, <https://chinese.doingbusiness.org/>, last access time: January 14, 2021.

“International Commercial Dispute Prevention and Resolution Organization” was formally established. The International Commercial Dispute Prevention and Resolution Organization is jointly initiated and organized by China Council for the Promotion of International Trade and China Chamber of International Commerce by unifying the 45 business associations, legal service institutions, and university think tanks from more than 20 countries and regions in Asia, Europe, Africa, North, and South America, aiming to provide diversified services from dispute prevention to resolution for international commercial entities. Not only that, China has also continued to share dispute resolution experience with neighboring countries. For example, in July 2019, the International Commercial Mediation Center for the Belt and Road listed in Kazakhstan’s Astana International Financial Center and Alma-ata separately set up a mediation room to form a convenient, fast and low-cost “one-stop” international commercial dispute resolution center to provide high-quality and efficient legal services for parties involved in the “Belt and Road” construction.¹⁸

As a result, in the foreseeable future, Chinese enterprises will be able to choose a more just and reasonable dispute resolution mechanism to handle economic and trade disputes with countries along the “Belt and Road” region. Of course, China still has a long way to go in building and fostering a fair, efficient, unified, and internationally credible transnational commercial mediation, arbitration, and litigation mechanism.

1.4 Risks in the Field of Corporate Compliance

When a small number of Chinese-funded enterprises and Chinese businessmen are operating overseas, they reduce operating costs by playing a “side ball” and exploiting legal loopholes to reduce operating costs, or gaining a competitive advantage through relationships and “special tasks”. Although this approach can bring some short-term benefits, it is not sustainable in the long run. It not only has a negative impact on the overall image of Chinese operators, but also lays hidden risks for the company’s long-term operations. In this regard, the experience of Wenzhou shoemakers in Russia and other countries can fully illustrate

¹⁸ Xinhuanet: “One Belt One Road” International Commercial Mediation Center Establishes Mediation Room in Kazakhstan, http://www.xinhuanet.com/world/2019-07/05/c_1210179655.htm, last access time: January 14,2021.

the problem.¹⁹ In view of this, the compliance risks of Chinese-funded enterprises are still relatively prominent.

According to the analysis of Moody's Investment, China's annual investment and assistance to Southeast Asia exceeds the sum of all international multilateral organizations and the level of the European Union.²⁰ To take Cambodia as an example, since 2011, China has become Cambodia's largest source of foreign direct investment. Thanks to the financial support of Chinese-funded enterprises and institutions, many new buildings have been built in Cambodia. About 80% of Cambodia's large-scale public facilities are built with Chinese assistance. Generally speaking, companies usually subcontract part of the project to other domestic or local contractors in foreign contracting projects. This subcontracting practice is also very common in China. Based on the restrictions and adjustments on project subcontracting and subcontracting in the Criminal Law, Tendering and Bidding Law and other relevant laws, enterprises can basically operate in compliance with the law in domestic contracting projects. However, due to the differences in the legal system and social and cultural development of countries along the "Belt and Road", domestic companies engaged in project contracting in some countries with weak legal systems are difficult to ensure legal compliance due to the lack of effective supervision. Individual domestic companies are not excluded to use loopholes in the legal system of the host country to lower prices and evade responsibility for safe production.

On June 22, 2019, a building collapse accident occurred in Sihanoukville, Cambodia. The accident caused multiple casualties. Since the collapsed building under construction was invested and constructed by Chinese-funded enterprises, and Cambodia, the country where the accident occurred, is an important participant of "Belt and Road" projects in Southeast Asian countries, after the accident, the Chinese Embassy in Cambodia quickly responded by expressing that while deeply distressed by the accident, he further stated that the Chinese citizens involved have been controlled by the Cambodian police. The Chinese side supports the relevant Cambodian authorities to conduct investigations in accordance

¹⁹ China News Net: "The Ministry of Commerce will hold an emergency meeting to study Russia's investigation of Wenzhou shoes incident", www.chinanews.com/news/2005/2005-03-20/26/552750.shtml, last access time: January 14, 2021.

²⁰ Sohu Net: "German Media: Chinese Investment Has Greatly Helped Cambodia", https://www.sohu.com/a/233007702_731021, last access time: January 14, 2021.

with the law, and supports Cambodia’s handling of relevant offenders in accordance with the law.²¹ Safe production knows no borders. Chinese-funded companies and companies with Chinese-funded backgrounds should abide by safety production standards in contracting projects in countries along “Belt and Road” region. Any violation of laws and regulations will inevitably damage the overall image of domestic companies “going out” and also have a negative impact on “Belt and Road” initiative.

In addition, land ownership disputes have also occurred in the investment of Chinese enterprises in Laos. Some countries along the “Belt and Road” region do not allow foreign companies or individuals to hold or own their own land. However, some Chinese-funded companies try to acquire land through the so-called “namely held by Lao citizens but actually owned by Chinese companies”. This obviously violates the laws of the host country, and encounters many legal risks and ownership disputes in practice. Undoubtedly, for companies, only by strictly complying with local laws and regulations, operating normally and operating in compliance, can potential law enforcement risks be minimized and the true competitiveness of Chinese-funded enterprises, Chinese products, and Chinese services can be reflected in order to realize the sustainable development of the “Belt and Road” construction.

2 SUGGESTIONS TO DEAL WITH THE POTENTIAL LEGAL RISKS OF THE “BELT AND ROAD” INITIATIVE

The construction of the “Belt and Road” is moving from “freehand brushwork” to “meticulous painting”. The rule of law is the common result of human civilization. The consolidation and development of the achievements of the “Belt and Road” are inseparable from the guarantee of a rule-oriented, open, inclusive, democratic and transparent rule of law mechanism. At present, in the context of major changes unseen in a century, the value and functional positioning of the “Belt and Road” initiative has become clearer. Fundamentally, China is suggested to take “becoming a leader in world peace and development” as the top-level design goal, and promote the in-depth development of the “Belt and

²¹ Cambodian-Chinese Daily: “The Chinese Embassy is deeply saddened by the collapse of the White Horse Building”, <http://jianhuadaily.com/20200105/71413>, last access time: January 14,2021.

Road” initiative. To achieve this goal, it is advised to further strengthen the study of international law,²² improve the ability to use rule of law thinking and methods to ensure the stability and long-term development of the “Belt and Road” initiative.

2.1 Make Full Use of Multilateral and Bilateral Economic and Trade Agreements

In the future “Belt and Road” initiative between China and countries along the “Belt and Road” region, more attention should be paid to the use of multilateral or bilateral legal tools to promote cooperation in the rule of law into a “deep water zone”. The advancement of the “Belt and Road” international cooperation must of course be based on reaching a political consensus, but if it only stays at the political consensus, the promise or appeal of the political party or government leader, and cannot be implemented into the domestic legal systems and rules of the relevant country, then the legitimacy and effectiveness of the cooperation mechanism will be questionable. Many countries participating in the “Belt and Road” are multi-party countries. The reality of party rotation and separation of powers makes it difficult for political consensus and leadership commitments to function stably and sustainably. In a sense, this has become a prominent risk point in the joint construction of the “Belt and Road”.²³

Therefore, the rule of law should be strengthened, and the results of cooperation should be implemented into multilateral and bilateral legal documents as much as possible to strengthen their legitimacy and effectiveness. The rule maker is often the beneficiary of the rule. As the initiator of the “Belt and Road” initiative, China has not yet transformed its economic advantages into normative formulation and discourse power. Currently, regional economic and trade agreements are an important part of the global trade governance mechanism. As a countermeasure against

²² Liu Huawen: “On Further Strengthening the Research and Application of International Law”, *International Law Studies*, Issue 1, 2020, p. 3.

²³ Fan Liao: “National Sovereignty, Due Process and Multilateralism: The Construction of ‘One Belt One Road’ Cooperation Mechanism from the Perspective of Global Administrative Law”, *Economic and Trade Law Review*, Issue 6, 2019, p. 33.

the “regulations” imposed by individual Western countries on China,²⁴ it shall be suggested to upgrade the “Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement” in the signatories. As an important agreement to promote the growth of regional trade and investment, China must actively promote the “Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement” to update as soon as possible. After the signing of the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement, China has signed 19 free trade agreements with 26 countries and regions, and the proportion of trade with free trade partners has increased from 27 to 35%.²⁵ Of course, China should speed up the negotiation of regional economic and trade agreements such as the China-Japan-Korea Free Trade Agreement, expand the coverage and areas of China-foreign free trade agreements, and build fairer and more reasonable foreign economic and trade norms, strategically responding to the rule “containment circle” formed by individual Western countries against China.

Specifically, on the one hand, China must actively use national treatment, most-favored-nation treatment, and fair and just treatment to claim the legitimate interests of Chinese traders and investors. For example, it considers to effectively use WTO agreements to correct discriminatory trade arrangements of neighboring countries against China. In response to the “targeted” restrictions on Chinese products, the Chinese government can initiate dispute settlement procedures in a timely manner in accordance with non-discrimination principles and rules to safeguard the legitimate rights and interests of Chinese goods, services, and service providers.

On the other hand, China should also actively promote multilateral and bilateral agreement negotiations, especially by strengthening the transparency and procedural fairness requirements of security reviews, in order to avoid the adverse effects of host country investment security reviews on Chinese investors. For example, it is suggested to advocate defining and sorting out the core content of security and public interest in the agreement. In practice, China can also learn from and invoke the four

²⁴ For example, the “Poison Pill Clause” introduced in the US-Mexico-Canada Agreement. See Sun Nanxiang: “Restrictions on non-market economy countries and their legality of the ‘U.S.-Mexico-Canada Agreement’”, *Latin American Studies*, Issue 1, 2019, p. 60.

²⁵ Zhong Shan: “Creating a New Situation for Global Open Cooperation”, *People’s Daily*, November 24, 2020, 11th edition.

guidelines of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development on foreign investment review, namely non-discrimination, transparency and predictability, regulatory proportionality, and accountability in order to advocate fair and reasonable treatment of Chinese-funded enterprises.

2.2 *Share the Achievements of China's Rule of Law with Neighboring Countries*

Most of the countries along the “Belt and Road” region are developing countries, in lack of their corresponding developed legal systems. At the practical level, China's corporate law, investment law, and environmental law can serve as a reference and model for developing countries. Especially when compared with Anglo-American law and European Union law, Chinese law is relatively concise and can be used for reference by neighboring countries in the early and mid-stage of the development of the rule of law.

The rule of law in China is full of Eastern wisdom. Although it is not exactly the same as the capitalist rule of law model described in the West, in practice, the construction of the rule of law in China not only ensures China's economic development, but also ensures that the fruits of China's social development are shared by the people. From this perspective, China's rule of law achievements have world-class influence and can provide a model for the development of domestic rule of law in developing countries. Furthermore, the rule of law in China has been deeply integrated into the process of the international rule of law. In a transnational legal system, the core dispute lies in the application of law, that is, whether the legal dispute applies to the law of the host country, the investor's home country, or the law of a third country. Since the reform and opening up, China's legal construction has been fully integrated into the international legal process. Taking the commercial field as an example, China is a member of the “United Nations Convention on Contracts for the International Sale of Goods”. If both parties agree to apply Chinese law, legal framework for the above conventions can actually be applied. In this sense, the openness of the rule of law in China also guarantees that the rule of law in China can play an active leading role in the surrounding areas.

Under the background of understanding and agreeing with the achievements of China’s rule of law, it shall be encouraged to pay attention to the construction of domestic rule of law in those countries along the “Belt and Road” region. The long-term development of the “Belt and Road” initiative should not only consider economic development, but also integrate domestic social construction. The “Belt and Road” countries can realize the coordination of domestic regulations through the common principles and principles of the rule of law to ensure the fruits of development in accordance with the rule of law. At this level, the “Belt and Road” initiative must emphasize mutual trust and legal cooperation. At present, the construction of the “Belt and Road” is facing political risks, security risks, integrity risks, environmental protection, labor risks, etc. All of these risks are inseparable from the host country’s domestic regulations, and all involve in legal cooperation.

Specifically, first, China can explore and launch unified legal norms or legal principles outlined with countries along the “Belt and Road” region to some extent, especially to coordinate the legal and cultural differences in the traditional countries of the common law system, the civil law system, and the Islamic law system to make the “Belt and Road” countries have a shared concept of rule of law. Second, China can actively create legal cooperation channels at the procedural level, provide a consultation platform for cooperation between China and countries along the “Belt and Road” region, and promote the “Belt and Road” countries to continuously improve the level and capacity of national governance modernization. Third, Western countries frequently use legal aid to promote the reform of legal systems in developing countries. In the construction of the “Belt and Road”, China can also learn from it. By means of legal aid, Chinese laws and Chinese systems can be used for reference by countries along the “Belt and Road” region.

2.3 Actively Improve the Company’s Compliance Awareness and the Capabilities to Application of Law

At present, some companies and institutions have not fully realized the legal risks caused by huge differences in the legal systems of countries along the “Belt and Road” region, such as the concept of the rule of law, market access, industry supervision, financial taxation, environmental protection, labor protection, etc., therefore they use policies to advance and ignore legal governance. Even if the law is used to deal with

problems, they are mostly temporary and emergency measures, lacking country-specific plans and long-term plans.

In the face of complex legal risks, Chinese enterprises should consciously enhance their legal awareness and ability to use laws in overseas investment. Specifically, first, Chinese companies should focus on their own compliance building and take the initiative to assume the social responsibilities of the investment destination country. Chinese-funded enterprises should “go global” in light of the national conditions of the host country and respect local customs and habits, especially in high-risk areas such as human rights, labor rights, anti-corruption, and environmental protection.

Second, for the “Belt and Road” projects, Chinese-funded enterprises need to sign contracts with overseas partners. With the improvement of the bargaining power of Chinese-funded enterprises, the contract will stipulate the application of Chinese law and Chinese as the contract language. Invoking Chinese laws in the form of contracts will help Chinese-funded enterprises control the dominance and voice of legal dispute resolution.

Third, when facing unfair treatment, Chinese enterprises must actively use legal means to protect their own interests. For example, if the rule of law in the host country is perfect, Chinese-funded enterprises should make full use of local legal mechanisms such as judicial review, and should be good at using mediation, arbitration, and local litigation to achieve their own interests. If the rule of law in the host country is not perfect, Chinese companies should actively explore the use of international or investment home country legal mechanisms, and use reconciliation and other means to resolve disputes in a timely and effective manner.

2.4 Effectively Improve the Market of Foreign-Related Legal Services

Up to now, Chinese-funded enterprises have actively responded to the “Belt and Road” initiative and have “going out” with more than 10,000 foreign cooperation projects, resulting in tens of thousands of various types of foreign-related contract documents signed for the implementation of the projects. Due to the lack of foreign-related legal talents in China, the long-term foreign exchanges mainly rely on British and American legal service agencies and lawyers from the British and American countries to provide legal services for overseas Chinese-funded enterprises. This is obviously not conducive to the development of China’s

foreign-related legal industry and market. Therefore, the relevant institutions and the legal profession in China must make early legal judgments for possible future Chinese-funded enterprises' foreign-related contract disputes, take effective preventive measures in a timely manner, and effectively protect the legitimate rights and interests of Chinese-funded enterprises from the legal level.

Specifically, on the one hand, the domestic dispute resolution mechanism should be reformed to attract parties to choose China as the location for dispute resolution. If more and more “Belt and Road” projects use China as the place of arbitration and China as the first choice for dispute resolution, then Chinese systems and laws will have a stronger global effect. However, China's domestic dispute resolution mechanism still needs to be improved. For example, at the level of litigation, China could broaden the scope of jurisdiction in foreign-related cases, especially to give parties to contracts greater autonomy of will. At the arbitration level, China should amend the “Arbitration Law” to grant ad hoc arbitration legitimacy. Therefore, the domestic civil and commercial litigation, arbitration, and mediation systems should be reformed to further enhance China's appeal as a global dispute resolution service venue.

On the other hand, Chinese legal services and foreign-related legal professionals should be promoted to go abroad. At this stage, China is relatively short of foreign-related legal talents, and the level of legal services is generally not high, and its competitiveness in the international legal service market is insufficient. To this end, relevant Chinese institutions should consciously encourage and support Chinese legal service organizations and foreign-related legal talents to participate in international competition. From a long-term perspective, China's foreign-related legal personnel should be cultivated, tempered, and promoted in the practice of international struggle. For example, as the pace of overseas investment by Chinese-funded enterprises accelerates, more and more Chinese law firms have established overseas branches to provide legal services. Undoubtedly, the “going out” of Chinese legal services and foreign-related legal talents can further promote the external dissemination of Chinese law and its rule of law thinking. This will also start from the perspective of optimizing the foreign-related legal environment and better protect the legitimate interests of Chinese enterprises and to share the story of the rule of law in China well.

3 THE SUMMARY

In general, with the smooth progress of the “Belt and Road” initiative, Chinese companies will encounter more and more legal issues when going abroad, and they will also encounter various types of legal risks caused by imperfect rule of law in countries along the “Belt and Road” region. Especially in the process of advancing the implementation of the “Belt and Road” initiative, they will often encounter challenging strategic measures implemented by the United States and Europe. In a nutshell, individual Western countries “stigmatize” Chinese products and investments that pose a “national security” threat and request that economic and trade exchanges with Chinese companies to be blocked. Behind this, individual Western companies have benefited a lot from economic containment strategies. For example, after the United States and Indian governments issued the ban on TikTok, Instagram, Facebook, and other social media in the United States plagiarized the TikTok application and launched similar functions to seize market share; individual Western countries’ bans on Huawei and others also made Apple and Qualcomm waiting for the market share of information and communication in China’s neighboring countries to increase; prohibiting the import of so-called “forced labor” products is actually an attempt to restrict the international economic and trade activities of Chinese-funded enterprises. There is no doubt that in the foreseeable stage, Chinese products and Chinese-funded enterprises will continue to compete in the market with products and enterprises from other countries. There is a lack of bilateral and multilateral treaties, and the foundation for international law enforcement cooperation and international judicial assistance is weak, a unified dispute settlement mechanism is in short supply, especially it is the core reason why Chinese-funded enterprises face legal risks in overseas investment. Under the circumstances that they are not familiar with the legal environment of neighboring countries and regions, to strengthen the theoretical research applicable outside the jurisdiction of our country, and establish and improve the legal work system of embassies and consulates abroad in the purpose of protecting the legitimate rights and interests of overseas Chinese enterprises and citizens can help solve the huge legal risks faced by the implementation of the “Belt and Road” initiative from the source. Therefore, as long as we strengthen the construction of the international legal service mechanism of the “government, education and business” alliance, and cultivate a large number of qualified international

legal service talents, it will be provided with sufficient and effective legal assistance to overseas Chinese enterprises and citizens, and resolve various legal risks, and improve their ability to use the rule of law thinking and methods to handle various foreign-related legal disputes, especially learn to use legal means to carry out foreign-related legal struggles, in order to promote the perfection and soundness of foreign-related legal mechanisms and international rule of law that are compatible with the implementation of the “Belt and Road” initiative, and provide the most reliable legal guarantee for investment, project contracting, and business activities of Chinese companies in the “Belt and Road” region.

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The “Belt and Road” International Production Capacity Cooperation and Its Prospects

Xiaohua Li

In the fall of 2013, when Chinese President Xi Jinping visited Kazakhstan and Indonesia, he put forward the proposals of jointly building the “Silk Road Economic Belt” and the “21st Century Maritime Silk Road” respectively. The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) is a new model of regional cooperation dedicated to strengthening exchanges and mutual learning among different civilizations, promoting world peace and development, and building a community with a shared future for mankind. International production capacity cooperation (IPCC) is an important component of the BRI, and the key to BRI construction.

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1 REVIEW OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF “BELT AND ROAD” IPCC

Since its introduction in 2013, the BRI has received widespread response from the international community. A large number of industrial investment projects have been put into construction, dozens of international cooperation parks have been carrying forward, and the production capacity cooperation between China and BRI countries has developed in depth. While promoting the export growth of China’s industrial products and optimizing the international layout of industrial chain, the “Belt and Road” IPCC has also effectively promoted the industrialization and economic growth of the BRI countries.

1.1 *China’s Direct Investment in BRI Countries*

China is the largest investor in the BRI region. The volume of Chinese investment has increased significantly since 2008, when the direct investment of developed economies in the BRI countries decreased after the international financial crisis, Chinese investment maintained growth.¹ Since the BRI was put forward, the production capacity cooperation between China and BRI countries has been advancing rapidly, which is prominently manifested in the growth of China’s direct investment in these countries. In 2014, China’s investment outward flow to BRI countries was US\$13.66 billion, accounting for 11.1% of its total foreign direct investment (FDI) outward flow of that year, while China’s investment outward stock in BRI countries was US\$92.46 billion, accounting for 10.5% of its total FDI outward stock. Despite the impact of the COVID-19, China’s direct investment outward flow to BRI countries grew by 20.6%, and hit US\$22.54 billion in 2020, accounting for 14.7% of its total FDI outward flow that year, increased by one percentage point from 2019. As of the end of 2020, China’s direct investment stock in BRI countries was US\$200.79 billion, accounting for 7.8% of China’s total FDI outward stock. From 2013 to 2020, China’s cumulative direct investment (CDI) in BRI countries was US\$139.85 billion, accounting for 12% of China’s total outward FDI in the period. Comparing China’s

¹ Chen, M., and C. Lin. (2018). *Foreign Investment across the Belt and Road: Patterns, Determinants and Effects* (Policy Research Working Paper 8607). World Bank. <http://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/394671539175518256/pdf/WPS8607.pdf>.

FDI outward stock in BRI countries at the end of 2020 with its CDI in BRI countries from 2013 to 2020, it can be found that after the BRI was put forward, China’s investment in these countries has boomed. According to data from the China’s National Bureau of Statistics, China’s outward FDI in BRI countries (excluding banks, securities, and insurance) grew from US\$14.8 billion in 2015 to US\$17.8 billion in 2020, and its proportion in China’s total outward FDI increased from 12.5 to 16.2% during the same period. Since 2017, the growth rate of China’s direct investment (excluding banks, securities, and insurance) in BRI countries has been higher than the growth rate of China’s total outward FDI, and it’s particularly remarkable in 2017 and 2020 with the growth rates of 28.7% and 19.0% higher respectively.

In 2020, when the growth rate of China’s outward FDI (excluding banks, securities, and insurance) dropped by 0.4%, the growth rate of investment in BRI countries recorded 18.7% (Table 1). In China’s direct investment in BRI countries, cross-border mergers and acquisitions occupy an important position, which is particularly true in the period between 2015 and 2018. In the 4 years, China’s mergers and acquisitions in BRI countries were US\$9.23 billion, US\$6.64 billion, US\$16.28 billion, and US\$10.03 billion respectively, accounting for 48.8%, 43.3%, 80.7%, and 56.1% of China’s investment flows to BRI countries in the 4 years. By the end of 2019, Chinese investors had established over 11,000 overseas enterprises in 63 BRI countries (Fig. 1).²

Looking at different countries, from 2014 to 2020, 40 BRI countries received China’s direct investment with a cumulative volume of more than US\$100 million. Among them, Singapore ranked first with the CDI of US\$39.92 billion; Indonesia ranked second with US\$12.15 billion. The CDI in Malaysia, Vietnam, Thailand, Russia, Laos, and United Arab Emirates went over US\$5 billion, while CDI in the Cambodia, Pakistan, Israel, India, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Bangladesh, Myanmar, Iraq, and Kyrgyzstan went over US\$1 billion. It can be seen from Table 2 that among the BRI countries with a relatively large amount of Chinese direct investment, except for Singapore and Israel which are two high-income countries, Brunei, Arab, the UAE, Kuwait, which are oil-rich countries,

² Ministry of Commerce of the People’s Republic of China, National Bureau of Statistics, State Administration of Foreign Exchange (2021). *2020 Statistical Bulletin of China’s Outward Foreign Direct Investment*. China Commerce and Trade Press. <http://images.mofcom.gov.cn/hzs/202111/20211112140104651>.

Table 1 The proportion change of China's outward FDI (excluding banks, securities, and insurance) in BRI countries

	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Annual outward FDI (US\$ 100 m)	1180	1701	1201	1205	1106	1102
Annual outward FDI increased over the previous year (%)	14.7	44.1	- 29.4	0.3	- 8.2	- 0.4
Outward FDI in BRI countries (US\$ 100 m)	148	145	144	156	150	178
Growth of outward FDI in BRI countries (%)	18.2	- 2.0	- 0.7	8.9	- 3.8	18.3
Proportion of outward FDI in BRI countries	12.5	8.5	12.0	13.0	13.6	16.2

Source National Economic and Social Development Statistical Bulletin

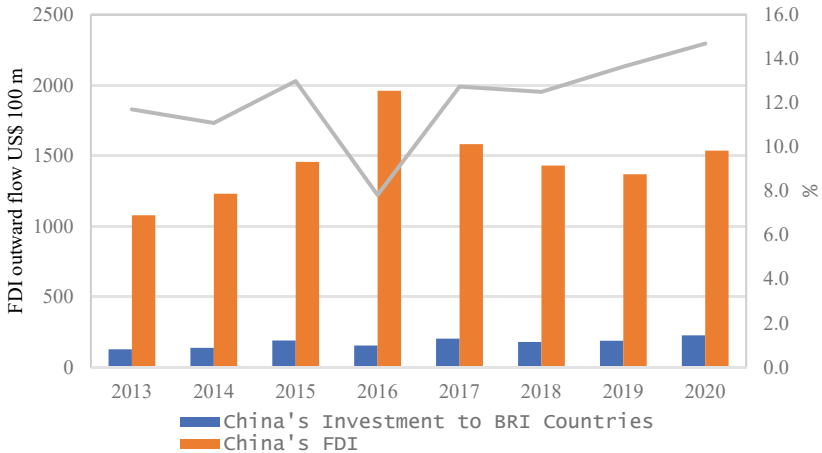


Fig. 1 China's investment flow to BRI countries (*Source* Ministry of Commerce of the People's Republic of China, National Bureau of Statistics, State Administration of Foreign Exchange. (2021). *2020 Statistical Bulletin of China's Outward Foreign Direct Investment*. China Commerce and Trade Press. <http://images.mofcom.gov.cn/hzs/202111/20211112140104651.pdf>)

and Hungary, Czech Republic, Poland, and Romania, which are Eastern European countries, are all middle-income countries. Moreover, many of these countries are middle-low-income countries, whose GDP per capita below US\$4000.

From the perspective of the industry distribution of China's outward FDI, as of the end of 2020, the leading industries in terms of outward FDI stock were leasing and business services (32.2%), wholesale and retail (13.4%), information transmission/software and information technology

Table 2 BRI Countries with Chinese CDI of more than US\$100 million (2014–2020)

	<i>Country/ region</i>	<i>GDP per capita in 2019 (US\$)</i>	<i>CDI (US\$ 100 m)</i>		<i>Country/ region</i>	<i>GDP per capita in 2019 (US\$)</i>	<i>CDI (US\$ 100 m)</i>
1	Singapore	65,233.3	399.2	21	Kuwait	32,000.4	7.5
2	Indonesia	4135.6	121.5	22	Egypt	3019.2	7.2
3	Malaysia	11,414.2	87.1	23	Belarus	6663.3	6.6
4	Vietnam	2715.3	76.1	24	the Philippines	3485.1	5.2
5	Thailand	7806.7	74.2	25	Georgia	4697.7	5.1
6	The Russian Federation	11,585.0	73.5	26	Serbia	7411.8	4.6
7	Laos	2534.9	69.4	27	Poland	15,692.5	4.1
8	United Arab Emirates	43,103.3	60.8	28	Hungary	16,731.8	3.9
9	Cambodia	1643.1	47.1	29	Nepal	1071.1	3.9
10	Pakistan	1284.7	39.6	30	Czech	23,494.6	2.9
11	Israel	43,592.1	31.4	31	Croatia	14,936.1	2.4
12	India	2099.6	23.5	32	Romania	12,919.5	2.4
13	Saudi Arabia	23,139.8	17.0	33	Sri Lanka	3853.1	2.2
14	Turkey	9126.6	16.0	34	Brunei	31,086.8	2.1
15	Bengal	1855.7	15.7	35	Mongolia	4339.8	2.1
16	Myanmar	1407.8	14.0	36	Oman	15,343.1	1.8
17	Iraq	5955.1	13.4	37	Bulgaria	9828.1	1.5
18	Kyrgyzstan	1309.4	11.1	38	East Timor	1560.5	1.3
19	Tajikistan	870.8	8.9	39	Montenegro	8908.9	1.2
20	Kazakhstan	9812.4	8.0		Ukraine	3659.0	1.1

Source: Statistical Bulletin of China's Outward Foreign Direct Investment (2014–2020), World Bank Database

service (11.5%), manufacturing (10.8%), finance (10.5%), and the mining (8.0%). In 2020, the industries that accounted for the highest proportion of total outward FDI flows were leasing and business service industries (25.2%), wholesale and retail (18.3%), manufacturing (16.8%), finance (12.8%), information transmission/software and information technology service (6.0%), and mining (5.3%). In contrast, the industry distribution of China's investment in BRI countries is quite different. In 2020, among China's direct investment in BRI countries, US\$7.68 billion (34.1%) went to manufacturing, US\$3.76 billion (16.7%) went to the construction industry, US\$2.48 billion (11%) went to the electricity production and supply industry, US\$1.94 billion (8.6%) went to the leasing and business services sector, US\$1.61 billion (7.1%) went to the wholesale and retail sector, US\$0.87 billion (3.8%) went to the scientific research and technical service industry, US\$0.82 billion (3.6%) went to the information transmission/software and information technology service, and US\$0.8 billion (3.5%) went to the financial sector. On March 28, 2015, the National Development and Reform Commission, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the Ministry of Commerce jointly issued the "Vision and proposed actions outlined on jointly building Silk Road Economic Belt and 21st Century Maritime Silk Road", proposing to expand the areas of mutual investment and promote cooperation in new industries. Such industries include: agriculture; forestry; animal husbandry and fishery; agricultural machinery and agricultural products production and processing; marine aquaculture; offshore fishery; aquatic product processing; seawater desalination; marine biopharmaceuticals; marine engineering technology; environmental protection industry and marine tourism; exploration and development of traditional energy resources such as coal, oil and gas, and minerals; clean and renewable energy such as hydropower, nuclear power, wind power, solar energy; energy resource deep processing technology, equipment and engineering services; new-generation information technology; biology, new energy, new materials, and other emerging industries. Manufacturing occupies the lion share of these industries. In 2015, the "Guiding Opinions of the State Council on Promoting International Cooperation in Production Capacity and Equipment Manufacturing" issued by the State Council, proposed "to take steel, nonferrous metals, building materials, railways, power, chemicals, textiles, automobiles, telecommunications, construction machinery, aerospace, shipbuilding, and marine engineering as key industries that shall be classified and implemented in an orderly manner".

From China’s investment in BRI countries, it can also be found that manufacturing is the area where China’s investment in BRI countries has the largest volume and the highest proportion, while construction, power production, and supply are also closely related to the development of manufacturing or the investment in manufactured products. This demonstrates the strong relationship between China and the BRI countries in production capacity cooperation. Specific forms of such cooperation include complete equipment export, greenfield investment, cross-border mergers and acquisitions, and engineering contracting.

1.2 The Joint Construction of International Cooperation Parks in BRI Countries

China’s overseas international cooperation industrial park is the collective name for multiple types of parks such as processing zones, industrial parks, science and technology industrial parks, and economic and trade cooperation zones.³ It is the space carrier for industrial development built under the guidance of the governments of China and partner countries, which support capable and qualified Chinese enterprises to invest and construct in relevant countries or jointly construct with enterprises of the host country, and to attract enterprises from China, host countries or other countries. It is with complete infrastructure for investment and development, clear leading industry, and sound public service functions.⁴ After years of development, China’s overseas international cooperation parks have not only grown in number and geographical scope, but also in investment volume and the level of industrial agglomeration. They have become important platforms for China to promote BRI construction and strengthen IPCC.

According to “Building the Belt and Road: Concept, Practice and China’s Contribution”, since the Ministry of Commerce’s Department of Outward Investment and Economic Cooperation proposed to build overseas economic and trade cooperation parks in 2010 to the end of

³ Wuzhati Yeerken, Zhang Wei, Liu Zhigao. (2017). *Development Modes of China’s Overseas Industrial Parks along the Belt and Road*. Bulletin of Chinese Academy of Sciences, 32(4), pp. 35–362 (in Chinese).

⁴ Shen Zhengping, Jian Xiaobin, Zhao Jie. Study on the Construction Modes of China’s Overseas Cooperation Industrial Parks Along the Belt and Road. *Urban Planning International*, 2018, 33(2), pp. 33–40 (in Chinese).

2016, China had built 77 such parks in 36 countries. Among them, there were 20 state-level overseas cooperation parks approved by the Ministry of Commerce and the Ministry of Finance, with a cumulative investment of US\$24.19 billion (averagely US\$1.21 billion), 1522 enterprises joined the parks (averagely 76 enterprises per park), and produced total output value of US\$70.28 billion. The BRI countries are the main areas for the construction of China's overseas cooperation parks. As of the end of 2016, 56 economic and trade cooperation zones were being built by Chinese companies in 20 BRI countries, accounting for 72.72% of the total number of cooperation zones under construction, with a cumulative investment of more than US\$18.5 billion. As of September 2018, Chinese companies have established 82 economic and trade cooperation zones and industrial parks (with investment volume of US\$30.45 billion) in 24 BRI countries. These parks had attracted 4098 enterprises. As of the end of 2019, Chinese companies had invested US\$35 billion in economic and trade cooperation parks built along the "Belt and Road".⁵

It can be seen from Table 3 that since the BRI was proposed in 2013, the construction of China's overseas international cooperation parks has significantly accelerated, the number has increased dramatically, and the geographical scope has expanded continuously. From 2003 to 2005, one new cooperation country was added annually, and 1.3 new cooperation parks were built annually; from 2006 to 2010, two new cooperation countries were added annually, and about 4.2 new cooperation parks were put into operation annually. From 2011 to 2015, there were annual increase of 3.4 cooperation countries and 5.8 cooperation parks, while from 2016 to 2017, seven new cooperation countries and 13 new cooperation parks were added annually.

These parks can be divided into different types according to their main hosting industries, such as processing and manufacturing, resource utilization, agricultural development, commerce and logistics, technological research and development, and diversity and comprehensiveness. Among

⁵ Ministry of Commerce of the People's Republic of China. (2021). Report on Development of China's Outward Investment and Economic Cooperation (2020). <http://www.gov.cn/xinwen/2021-02/03/5584540/files/924b9a95d0a048daaa8465d56051aca4.pdf>.

Table 3 Changes in the number of China’s international cooperation parks along the “Belt and Road” and the number of countries co-constructing parks

<i>Year</i>	<i>Number of international cooperation parks</i>	<i>Number of new cooperation parks</i>	<i>Number of partner countries</i>	<i>Number of new partner countries</i>	<i>New partner countries</i>
2003–2005	5	4	3	3	Russia, Laos, Sierra Leone
2006–2010	26	21	13	10	Pakistan, Indonesia, Thailand, Vietnam, Uzbekistan, Belarus, Nigeria, Ethiopia, Algeria, Zambia
2011–2015	55	29	30	17	Kyrgyzstan, Malaysia, Cambodia, Turkey, Georgia, Hungary, South Africa, Zimbabwe, etc.
2016–2017	81	26	44	14	Saudi Arabia, Iran, Poland, Sri Lanka, Oman, Bulgaria, Djibouti, Egypt, Kenya, etc.

Source ZHAO Shengbo, WANG Xingping, HU Xuefeng. (2018). *Research on the Development of China’s International Cooperation Parks in the Belt & Road Area: Status, Effect, and Trend*. *City Planning Review*, 42(9), 9–20+38. (in Chinese)

them, diversity and comprehensiveness, processing and manufacturing, and agricultural development types are the main ones (Table 4).⁶

From the perspective of construction and operation modes, the industrial parks built by China in BRI countries can be roughly divided into three types. The first type of industrial park is promoted by high-level governments, that is, China and BRI governments sign cooperation agreements and the parks are established under the support of governments. The second model is led by park development enterprises, that is, Chinese enterprises that have rich experience in park development and operation lead the construction and operation of the park. For example, Tianjin TEDA Investment Holding Co., Ltd., Tianjin Development Zone Suez International Cooperation Co., Ltd., and Egypt-China Joint Venture Company set up a joint venture with 75%:5%:5% of the shares in Egypt TEDA Investment Holding Co., Ltd., responsible for the development, construction, investment and management of China-Egypt TEDA Suez Economic and Trade Cooperation Zone. The third is the manufacturing enterprise-led construction model, where one or more Chinese private enterprises or a joint venture between a Chinese enterprise and a host country enterprise, build an overseas industrial cooperation park. Most of the overseas parks built in BRI countries fall in the third type.

1.3 *The Effectiveness of “Belt and Road” IPCC*

China has always adhered to win-win cooperation and common development in the “Belt and Road” IPCC. While promoting the export of China’s industrial products and improving the international layout of China’s industrial chain, it has also spurred the economic development and industrialization of the BRI countries.

1.3.1 *BRI Countries are Becoming More Important in China’s Foreign Engineering Contracting and Merchandise Exports*

From 2016 to 2020, the turnover of China’s foreign contracted engineering business to BRI countries grew from US\$76 billion to US\$91.1 billion. The growth rate far exceeds the overall turnover of China’s

⁶ Gang, Zeng, Zhao Hai, Hu Hao. (2018). *Report on Construction and Development of China’s Overseas Industrial Parks under the Belt and Road Initiatives (2018)*. China Social Sciences Press (in Chinese).

Table 4 Types of Cooperation Industrial Parks

<i>Type</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>Overseas Parks</i>
Processing and manufacturing	12	China-Egypt TEDA Suez Economic and Trade Cooperation Zone; Sino-Hungarian Borsod Industrial Zone; China-Indonesia Economic and Trade Cooperation Zone; Cambodia Sihanoukville Special Economic Zone; Pakistan Haier-Ruba Economic Zone; India Maharashtra State Automobile Industrial Park; Russia Ussuriysk Economic and Trade Cooperation Zone; Sri Lanka China Industrial Park; China-Belarus Industrial Park; Myanmar Kyaukphyu Special Economic Zone Industrial Park; China-Vietnam (Shenzhen-Haiphong) Economic and Trade Cooperation Zone; Georgia Hualing Free Industrial Zone
Resource utilization	3	Indonesia Tsingshan Industrial Park; India Gujarat Power Industrial Park; China-Oman Industrial Park
Agricultural development	8	China-Indonesia Julong Agricultural Industry Cooperation Zone; China-Russia Tomsk State Wood Industry and Trade Cooperation Zone; China-Indonesia Julong Agricultural Industry Cooperation Zone; China-Russian Modern Agriculture Industrial Cooperation Zone; Laos Yunnan Natural Rubber Industry Group Park; Kyrgyzstan Asia Star Agricultural Industry Cooperation Zone; Russia Longyue Forestry Economic and Trade Cooperation Zone; China-Tajikistan Agricultural Textile Industrial Park

(continued)

Table 4 (continued)

<i>Type</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>Overseas Parks</i>
Commerce and logistics	5	Hungary The Central European Trade and Logistics Cooperation Zone; Sri Lanka Colombo Port City; Gwadar Free Trade Zone; China-Kazakhstan Khorgos International Border Cooperation Center; China-Myanmar Border Economic Cooperation Zone
Technological research and development	1	China-ASEAN Beidou Science and Technology City
Diversity and comprehensiveness	16	Vietnam Longjiang Industrial Park; Uzbekistan Jizzakh Industrial Zone; Laos Vientiane Saysettha Development Zone; Thai-Chinese Rayong Industrial Zone; China-Nepal Friendship Industrial Park; Chinese Economic & Industrial Zone in Bangladesh; Indonesia China Minsheng Investment Group Industrial Park; Malaysia Melaka Gateway; China-Kazakhstan Industrial Park; Indonesia CFLD (China Fortune Land Development) Karawang New Industry City; Malaysia-China Kuantan Industrial Park; India Wanda Industrial New City; Iran Qeshm Free Trade-Industrial Zone; Vietnam CFLD New Industry City; China-Tajikistan Industrial Park; China-Laos Mohan-Boten Economic Cooperation Zone

Source ZENG Gang, ZHAO Hai, HU Hao. (2018). *Report on Construction and Development of China's Overseas Industrial Parks under the Belt and Road Initiatives (2018)*. China Social Sciences Press (in Chinese)

foreign contracted engineering business, and the proportion in the completed turnover also increased from 47.7 to 58.4% (Table 5). According to Constantinescu and Ruta (2018), BRI countries accounted for about 40% of China's total merchandise exports in 2017, an increase of nearly 9 percentage point over 2001. The proportion of BRI countries in China's infrastructure-related merchandise exports increased by 11 percentage point, and the proportion of steel imported from China

Table 5 Changes of Proportion of China’s foreign contracted engineering business completed in BRI countries

	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Completed turnover of foreign contracted engineering business (US\$ billion)	159.4	168.6	169.0	172.9	155.9
The turnover of foreign contracted engineering business increased over the previous year (%)	3.5	5.8	0.3	2.3	- 9.8
Completed turnover of foreign contracted engineering business in BRI countries (US\$ billion)	76.0	85.5	89.3	98.0	91.1
The turnover of foreign contracted projects in BRI countries increased over the previous year (%)	9.7	12.6	4.4	9.7	- 7.0
Proportion of BRI countries (%)	47.7	50.7	52.8	56.7	58.4

Source National Economic and Social Development Statistical Bulletin

increased by 16 percentage point. In 2017, the proportion of China’s exports of infrastructure-related merchandise and steel to BRI countries were respectively 27% and 37%, an increase of 15 percentage point and 17 percentage point over 2013.⁷ The proportion of China’s total imports and exports to and from BRI countries in the total import and export of goods has increased from 25.7% in 2016 to over 29% in 2019 and 2020, and the proportion of exports to BRI countries increased from 23.1 to more than 30%.

1.3.2 *The “Belt and Road” IPCC Has Spurred the Economic Growth of BRI Countries*

According to statistics from Chinese Ministry of Commerce, as of the end of 2016, there were 1082 enterprises in 56 cooperation zones under construction in 20 BRI countries, with a total output value of US\$50.69 billion, and US\$1.07 billion in taxes and fees paid to the host countries. In 2018, Chinese abroad companies paid US\$59.4 billion in taxes to host countries, and hired 1.97 million foreign employees (accounting for more than half of the employees in Chinese abroad companies). The

⁷ Constantinescu, C., and M. Ruta. (2018). *How Old is the Belt and Road Initiative? Long Term Patterns of Chinese Exports to BRI Economies* (MTI Practice Notes, 6). World Bank. <http://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/984921545241288569/pdf/How-Old-is-the-Belt-and-Road-Initiative-Long-Term-Patterns-of-Chinese-Exports-to-BRI-Economies.pdf>.

933 enterprises in 20 overseas economic and trade cooperation zones that have been verified, contributed US\$2.28 billion in taxes and fees to host countries, creating 147,000 native jobs.⁸ In 2019, Chinese companies in the economic and trade cooperation parks built along the “Belt and Road”, paid more than US\$3 billion in taxes and fees to host countries, created 320,000 jobs.⁹ According to a questionnaire survey by the “International Finance Forum China Report 2018”, 92% of the central banks of BRI countries expect that their economic growth in the next 5 years will benefit from the BRI projects, while most of the respondents believe that BRI projects will drive nearly 1 percentage point of annual economic growth, and one quarter of respondents expect to see an higher annual economic growth of 2–5 percentage point.¹⁰

1.3.3 *The “Belt and Road” IPCC Has Played an Important Role in Promoting the Industrialization of BRI Countries*

The cooperation between China and BRI governments in infrastructure construction, and the international direct investment of Chinese enterprises have not only accelerated the local infrastructure construction, improved the conditions for local industrial development, but also strongly supported the BRI countries to transform their comparative advantages into industrial advantages. It has promoted the development of resource-based industries and labor-intensive industries that can give full play to the advantages of local resources and labor forces, which will help BRI countries build a more modern industrial system, enhance the added value of resources, and accelerate the industrialization process.¹¹ Laos and Cambodia are the countries where China’s direct investment accounts for a relatively high proportion of the country’s total inward

⁸ Ministry of Commerce of the People’s Republic of China. (2020). *Report on Development of China’s Outward Investment (2019)*. <http://images.mofcom.gov.cn/fec/202005/20200507111104426.pdf>.

⁹ Ministry of Commerce of the People’s Republic of China. (2021). *Report on Development of China’s Outward Investment and Economic Cooperation (2020)*. <http://www.gov.cn/xinwen/2021-02/03/5584540/files/924b9a95d0a048daa8465d56051aca4.pdf>.

¹⁰ Ministry of Commerce of the People’s Republic of China. (2019). *Report on Development of China’s Outward Investment (2018)*. <http://images.mofcom.gov.cn/fec/201901/20190128155348158.pdf>.

¹¹ The State Council Information Office of the People’s Republic of China. (2021). *China’s International Development Cooperation in the New Era*. http://english.scio.gov.cn/whitepapers/2021-01/10/content_77099782.htm.

Table 6 China’s direct investment in some BRI countries (US\$ billion)

	<i>Total FDI flow, 2014–2019</i>	<i>Total FDI flow from China, 2014–2019</i>	<i>Total FDI flow from China, 2014–2019 (%)</i>
Laos	6.44	5.48	85.1
Cambodia	15.81	3.75	23.7

Source 2014–2019 China’s Foreign Direct Investment Statistical Bulletin, UNCTAD database

FDI. From 2014 to 2019, China’s direct investment accounted for respective 85.1% and 23.7% of the total inward FDI of the two countries (Table 6). With the advancement of the “Belt and Road” IPCC, the labor-intensive industries of Laos and Cambodia have developed and their exports have grown rapidly. The export volume of manufactured goods has increased from US\$460 million and US\$6.02 billion respectively in 2013 to US\$ 1.3 billion and US\$ 13.43 billion in 2019, which were 2.8 times and 2.2 times more than that of 2013.

2 THE CHARACTERISTICS AND MECHANISM OF “BELT AND ROAD” IPCC

The “Belt and Road” IPCC shows a significant difference from the past international direct investment. It can help BRI developing countries escape from the “low-level trap”, accelerate the industrialization process, and achieve win–win outcome with China.

2.1 The Characteristics of “Belt and Road” IPCC

The “Belt and Road” IPCC is promoted by Chinese and BRI countries’ governments and participated by enterprises. It is not only different from the “Marshall Plan”, which was American aid to Europe after World War II, but also different from international investment led by multinational companies. Specifically, the “Belt and Road” IPCC presents the characteristics of complementary advantages, equality and mutual benefit, capacity orientation, and inclusive growth.

2.1.1 Complementary Advantages

China and the BRI countries are highly complementary, particularly in the manufacturing sector. China is the world’s largest manufacturing

country, with manufacturing added value accounting for more than 28% of the world's total. It has a complete range of industrial sectors and a perfect industrial supporting system. Among the 22 major manufacturing industries classified by the United Nations Industrial Development Organization, China's added value is among the top in the world, and the export volume of electronic information, textile, and clothing products accounts for more than 30% of the world's total. In the "2020 Competitive Industrial Performance Index" issued by the United Nations Industrial Development Organization, China scored 0.37, only after Germany's 0.47, ranked second in the world. In contrast, the industrialization level of most BRI countries is low. Their manufacturing industries are relatively weak and lack international competitiveness, and they have to import a large amount of manufactured goods. But at the same time, the BRI countries either have abundant resources or low-cost labor forces. China needs to import a large amount of energy and resources. As wages continue to rise rapidly, China's labor-cost advantage is disappearing, and labor-intensive enterprises need to optimize their industrial layout. Take the international industrial cooperation park as an example, China has abundant capital, high-quality human resources, advanced production technology, mass production capabilities, supply chain management capabilities, park and enterprise building technology, construction experience, and park planning, construction, and operation experience. Meanwhile, the BRI countries have differentiated technologies, human resources, natural resources, location conditions, and markets. Such differences form the basis for the two parties to jointly build international industrial cooperation parks (Fig. 2).

2.1.2 *Equality and Mutual Benefit*

The cooperation between China and the BRI countries completely follows the principle of equality and mutual benefit. The "Vision and Actions on Jointly Building Silk Road Economic Belt And 21st Century Maritime Silk Road" proposes to adhere to the principles of "should be jointly built through consultation to meet the interests of all". It states that "the Initiative is harmonious and inclusive. It advocates tolerance among civilizations, respects the paths and modes of development chosen by different countries, and supports dialogues among different civilizations on the principles of seeking common ground while shelving differences and drawing on each other's strengths, so that all countries can coexist in peace for common prosperity". It underlines that "the Initiative seeks

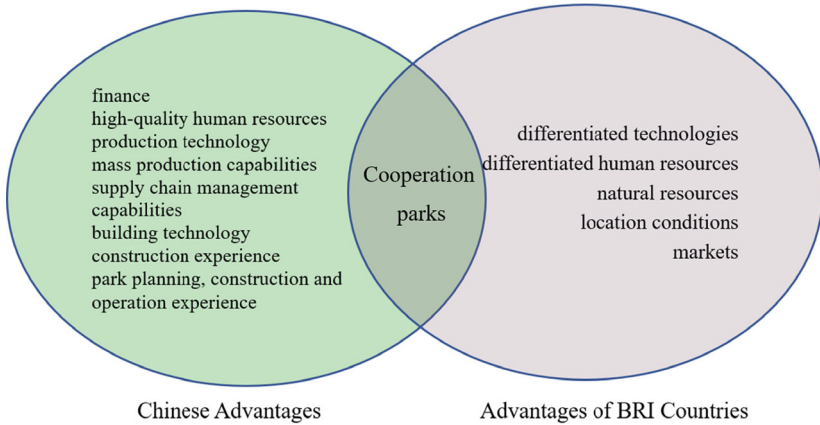


Fig. 2 Cooperation in industrial parks to achieve complementary advantages between China and BRI countries

mutual benefit. It accommodates the interests and concerns of all parties involved, and seeks a conjunction of interests and the ‘biggest common denominator’ for cooperation so as to give full play to the wisdom and creativity, strengths and potentials of all parties”. Xi Jinping pointed out in his speech at the opening ceremony of the Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation on May 14, 2017, that “China will enhance friendship and cooperation with all countries involved in the Belt and Road Initiative on the basis of the Five Principles of Peaceful Co-existence”. We are ready to share practices of development with other countries, but we have no intention to interfere in other countries’ internal affairs, export our own social system and model of development, or impose our own will on others. In pursuing the Belt and Road Initiative, we will not resort to outdated geopolitical maneuvering. What we hope to achieve is a new model of win–win cooperation. We have no intention to form a small group detrimental to stability, what we hope to create is a big family of harmonious co-existence. In the closing remarks, Xi Jinping pointed out that “we will discuss and decide together on the basis of mutual respect and in keeping with the principle of extensive consultation, joint contribution, and shared benefits. We will cooperate in an environment of ever greater openness and seek win–win results through cooperation”.

2.1.3 *Capacity Orientation*

The BRI is different from traditional international direct investment. It helps developing countries improve their infrastructure, develop industries, and enhance their own capacity for economic development through international cooperation. The BRI countries bear advantages in natural resources, geographical location, and labor forces. The reason why these advantages cannot be converted into the driving force of economic growth and these countries are in a “low-level trap”, is that they lack the capacity to carry out infrastructure construction due to the low economic development level and lack of capital. The investment volume in infrastructure construction is huge and the payback period is long. The governments of developing countries lack financial resources to provide these public goods, while profit-oriented multinational companies are not willing to get involved. The BRI promoted by China is a set of combination cooperation efforts with BRI developing countries. On the one hand, the signing of government-to-government agreements and the aligning of development strategies make infrastructure construction a priority in the joint construction of BRI. It encourages strong and reputable enterprises to develop infrastructure such as railways, highways, ports, power, information, and communication, which will effectively enhance the supply capacity of transportation, energy, and information infrastructure of BRI countries, making it possible for modern production and operation activities, as well as the circulation and export of products. On the other hand, Chinese enterprises build industrial parks and invest in production enterprises in the BRI countries, bring China’s globally competitive production capacity, supply chain management experience and international market sales channels to BRI countries, and help them exploit the advantages in natural resources and labor forces. Since China’s manufacturing capacity, especially in labor-intensive industries, is at the top of the world, and Chinese enterprises have not been investing in backward production capacity but capacity with internationally competitiveness in BRI countries, the “Belt and Road” IPCC can not only help the BRI country’s develop industries, but also make them competitive in the global market.

2.1.4 *Inclusiveness*

The IPCC within the BRI framework emphasizes the concept of inclusiveness and reciprocity. The BRI is an open, inclusive, balanced, and

reciprocal new-type cooperation framework, embodies the common interests of BRI countries and China, featured with equality, inclusiveness, and pragmatism.¹² The “Vision and Actions on Jointly Building Silk Road Economic Belt And 21st Century Maritime Silk Road” released in 2015 clearly stated that “the connectivity projects of the Initiative will help align and coordinate the development strategies of the countries along the Belt and Road, tap market potential in this region, promote investment and consumption, create demands and job opportunities, enhance people-to-people and cultural exchanges, and mutual learning among the peoples of the relevant countries, and enable them to understand, trust and respect each other and live in harmony, peace, and prosperity”. The IPCC advocated by China is inclusive, and its important goal is to make economic growth benefit more countries and more people, and the economic development of more countries and the increase of more people’s income will in turn promote the world’s economic growth. This will form a positive feedback mechanism, and all countries participating in the BRI cooperation can benefit from it. China’s investment in infrastructure, parks, and factories in BRI countries can make the natural resources and human resources of these countries play their roles, create values, and push the local economy to take off. The business development of Chinese companies in BRI countries follows native labor laws and focuses on hiring native employees, which drives local employment and promotes local income growth. China’s outbound investment also pays special attention to the long-term sustainability of economic development. The production capacity transferred from China to BRI countries is not backward capacity, but world-class advanced capacity, which is optimized and upgraded under the guidance of China’s “new industrialization” and new development philosophy. It can drive the development of native industries, and reduce the impact on the ecological environment as much as possible.¹³

¹² Office of the Leading Group for the Belt and Road Initiative. (2017). *Building the Belt and Road: Concept, Practice and China’s Contribution*. Foreign Languages Press. <https://www.yidaiyilu.gov.cn/wcm.files/upload/CMSydylyw/201705/201705110537027.pdf>.

¹³ LI Xiaohua. (2019). *Capacity-building-oriented and Inclusive International Production Capacity Cooperation*. *Research on Economics and Management*, 40(05), pp. 13–29 (in Chinese).

2.2 *The Mechanism of “Belt and Road” IPCC*

The BRI construction is featured with central-government promotion, alignment of strategies, and implementation by enterprises. Specific to IPCC, due to the realization of strategic synergy, enterprises can spot the key projects or key areas of BRI countries, whether they are participating in infrastructure construction, investing in industrial parks, or establishing native production capacity. This can help significantly reduce investment risks. The IPCC initiated by the Chinese government and participated by Chinese enterprises can promote BRI country’s industrialization and help developing countries build viability for industrial development, thereby entering a sustainable development track. In this process, Chinese enterprises can improve the layout of global industrial chain, expand market scale, and harvest economic profits.

2.2.1 *Foreign Capital Injection Breaks the “Low-Level Trap” Lock-In*

According to calculations by Huang Qunhui et al. (2017) based on 2014 data, the industrialization level of 65 BRI countries is very different. One country was in the pre-industrialization stage, 14 countries were in the early stage of industrialization, 16 countries were in the mid-industrialization stage, 32 countries were in the late-industrialization stage, and two countries were in the post-industrialization stage. China was in the middle period of the late-industrialization stage, and 44 BRI countries’ industrialization level was lower than that of China.¹⁴ Some countries’ development level was low, severely lack of capital, and some countries even bear heavy debt burden. According to the debt sustainability analysis conducted by the World Bank, one-third of the low-income BRI countries are suffering from high-risk debt problems, and nearly two-thirds are facing rising debt vulnerability.¹⁵ It is difficult for these low-income countries to come up with sufficient finance to improve infrastructure. Therefore, without external support, they are locked in a “low-level trap” and are difficult to kick off the industrialization process.

¹⁴ Huang Qunhui, Yun Jiang, Li Fangfang. (2015). *“The Belt and Road” National Industrialization Process Report*. Social Science Academic Press (in Chinese).

¹⁵ International Bank for Reconstruction and Development/The World Bank. (2019) *Belt and Road Economics: Opportunities and Risks of Transport Corridors*. <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/bitstream/handle/10986/31878/9781464813924.pdf>.

The BRI construction takes infrastructure as the forerunner. Through government guarantees and low-cost finance from the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank and “Silk Road Fund”, the BRI has strengthened the patience of private investors involved in infrastructure construction and helped BRI countries improve infrastructure. The infrastructure investment in BRI countries requires a large amount of construction materials such as steel and cement, construction machinery, and rich construction experience. China’s industrial development and leap-forward infrastructure construction in the 40 years of reform and opening up, precisely formed the huge production capacity in steel, building materials, and construction machinery. China holds high-efficiency and low-cost capacity and advantage in infrastructure construction.

2.2.2 *Infrastructure Construction Improves Business Environment*

The BRI countries bear advantages in labor costs and natural resources. The lack of infrastructure has severely hindered the conversion of comparative advantages into competitive advantages and driving forces for economic growth. Improvements in infrastructure such as energy, transportation, and communications can connect regions within the BRI countries with the world market, allow resources and products to enter the cycle of domestic and international economic activities. The industrial parks endue BRI countries with space carrier for attracting foreign investment and developing industries with comparative advantages. With the advancement of infrastructure and industrial park construction, the business environment of BRI countries improves, which will enhance their attractiveness to international investment in resource-based and labor-intensive industries. For China, on the one hand, the development of domestic industries and the improvement of people’s living standards require a stable supply of energy and raw materials, and the enhancement of energy and resource supply capacity of BRI countries can help China guarantee resource supply; on the other hand, with the rising labor cost, China’s advantages in labor-intensive industries have been weakened. The growth of industrial acceptance capability in developing countries provides a suitable carrier for the industrial transfer of Chinese enterprises, which can help them optimize the layout of the value chain and maintain international competitiveness.

2.2.3 *Production Capacity Cooperation Kicks Off the Industrialization Process*

For developing countries, the BRI is both to “give people fish” and to “teach people how to fish”. China has not only helped the BRI countries obtain the finance needed for development through government-to-government cooperation with BRI countries, but also carried out the construction of many industrial cooperation parks and a large amount of industrial investment. Most of these industrial parks and projects focus on making use of the comparative advantages of developing countries along the Belt and Road in natural resources and labor forces, and combining comparative advantages with production capacity to form an international competitive advantage of these countries. For example, the textile and apparel industry is highly labor-intensive, which does not require high knowledge and skills, but has certain financial thresholds. Chinese enterprises invest in the construction of garment factories in BRI countries, making full use of the native abundant labor resources. Due to low wages, the garment products produced by these factories are competitive in price in the global market. The completed infrastructure establishes links between BRI countries and the international market, so to support the sale of internationally competitive products to the global market. According to data, the export volume of mineral resources, clothing, electronics, and other products of many BRI countries is growing rapidly. Infrastructure investment based on and leveraged by international cooperation, strengthens the attractiveness of BRI countries to industrial finance, and the power of market can be brought into play. This finally leads to the effect of “governments set up the stage, enterprises perform”. The production capacity cooperation between China and BRI countries in industrial parks and specific industrial areas enables BRI countries to exert their comparative advantages and gain competitiveness on the global stage, and accumulate finance required for in-depth advancement of industrialization. The continuous improvement of park infrastructure and growing industries attract new industrial investment, which significantly enhances the viability of BRI countries’ industries. Their economic growth accelerates, and enters a virtuous development cycle. Most of the high-growth countries with a population of more than five million and GDP of more than US\$10 billion in the world are BRI countries.

2.2.4 *Increased Viability Promotes the Extension of Industrial Chain*

The reason why the industrialization of various countries generally started from the labor-intensive textile and garment industry, is that the textile and garment industry has huge domestic and foreign markets with high-income elasticity. The expansion of the textile and garment industry market scale makes it lucrative to adopt mechanized mass production. This leads to the chain reaction of deepening of the division of labor, and thus the emergence of more industrial sectors.¹⁶ At the initial stage of industrialization in BRI countries, due to the small scale of labor-intensive industries represented by garment, the cost of importing machinery, raw materials, and parts from abroad is lower. With the use of comparative advantages and entering into international market, the scale of labor-intensive industries expands. On one hand, investment in upstream industries can find sufficient local markets, saving the cost of international transportation of goods, and thus becomes profitable; on the other hand, to further enhance the international competitiveness of labor-intensive industries requires immediate response to changes in international market demand, and strengthening local industrial support will help improve the response speed of the supply chain. As a result, the economic development of developing countries enters a virtuous circle of “infrastructure connectivity → labor-intensive industry development → capital-intensive industry development → complete industrial system with strong supporting capacity”.¹⁷ Finally, basic industries such as steel, nonferrous metals, petrochemicals, and chemicals are gradually established, and the labor-intensive industry chain become more complete.

2.2.5 *Strengthen Import and Export and the Cooperation of Industrial Chain*

In the short term, IPCC has promoted the export of Chinese manufacturing products, especially high-end equipment, upstream materials and parts related to infrastructure construction and industrial investment.

¹⁶ Wen Yi. (2016). *Great Industrial Revolution of China*. Tsinghua University Press (in Chinese).

¹⁷ LI Xiaohua. (2019). *Capacity-building-oriented and Inclusive International Production Capacity Cooperation*. *Research on Economics and Management*, 40(05), pp. 13–29 (in Chinese).

From a long-term perspective, with the economic growth, improvement of domestic living standards, and industrial upgrading of BRI countries, they will import more industrial investment goods, and peoples' demand of consumption goods for modern life will also increase significantly. Many of the industries related to these goods are China's most internationally competitive industries that have been transferred from developed countries, while low-cost developing countries have not yet developed. This may drive the export of Chinese investment and consumption merchandise. In recent years, with China's economic development, wage levels have been rising, and some Chinese labor-intensive industries or industrial chain links no longer have comparative advantages. There is a driving force to shift to lower-cost regions and realize the optimal layout of the value chain, and China's industries are upgrading to the high-end value chain, such as R&D and design, brand management, and core components and parts. The level of economic development of many BRI countries is lower than that of China, and wage level is much lower as well, and they have strong industrial complementarity with China. With the upgrading of the infrastructure, the construction and development of industrial parks, and the improvement of industrial supporting systems in BRI countries, more labor-intensive industries will be transferred out of China. This will form a division of labor between China and BRI countries in the value chain, realize the win-win outcome between them, and further promotes the BRI region as a whole to occupy a more important position in the global manufacturing and economic landscape.

2.3 *Prospects and Suggestions for "Belt and Road" IPCC*

Since introduction, the BRI has received increasingly widespread responses. With more and more countries and regions joining the BRI, and smoother communication and closer cooperation, the "Belt and Road" IPCC will achieve greater development. At the same time, it is also necessary to tackle the existing problems, constraints, and obstacles in IPCC.

2.3.1 *Outlook*

Expansion of the Geographical Scope for Cooperation

The BRI is not a closed circle of friends, but an open and inclusive platform that is for all interested countries. Its purpose is to allow countries around the world to share the fruits of economic development,

and make the “Belt and Road” a road of opportunity and prosperity through connectivity. On May 14, 2017, President Xi Jinping delivered a speech entitled “Work Together to Build the Silk Road Economic Belt and the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road” at the opening ceremony of the Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation. He outlined the geographical scope of the BRI by saying that, “It focuses on the Asian, European and African continents, but is also open to all other countries. All countries, from either Asia, Europe, Africa or the Americas, can be international cooperation partners of the Belt and Road Initiative.”¹⁸ After the BRI was put forward, China has actively coordinated development and cooperation plans with international and regional organizations such as the United Nations, ASEAN, the African Union, the European Union, and the Eurasian Economic Union. In 2017, Chile, Argentina, Mexico, Panama, and other Latin American countries expressed their willingness to participate in the BRI, or signing BRI construction memorandums with China. Brazil is a founding member of AIIB, and Peru, Venezuela, Bolivia, Chile, Argentina, and Ecuador joined the AIIB in 2017. By the end of 2019, China had signed 201 cooperation documents for jointly building the BRI with 167 countries and international organizations,¹⁹ and the BRI circle of friends continued to expand. In addition, China has improved cooperation mechanisms and deepened bilateral cooperation by establishing trade and investment cooperation mechanisms and cooperation working groups with BRI countries. By the end of 2019, China had established unimpeded trade working groups with eight countries, investment cooperation working groups with 40 countries, e-commerce cooperation mechanisms with 22 countries, service trade cooperation mechanisms with 14 countries, and signed documents with 14 countries for cooperating in third-party markets.²⁰ In the face

¹⁸ Xi Jinping. (2017). Work Together to Build the Silk Road Economic Belt and The 21st Century Maritime Silk Road, Speech by H.E. Xi Jinping, President of the People’s Republic of China At the Opening Ceremony of The Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation. http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2017-05/16/c_136287878.htm.

¹⁹ Ministry of Commerce of the People’s Republic of China. (2021). Report on Development of China’s Outward Investment and Economic Cooperation (2020). <http://www.gov.cn/xinwen/2021-02/03/5584540/files/924b9a95d0a048daaa8465d56051aca4.pdf>.

²⁰ Ministry of Commerce of the People’s Republic of China. (2021). Report on Development of China’s Outward Investment and Economic Cooperation (2020). <http://www.gov.cn/xinwen/2021-02/03/5584540/files/924b9a95d0a048daaa8465d56051aca4.pdf>.

of COVID-19 pandemic, China proactively provides masks, protective clothing, disinfection supplies, vaccines, and other anti-epidemic materials to BRI countries. As of November 5, 2020, the number of China–Europe freight trains trips reached 10,180, which exceeded the total number in 2019, and 927,000 TEUs (twenty-foot equivalent unit) of merchandise were transported, an increase of 54% year-on-year. The round-trip comprehensive heavy container rate reached 98.3%. More importantly, the China–Europe freight trains delivered nearly 80 million pieces of medical supplies, totaling more than 60,000 tons, to BRI countries, setting up a “lifeline” for the BRI countries’ fight against the pandemic. Providing public goods to the world, especially the BRI countries, demonstrates China’s responsibility as a major power, and makes the concepts of win–win cooperation, mutual benefit, and common development more popular. Moreover, investment in BRI countries has been growing, laying foundation for the early recovery of the economies of BRI countries and gathering more consensus on development. As the BRI insists that “the pursuit of this initiative is based on extensive consultation and its benefits will be shared by us all”,²¹ and with the outcomes of the BRI continue to emerge and the demonstration effect continues to grow, more actors will be attracted to join the BRI IPCC.

The Cooperation Scale Continues to Expand

The “Belt and Road” IPCC has become an important driving force for the industrialization and economic growth of BRI developing countries. With the improvement of industrial supporting systems and the expansion of domestic markets in BRI countries, the scale of IPCC will continue to expand. On one hand, the “Belt and Road” IPCC has boosted investments in manufacturing industries, especially labor-intensive industries in BRI countries. For some countries with low development levels and weak infrastructure, the “Belt and Road” IPCC investment constitutes the cardinal of their manufacturing industry investment. These investments generate the production capacity of manufacturing industry, and form a positive feedback mechanism through three effects that strengthen the development of manufacturing industry. The first is the swarm effect,

²¹ Xi Jinping. (2017). *Work Together to Build the Silk Road Economic Belt and The 21st Century Maritime Silk Road, Speech by H.E. Xi Jinping, President of the People’s Republic of China At the Opening Ceremony of The Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation.* http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2017-05/16/c_136287878.htm.

that is, the investment of leading enterprises will drive the upstream and downstream enterprises to invest together; the second is the demonstration effect, that is, the good economic benefits of the invested enterprises will attract more overseas investors; the third is incubation effect, that is, local enterprises enter the industry to provide supporting facilities for large foreign investors, and even directly compete with them. On the other hand, the economic development of BRI countries has not only brought about the growth of industry's upstream and downstream input demand at home, but also the growth of final consumption demand. The expanded market will attract more Chinese investors in setting up factories to meet local industrial and consumption demands. Studies reveal that the economic benefits of the BRI international cooperation parks do not show soon: the economy grows significantly by 30% in 5–12 years after the establishment of the cooperation zones.²² In the first three quarters of 2020, China's non-financial direct investment in BRI countries reached US\$13.02 billion, a year-on-year growth of 29.7%, which was 32.3 percentage points higher than the overall national growth rate and accounted for 16.5% of the total in the first three quarters, 4.1% percentage points higher compared with the same period in 2019.²³ It can be predicted that in the future, the BRI will continue to advance in depth, and the scale of IPCC will continue to expand.

Closer Division of Labor

“The scale of market determines the level of division of labor”. In the early stage of IPCC, due to the limited local market size, multinational companies usually organize production by means of local assembly and importing raw materials and parts from overseas. When the market scale expands, a more detailed division of labor becomes possible, and the production of raw materials and parts at places that are geographically close to the assembly factories becomes an economically favorable choice. Therefore, IPCC will expand from the processing and assembly of final products to the production of raw materials and parts in the upstream and

²² Li Jinye, Li Chunying. (2020). *Economic benefits of the Economic Cooperation Zone on the Countries alongside the Belt & Road Initiative*. Journal of Commercial Economics, (2), pp. 147–151 (in Chinese).

²³ Ministry of Commerce of the People's Republic of China. (2021). Report on Development of China's Outward Investment and Economic Cooperation (2020). <http://www.gov.cn/xinwen/2021-02/03/5584540/files/924b9a95d0a048daaa8465d56051aca4.pdf>.

supporting services in the downstream of industrial chain. Take the textile and garment industry as an example. The early investment of Chinese enterprises in BRI countries was mainly in the field of clothing processing, while fabrics and clothing accessories had to be imported from China, and the BRI countries were also showing a trend of synchronous growth in clothing exports and textile imports. However, as the garment processing capacity of BRI countries grows and the scale of the industry expands, the investment of Chinese enterprises will extend to the upstream of the industrial chain, and supporting sectors of the garment industry such as cotton spinning, chemical fiber, printing and dyeing, plastics and metal products will develop.

In terms of the value chain, the production capacity cooperation in the early years was mainly concentrated in the processing and assembly sections. With the expansion of local markets, multinational companies will pay more attention to the localized demand, by setting up R&D centers to develop products suitable for local customers, and by setting up service organizations to meet localized service demand, thus production capacity cooperation will extend from the processing and assembly links at the middle of global value chain to R&D and design, and brand marketing at both ends. In terms of investment direction of capacity cooperation, in the early years, China was mainly investing in BRI developing countries. With the economic development of BRI countries and the growth of native enterprises, there will be more and more reverse FDI flows from BRI countries to China, through which, they will use China's finance, human resources, and industrial supporting facilities.

International Role Becomes Increasingly Prominent

In recent years, the world economy has shown the characteristics of "rising in the East and falling in the West". In terms of the added value of global manufacturing, the proportion of high-income countries dropped from 74.5% in 2005 to 53.8% in 2018, while middle-income countries increased from 25.2% in 2005 to 46.7% in 2019, among which upper-middle-income countries saw an increase of nearly 20%. In terms of manufactured merchandise exports, from 2005 to 2018, the proportion of high-income countries fell from 77.1 to 68.0%, while the proportion of middle-income countries rose from 23.3 to 31.5%. Among them, the proportion of upper-middle-income countries increased from

19.6 to 26.9%.²⁴ With the introduction of the BRI and the in-depth advancement of IPCC, the infrastructure of BRI countries continues to improve and their industries continue to develop, their occupation in the world's manufacturing industry and manufactured merchandise exports is expected to further increase. As the engine of “Belt and Road” IPCC, China's industrial innovation capabilities have been continuously strengthened in recent years, its industrial development level and role in global industrial chain have been lifted. At the same time, due to the rising costs of production factors, China's labor-intensive industries also need to transfer to lower-cost countries. This means that the industrial cooperation between China and the BRI countries will shift from the original inter-industry division of labor to the intra-industry and intra-product division of labor. The deepening of industrial chain links will further enhance the importance and influence of BRI countries in the global industrial division of labor.

2.3.2 *Suggestions*

Although the “Belt and Road” IPCC has developed rapidly and achieved positive results and is showing bright prospects, there are many challenges, such as the unbalanced distribution of IPCC projects and the small scale of investments. IPCC is facing drastic environmental changes such as the countercurrent of globalization. In some countries, political and economic instability, unsound laws and regulations, and relatively weak credit status have increased the risks of IPCC. Factors such as insufficient internationalization experience of Chinese “going global” enterprises and their unfamiliarity with the host countries' situation, have made them difficult to recover investment in some projects. In order to make greater progress and effectiveness in “Belt and Road” IPCC, it is suggested that the governments of China and BRI countries make improvements in the following areas:

First, strengthen policy communication and further deepen IPCC. In addition to signing strategic cooperation agreements with BRI countries, aligning development plans and strategies, China should continue to communicate with BRI countries in policies, benchmark international high-level free trade agreements, and promote the negotiation of bilateral or regional free trade agreements, expand the depth and width of opening

²⁴ Li Xiaohua. (2021). *Evolution Trend of Global Manufacturing Landscape and China's Countermeasures*. Research on Financial and Economic Issues. (1), pp. 31–42 (in Chinese).

up, and further promote the flow of goods, services, and capital. On one hand, it will better foster the investment of Chinese enterprises in BRI countries; on the other hand, it will attract BRI countries to increase the investment scale and fields in China.

Second, strengthen risk assessment of BRI countries to reduce IPCC risks. Promote China's consulates and embassies abroad, think tanks, financial institutions, and credit rating agencies to strengthen the collection of information on the political, cultural, social, economic, and industrial aspects of BRI countries, and to compile and publish country reports, industrial development reports, and national risk assessment reports regularly. The Ministry of Commerce and other relevant ministries provide these reports to Chinese "going global" enterprises through government procurement of services, to help them understand the political, economic, and social situations of the countries where they intend to invest in, evaluate investment opportunities and risks, thereby optimizing the investment direction and layout, and preventing blind investments and vicious competition, effectively preventing and controlling risks, and improving the quality of IPCC.

Third, distinguish the ways of IPCC and achieve coordination between government and market. In the field of infrastructure construction and government-led industrial park construction, such cooperation can be led by governments, and contributed by enterprises. With the support of government-to-government assistance funds, AIIB, and Silk Road Fund, infrastructure construction can drive the export of China's products. In areas such as park construction (non-governmental cooperation) and direct investment by enterprises, the autonomy of enterprises should be better brought into play, and the location, industrial field, investment scale, and speed should be determined by enterprises.

Fourth, promote the establishment of industry intermediaries to coordinate overseas investment activities. Encourage Chinese enterprises and financial institutions in the same region or country to establish "Chinese Chamber of Commerce" to provide Chinese enterprises with information on local regimes, laws, markets, industries, etc., and legal and government relations support. They can help formulate norms that local Chinese enterprises abide by, strengthen coordination and cooperation among enterprises, promote Chinese enterprises to abide by native laws and

regulations, and the market order of fair competition, prevent disorderly and vicious competition, perform social responsibilities actively, and contribute to the native economy and society.²⁵

Fifth, support service enterprises to “go global” and provide support for IPCC. The development of the industrial sector is inseparable from the strong support of producer service industry. With the expansion of Chinese enterprises’ investments in BRI countries, and the extension of industrial fields and chains, more demand for producer services will be formed. While continuing to support industrial enterprises to “go global” to carry out investment cooperation, policies should be formulated to support enterprises in the fields of modern finance, foreign trade, legal consulting, and commercial circulation to strengthen investment in BRI countries. In particular, it is necessary to encourage the business partners of Chinese industrial enterprises to jointly carry out IPCC in BRI countries.

²⁵ State Council of the People’s Republic of China. (2015). *Guiding Opinions of the State Council of the People’s Republic of China, on Promoting International Capacity and Equipment Manufacturing Cooperation*. http://www.gov.cn/zhengce/content/2015-05/16/content_9771.htm.

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The Belt and Road Initiative: Supply Chain Resilience as a Prerequisite for Sustainability

Alexandru Georgescu

1 INTRODUCTION

The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) is a massive project, composed of multiple geographic corridors and sectoral initiatives brought under a single strategic umbrella whose role is to create infrastructure and to manage efforts to enhance trade and flows of resources, capital, and innovation, while fostering people-to-people contacts mainly in the Eurasian continent and in East Africa. The BRI has been assigned geostrategic valences through its resulting promotion of Chinese economic transition into an exporter of capital and innovation and through its comparative advantage of being able to credibly mobilize resources across large time-frames that are not feasible for Western-style governmental turnovers in response to shifting voter preference. As such, the BRI encompasses a level of ideological challenge to the prevailing narrative regarding liberal democracy, and China's partners in the developing world are increasingly referring to a Chinese model of economic development and resource mobilization. Adding to this the institutional developments taking place

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195

under the BRI, such as the creation of the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, which is perceived as an attempt to displace or provide an alternative to the Western-backed international financial and developmental ecosystem, it is understandable why, regardless of its promise of shared economic gain, the BRI is regarded with anxiety and hostility by actors in the West.

The first great challenge for the BRI since its creation in 2013 has been the effects of the global COVID-19 pandemic, whose direct impact and the impact of measures implemented to control its spread have resulted in a drop in BRI investment, in problems for BRI project implementation and in emergent but also cultivated narratives against an ever-deepening global economic integration. Globalization may have delivered significant economic benefits to those who have had the capacity to grasp it, but it has also exposed its adherents to cascading disruptions and the propagation of risks, vulnerabilities, and threats resulting from rapid shifts in the global environment and their impact on complex systems which are hard to understand and predict.

This article argues that supply chain resilience and sustainability must become a crucial component of the BRI narrative, agenda and policy toolbox, if it is to emerge from the pandemic strengthened and also able to answer its detractors. Chan et al.¹ write that “innovative business models for logistics and supply chain management would be required to support such a huge ambition” on the part of BRI to integrate over 60 nations covering two-thirds of the world population, and accounting for projects worth over 2.5 trillion dollars cumulatively² but also that “logistics and supply chain innovation will enhance sustainable business and economic development”.

We formulate a series of proposals, both strategic and tactical, that would serve to enhance BRI supply chain resilience and affirm that a safety/security perspective on the BRI is both necessary and desirable to address emerging issues in the complex transborder infrastructure

¹ Chan, H. K., Dai, J., Wang, X., Lacka, E. (2019). Logistics and supply chain innovation in the context of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). *Transportation Research Part E: Logistics and Transportation Review*, Volume 132, 2019, Pg. 51–56, Elsevier, ISSN 1366-5545, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tre.2019.10.009>.

² INFRASTRUCTURE 360 REVIEW—BRI FOCUS: Progressing through the Pandemic. Refinitiv, as Refinitiv (2021), https://www.refinitiv.com/content/dam/market/ing/en_us/documents/reports/infrastructure-360-review-bri-focus.pdf.

networks and supply and production chains, and to promote greater cooperation between the varied stakeholders of the BRI.

2 JUSTIFICATION: MULTILATERALISM AND SUSTAINABILITY

We argue that the long-term sustainability of the BRI is dependent on continuously improving resilience governance at multiple levels, but especially resilience to high impact and low-frequency events, like the pandemic and the various categories of threats identified in recent years, such as “gray rhinos” (problems known to exist and ignored until they break out), black swans (problems which are unprecedented and unexpected at the moment when they occur), pink elephants (problems everybody knows about but are unaddressed because of how controversial tackling them is) etc.

The pandemic should be a wake-up call regarding the potential threats of disruptions in globalized infrastructure chains which are transmitted from one region and sector of activity to another. Amid pandemic recriminations regarding nationalist behavior and beggar-thy-neighbor policies, a new tendency toward protectionism and unilateralism was felt, at least for the duration of the peak of uncertainty during the pandemic period. This led to an important shift in the discourse against China’s Belt and Road Initiative.

Previously, the narrative was that the Belt and Road Initiative had to be countered in order to disrupt Chinese strategic interests and perceived ambitions, whether regional or global. Gradually, a new narrative was developed which saw further expansion during the pandemic-fueled crisis, one focused on the risk outcomes of cooperation in the BRI—the environmental impact of projects or of their particular implementation in partnership with China, the financial impact of cooperation, through “debt traps” and “debt diplomacy”, the issues of strategic dependency in a comprehensive manner on China and exposure to its alleged strategic or arbitrary decision-making and, last but not least, the disruption of critical supply chains during the pandemic and the subsequent competition, during the recovery, for scarce capabilities in global transport and other scarce resources, which triggered further economic anxiety and resentment (coupled with admiration) of China. The EU-backed Global Gateway initiative, which has a similar infrastructure focus, and especially the US-backed Blue Dot Network with its emphasis on governance for

infrastructure selection, financing, and sustainable implementation define their selling point over the BRI as their model of governance which takes financial sustainability, labor protection, environmental issues and many other facets into account.

In the context of this new approach, the success of the BRI requires visible and effective action to increase provable resilience, improve sustainability, and to address the asymmetry that the BRI entails for smaller countries, smaller economies, for small companies etc.³

Resilience is the ability of a system of critical infrastructures, such as the BRI or its individual assets and components, to minimize the risk of the manifestation of a disruptive event and, if it takes place, to minimize the damage to the users and stakeholders who are critically reliant on the system, to minimize the damage to the system itself and to ensure a rapid recovery to an acceptable level of functioning for the system.⁴ In a resilient system, crises take place with minimal disruption and maximum adaptability.

Sustainability is the long-term capacity of a system to function in the context of various challenges and constraints, including ecological, social, resource-wise, political, and technological, in a manner that preserves system viability and minimizes system pathologies (pollution, degradation, loss of function).⁵

Taken by these definitions, resilience can be designated a prerequisite of sustainability. Resilience from unanticipated shocks, such as the multiple ones recently experienced in the global economy, must become a priority. We have witnessed three types of shocks—the ones caused by the

³ Ram, J., Zhang, Z. (2020). Belt and road initiative (BRI) supply chain risks: propositions and model development. *The International Journal of Logistics Management*, Issue 4, Vol. 31, Volume 31 Issue 4, September 2020, ISSN: 0957-4093, <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJLM-12-2019-0366>

⁴ Georgescu, A., Gheorghe, A., Piso, M.-I., Katina, P.F. (2019), “Critical Space Infrastructures: Risk, Resilience and Complexity”, *Topics in Safety, Risk, Reliability and Quality*, Series 36, eBook ISBN 978-3-030-12604-9, <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-12604-9>, Hardcover ISBN 978-3-030-12603-2, Series ISSN 1566-0443, Springer International Publishing.

⁵ Veveřa, V., Cirnu, C.E., Georgescu, A. (2021). Blockchain in the management of complex systems—impact on sustainable development. in Ranf, D.E., Bucovețchi, O., Badea, D. (eds) (2021). “Sustainability management and managerial sustainability from classic to modern paradigms”. pp. 214–233, Ed. Academiei Fortelor Terestre Nicolae Bălcescu Sibiu 2021, ISBN 978-973-153-419-0.

disruption, the ones caused by the recovery of demands on an otherwise atrophied system as a result of the crisis, and the ones caused by independent events such as extreme weather, which happened to take place at the particular moment to heighten the disruptive impact of the other shock categories. Examples not related to the BRI include:

- The oil storage shock—the economic slowdown engendered by the crisis in the first phase led to a slowdown in the consumption of oil which, in the case of the US, led to a scarcity of storage while oil tankers were navigating to fulfill contracts. The situation became so dire that the futures contract price on oil reached negative levels, as contract holders were willing to pay others to take over contracts before delivery rather than having to receive oil which they had no place to store;
- Later, the growth in demand for energy engendered by the economic recovery, coupled with geopolitical crises between Russia, the US, and Russia's European clients for natural gas led to a rapid growth in natural gas prices without actual shortages, though in the presence of anxiety regarding low reserves;
- The semiconductor crisis—the slowdown in automotive manufacturing led to a reorientation of chip manufacturers to industries which performed better, such as home electronics. With carmakers wanting to restart production, not enough capacity was available, as it takes years and billions of dollars to add a new fabrication unit, contrasting with the speed of the market swings during the pandemic;
- The logistics crises in countries such as the US and Great Britain, which saw fears regarding the stocking of shelves and the adequate running of logistics chains from port to customer. This took place in the context of continuing pandemic restrictions and health problems affecting the transport sector work force. At the same time, there was an economic recovery making demands on the transportation sector for meeting deferred consumption (automatically higher than consumption smoothed over time, during normal periods) which the transport firms could not resolve because they had atrophied during the crisis (had sold trucks, fired drivers and so on, because of the uncertainties in demand recovery);
- The supply chain crisis for plastics, because of extreme weather events in the Gulf of Mexico area affecting US suppliers of key basic

resins and other ingredients for the plastics that go into a number of industries;

- The added demand for container transport capability, which led to bidding wars among categories of customers and nations, with some countries paying premiums to ensure they can meet their export commitments;
- In a classic case of escalating failure, retailers and other importers faced with long delays in acquiring goods, and used to not maintaining sufficient stock to meet demand for an intermediary period due to the costs, started placing higher orders from suppliers to be sure that they have more stock on hand in case further delays are registered in future shipments. This adds even more pressure to the system, producing further delays.

3 BRI SUPPLY CHAIN PERSPECTIVES

According to Ram & Zhang,⁶ BRI supply chains face a combination of risks triggered by operational processes, informational and environmental deficiencies:

- Externally driven or environmental risks due to exogenous factors related to security environment, regulatory environment, competition, the state of customers, the state of access to finance, and so on;
- “Internally driven or process risks that arise due to incompatibility between processes and organizational objectives encapsulating risks related to operations, processes, empowerment, etc.”;
- “Information or decision-driven risks that arise due to inaccurate, incomplete or obsolete information encapsulating risks related to processes, operations, strategic decision making, contracts, business reporting, etc.”.

⁶ Ram, J., Zhang, Z. (2020). Belt and road initiative (BRI) supply chain risks: propositions and model development. *The International Journal of Logistics Management*, Issue 4, Vol. 31, September 2020, ISSN: 0957-4093, <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJLM-12-2019-0366>

Figure 1 illustrates the main sub-headings of the analysis of BRI supply chain issues.

One simple way of viewing the evolution in time of supply chain risks is that, while the BRI is centered on efforts to reduce lead times and frictions in cross-border trade and other exchanges, increased geographical distances and the exponential growth in interactions between various actors placed in contact through BRI interconnectivity will raise new challenges to managing supply chain flows, such as disruption risks and sustainability issues.

Risks include, in addition to simple disruptions in access to necessary goods and services, unsustainable supply management for emergency purposes, lack of risk and liability management, unbalanced risk-sharing

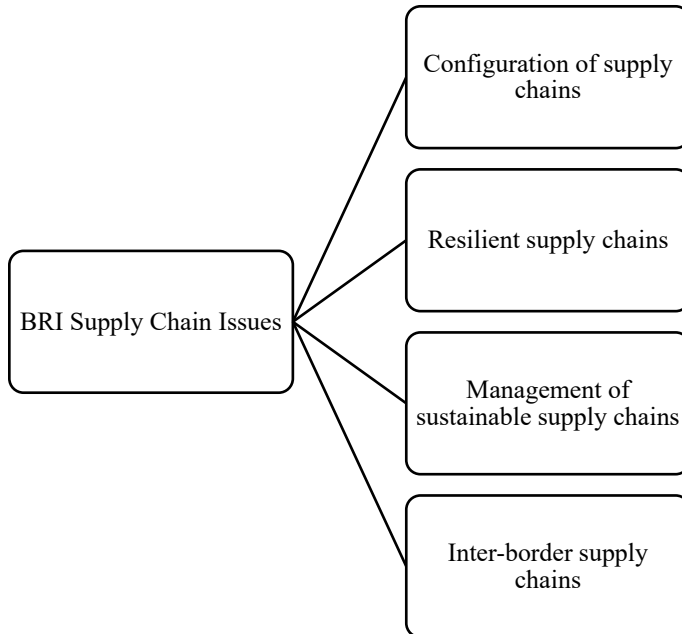


Fig. 1 BRI supply chain issues (*Source* Butt, A.S.; Arshi, T.A.; Rao, V.; Tewari, V. (2020) Implications of Belt and Road Initiative for Supply Chain Management: A Holistic View. *J. Open Innov. Technol. Mark. Complex.* 2020, 6, 136. <https://doi.org/10.3390/joitmc6040136>)

partnerships, lack of transparency, inadequate project evaluation, incompatible corporate governance structures, cyber security issues, and more.⁷

4 RESILIENCE BY DESIGN: KEY PROPOSALS

This section presents a few proposals related to achieving resilience by design in the BRI supply chain through systemic shifts in governance, whether at the level of financing or as general policies to be supported by a wide array of stakeholders. It can be difficult to enact a change that requires many actors to agree to its implementation, and the link between action and result is not always obvious. These proposals also eschew details regarding practical implementation. For this reason, the next section will focus on concrete proposals for improving supply chain resilience with existing structures on a project-by-project basis.

The following is a non-exhaustive list of potential measures:

1. Implement best practices in project selection and governance through the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank and other sources of multilateral financing, as recommended by Caba-Maria et al.⁸ Brînză⁹, and Ding et al.¹⁰ The BRI requires a “wider range of financing options and more multilateral projects under the BRI. Various financing options involving multiple stakeholders in BRI

⁷ Ram, J., Zhang, Z. (2020). Belt and road initiative (BRI) supply chain risks: propositions and model development. *The International Journal of Logistics Management*, Issue 4, Vol. 31, September 2020, ISSN: 0957-4093, <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJLM-12-2019-0366>

⁸ Caba-Maria, F., Georgescu, A., Mureșan, L., Mușetescu, R. C. (coord.) (2020). Promoting the Belt and Road Initiative and 17 + 1 Cooperation in Central and Eastern Europe, from the Perspective of Central and Eastern European Countries”, Eikon, 2020, ISBN: 978-606-49-0389-1, <https://mepei.com/report-policy-analysis-promoting-the-belt-and-road-initiative-and-17-1-cooperation-in-central-and-eastern-europe-from-the-perspective-of-central-and-eastern-european-countries/>

⁹ Brînză, A. (2019). China can replace Belt and Road bilateral deals with multilateral cooperation. *Nikkei Asian Review*, 10 May 2019, <https://asia.nikkei.com/Opinion/China-can-replace-Belt-and-Road-bilateral-deals-with-multilateral-cooperation>.

¹⁰ Ding, Y., Xiao, A., Tian, E. (2020). China’s Belt and Road initiative in a post-pandemic world. *Invesco Limited Market Views*, 15 June 2020, <https://www.invesco.com/invest-china/en/institutional/insights/chinas-belt-and-road-initiative-in-a-postpandemic-world.html>.

projects could improve project management and decrease dependence on Chinese capital”.¹¹ A byproduct of better project selection and management is a greater focus on security and sustainability, including at the nexus between the two as recounted by Hanson and Fu¹² in describing supply chain security for soft commodities. An example in this regard is the growth of the London Stock Exchange’s involvement in financing BRI projects¹³ and supporting RMB internationalization, with \$80 bn equity capital raised and \$170 bn in debt capital raised for BRI infrastructure projects, while listing on the Exchange 290 companies from 41 sectors and 38 countries from the BRI group.

2. Hanson & Fu¹⁴ emphasize the link between security, sustainability, and environmentalism when it comes to supply chains for commodities. “Greening” supply chains does not always hamper them, though it requires foresight and investment. Rather, this can strengthen supply chains. The environmental aspect of the BRI has been also one of the main objections formulated in the international public discourse against the BRI by the US and various European and Western powers, which China has tried to counter by “greening” BRI infrastructure project selection and other measures which may or may not be sustainable.¹⁵ It announced the Green

¹¹ Ding, Y., Xiao, A., Tian, E. (2020). China’s Belt and Road initiative in a post-pandemic world. Invesco Limited Market Views, 15 June 2020, <https://www.invesco.com/invest-china/en/institutional/insights/chinas-belt-and-road-initiative-in-a-postpandemic-world.html>.

¹² Hanson, C., Fu, X. (eds.) (2020). Green Commodity Supply Chain Index: Contributing to Supply Chain Stability and Sustainability (Phase 1 Research). BRI International Green Development Coalition 2020 Policy Study Series, http://en.brigc.net/Reports/research_subject/202011/P020201129786820554459.pdf.

¹³ The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). London Stock Exchange Group website, accessed 8 February 2022, as LSEG (2022), <https://www.lseg.com/markets-products-and-services/our-markets/london-stock-exchange-group/belt-and-road-initiative-bri>.

¹⁴ Hanson, C., Fu, X. (eds.) (2020). Green Commodity Supply Chain Index: Contributing to Supply Chain Stability and Sustainability (Phase 1 Research). BRI International Green Development Coalition 2020 Policy Study Series, http://en.brigc.net/Reports/research_subject/202011/P020201129786820554459.pdf.

¹⁵ Martin, X., Van der Putten, F. (2020). China’s infrastructure investment & environmental sustainability. ISPI Italy, Dossier Sustainability and Infrastructure for New Growth in a Post-Covid Era, 24 June 2020, <https://www.ispionline.it/it/pubblicazione/chinas-infrastructure-investment-and-environmental-sustainability-26635>.

Investment Principles of 2019 and the Everbright Belt & Road Green Investment Fund to deliver green environment, green energy, green manufacturing, and green living¹⁶ while also committing to limiting investment in carbon-intensive energy projects abroad during the COP26 UN Climate Change Conference in Glasgow between October 31, 2021 and November 12, 2021.¹⁷ Reactions in Western analyses have been muted as to the sustainability and success of this environmentalist shift.¹⁸ Nevertheless, CCICED¹⁹ stresses that a green supply chain “can strengthen the security of food supplies, rebuild trust in global commodity trade, and fill gaps in current global governance—harnessing the shared performance ambitions of commodity suppliers, traders, buyers, exporting countries, and importing countries”,²⁰ which is something the BRI requires in its overall supply chains.

3. China should continue investing in optimizing transborder connectivity, for example through continuous reductions of time spent shifting train containers to different gauge tracks in Central Asia, or the time spent in customs, among other issues. This connectivity reduces the frictions of international trade and enables supply chains to work better, with more efficiency and predictability. Connectivity should also take into mind an all-hazards approach that ensures

¹⁶ Ladislav, S., Carey, L. (2019). Chinese Multilateralism and the Promise of a Green Belt and Road. CSIS Briefs, 5 November 2019, <https://www.csis.org/analysis/chinese-multilateralism-and-promise-green-belt-and-road>.

¹⁷ Jiang, Y. (2021). China at COP26: Coal, 1.5C and short-term actions. China Dialogue, 16 November 2021, <https://chinadialogue.net/en/climate/coal-1-5c-and-short-term-actions-china-at-cop26/>

¹⁸ Ladislav, S., Carey, L. (2019). Chinese Multilateralism and the Promise of a Green Belt and Road. CSIS Briefs, 5 November 2019, <https://www.csis.org/analysis/chinese-multilateralism-and-promise-green-belt-and-road>.

¹⁹ Global Green Value Chains: Greening China’s “Soft Commodity” Value Chains. CCICED Special Policy Study Report. Beijing: China Council for International Cooperation on Environment and Development, as CCICED (2020), <https://cciced.eco/research/special-policy-study/global-green-value-chains-greening-chinas-soft-commodity-value-chains/>

²⁰ Global Green Value Chains: Greening China’s “Soft Commodity” Value Chains. CCICED Special Policy Study Report. Beijing: China Council for International Cooperation on Environment and Development, as CCICED (2020), <https://cciced.eco/research/special-policy-study/global-green-value-chains-greening-chinas-soft-commodity-value-chains/>

contingency planning for various crises that may hinder transborder flows or lead a government to adopt knee-jerk restrictions on the flow of goods.

4. As part of the BRI, China has made significant investment in infrastructure that facilitates cross-border trade and access to resources. Refinitiv²¹ maintains a BRI 360 Infrastructure Database that separates BRI projects from other Chinese investments and also classifies them according to sector. In 2020, the most recent year for which the full database has been updated, 731 new BRI projects were initiated, worth 420 billion dollars, of which transport infrastructure accounted for 179 projects (24.45% of the total) and 133 billion dollars (31.7% of total). Manufacturing and the Oil & Gas sectors, which have important cross-border supply chain valences, were worth 56.36 bn dollars (13.42%) and 46.32 bn dollars (11.03%) respectively. Therefore, supply chain considerations in normal exploitation are directly connected to over half of BRI investment. As an aside, there has been a significant decline from 2019 to 2020 in the value of BRI projects, from 884 bn dollars to 420, even though the number of projects stayed similar, illustrating the impact of the pandemic and one would consider also the reduction in investment in a more reticent West. Nevertheless, there was an even greater decline in Chinese non-BRI projects abroad, illustrating the growth of the importance of the BRI in overall Chinese investment interaction with the world. With this in mind, we would recommend that China invest in resilient infrastructure and emphasize a commitment to excellence in maintenance to ensure safe exploitation over the infrastructure's lifetime. The Belt and Road Initiative, seen from a Critical Infrastructure Perspective, is a network of infrastructures facilitating trade, contacts, and other exchanges and therefore requires serious thought given to issues of resilience.²² The Critical Infrastructure Protection framework is

²¹ INFRASTRUCTURE 360 REVIEW—BRI FOCUS: Progressing through the Pandemic. Refinitiv, as Refinitiv (2021), https://www.refinitiv.com/content/dam/market-ing/en_us/documents/reports/infrastructure-360-review-bri-focus.pdf.

²² Georgescu, A. (2017). Critical infrastructure protection for the Belt and Road Initiative. in Dimitrijević, D., Ping, H. (eds.). Initiatives of the “New Silk Road” Achievements and Challenges. pg. 191–204, ISBN 978-86-7067-246-8; Georgescu, A. (2018). Critical infrastructure protection—challenge and opportunity for the Belt and Road Initiative. *Bulgarian Diplomatic Journal* 20/2018, pg 265–274, ISSN 1313-6437;

ideally suited to ensuring supply chain resilience, as it deals in the resilience of the critical infrastructures which makes them possible. However, resilience must become a stated priority for BRI projects in the past, present and future to enable a proper response to a challenging, complex, and rapidly changing security environment, beset by natural, accidental and man-made risks, vulnerabilities and threats. In the case of infrastructure being planned and implemented today, the focus on resilience can begin in the design phase, where the resulting transport link is “resilient by design”, featuring redundant, robust, flexible, adaptable, and hardened systems with strong supporting organizations and cooperation between stakeholders and benefiting from technological solutions and implementation methods addressing the salient security concerns of today (such as cybersecurity).

5. The Digital Silk Road being developed as part of the BRI fosters an increase in the number of users or subscribers to trading channels, apps, messaging services, e-payment services etc. Vila Seoane²³ links these developments to the electronic World Trade Platform (eWTP) which will further promote and enhance trade and economic development along the BRI countries, especially in the dimensions that involve SMEs, which have a disadvantage in cross-border trade compared to very large companies that can more easily manage differences in culture, tastes and gaps in market and regulatory knowledge, while having the capacity to organize and run complex

Mureşan, L., Georgescu, A. (2019). A Critical Infrastructure Perspective on the Belt and Road Initiative and its Opportunities and Challenges. in Yang, J., Obradovic, Z. (eds.) (2019). “The Belt and Road and Central and Eastern Europe”, p. 205–228, Shanghai Foreign Language Education Press, ISBN 978-7-5446-5465-4; Caba-Maria, F., Georgescu, A., Mureşan, L., Muşetescu, R. C. (coord.) (2020). Promoting the Belt and Road Initiative and 17 + 1 Cooperation in Central and Eastern Europe, from the Perspective of Central and Eastern European Countries”, Eikon, 2020, ISBN: 978-606-49-0389-1, <https://mepei.com/report-policy-analysis-promoting-the-belt-and-road-initiative-and-17-1-cooperation-in-central-and-eastern-europe-from-the-perspective-of-central-and-eastern-european-countries/>

²³ Vila Seoane, M. F. (2019). Alibaba’s discourse for the digital Silk Road: the electronic World Trade Platform and “inclusive globalization”. Chinese Journal of Communication, Volume 13, issue 1, Taylor & Francis, 2020, <https://doi.org/10.1080/17544750.2019.1606838>.

and scaled supply chains. From the perspective of supply chain security, the diversification promoted by the eWTP approach may have a salutary impact on overall resilience and on market competition.

6. The significant development of the China Maritime Belt has led to an overarching focus on it compared to rail, which is justified by its role in BRI logistics and transport. However, rail must continue to be a priority for China, including through subsidies, because of the geopolitical and geoeconomic advantages of the four land corridors of the Belt and Road Initiative connecting China and Europe, especially since maritime transport is the most exposed to geopolitically relevant zone transit. The inherent diversification offered by rail, even as it struggles to achieve sustainability with its mix of speed and costs, will be a valued contributing factor to supply chain resilience. Wen et al.²⁴ analyzed the impact of the BRI Economic Corridors on the actual route decisions made by export companies, and found that there is significant value in them as alternatives and that they have a competitive edge over maritime transport between China and Europe, especially when delivery times are strict.

5 CONCRETE PROPOSALS

In terms of concrete proposals to improve supply chain resilience in the BRI, we are limited by the existing level of non-institutionalized cooperation and governance at multilateral levels in the Belt and Road Initiative and, more specifically, as an area of special focus to us, the cooperation between China and its Central and Eastern European Partners. Most of the following proposals rely on the good academic and business cooperation that has been developed regardless of the ebb and flow of political relations in the wider context of the global multipolar shift and the security priorities of partner nations in the regional context of instability. Five possible ideas are outlined in this section, though many more are possible by leveraging existing academic and business networks:

²⁴ Wen, X., Ma, H.L., Choi, T.M., Sheu, J.B. (2019). Impacts of the Belt and Road Initiative on the China–Europe trading route selections. *Transportation Research Part E: Logistics and Transportation Review*, Volume 122, pg. 581–604, Elsevier, ISSN 1366-5545.

1. The development of a specialized curriculum and certification for the initial and continuing advanced education of government and company experts in BRI supply chain security and risk management. The formalization of the study of BRI with practical applications in universities and even in specialized research and teaching institutes is already taking shape at the level of business, social, and culture studies. Applied study of BRI resilience and security in general, and supply chain security, in particular, is a necessary development, which can also spur cross-border recognition of degrees and specific educational certificates.
2. According to Chan et al.²⁵ the “BRI paradigm is a new and emerging topic, particularly in the operations management domain”. Education must be supplemented by actual research into BRI supply chains, which can be undertaken by cross-border teams and funded in various collective forms by groups of BRI countries (maybe on a regional or sectoral basis). The 16 + 1 Think Tank Cooperation and Exchange Network and the Global Partnership Center, two existing initiatives, can play a role in this regard, and other such networks can be identified that may play a role in research at the BRI level.
3. Develop a BRI Secure Supply Chain Index or something similarly named as a product that addresses the informational asymmetries inherent in the size and diversity of the BRI partner economies and countries. Whether it is developed by a Chinese company, a consortium of universities, or a West–East partnership, this can become a tool to alleviate newly validated concerns about the fragility of cross-border supply chains in an uncertain and unstable security environment, though arbitrary government restrictions would remain a problem. An example of such a tool is the Green Commodity Supply Chain Index developed by the BRI International Green Development Coalition which “[assesses] the relative risk to the long-term security and stability of a soft commodity supply chain posed by

²⁵ Chan, H. K., Dai, J., Wang, X., Lacka, E. (2019). Logistics and supply chain innovation in the context of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). *Transportation Research Part E: Logistics and Transportation Review*, Volume 132, 2019, pp. 51–56, Elsevier, ISSN 1366-5545, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tre.2019.10.009>.

major environmental and social factors”.²⁶ Soft commodities are raw materials and derivatives from forestry and agriculture, as opposed to the hard commodities which are extracted or mined, and the Index also intends to ensure the “greening” of the supply chain for soft commodities, as a contribution to China’s stated goals of building an “Ecological Civilization” and the concept of building “a community with a shared future for mankind”.²⁷ The main goal, however, is supply chain security. The main limitation of this particular Index is that it is a product addressed specifically to Chinese entities, not to all BRI entities, limiting its integrative potential within the asymmetrical information flows of the BRI.

4. In line with the persistent theme of reducing uncertainties and information asymmetries, and the reasoning in the previous paragraph, we would recommend introducing a BRI Supply Chain Security Standard Certification for companies and other entities engaged in transborder product flows. This reduces the perceived risk of contracting with a foreign supplier and creates an incentive for companies to make certain investments in security that would otherwise be minimized as fruitless costs. This is especially important for SMEs and other disadvantaged entities within the BRI, since, as mentioned before, the BRI’s size and actor knowledge gaps favors the largest companies, many of them state-owned (in China and elsewhere). A credible certification for supply chain security can raise the confidence levels of potential clients, thereby improving competition and innovation potential.
5. Lastly, we would argue that supply chains must move beyond systems similar to “just-in-time” inventory management, which reduces the cost of maintaining stocks of finished goods or raw materials on hand in favor of relying on global supply chains with a very low margin for error. The savings of such a system are significant, but the impact of even the slightest delays can

²⁶ Hanson, C., Fu, X. (eds.) (2020). Green Commodity Supply Chain Index: Contributing to Supply Chain Stability and Sustainability (Phase 1 Research). BRI International Green Development Coalition 2020 Policy Study Series, http://en.brigc.net/Reports/research_subject/202011/P020201129786820554459.pdf.

²⁷ Hanson, C., Fu, X. (eds.) (2020). Green Commodity Supply Chain Index: Contributing to Supply Chain Stability and Sustainability (Phase 1 Research). BRI International Green Development Coalition 2020 Policy Study Series, http://en.brigc.net/Reports/research_subject/202011/P020201129786820554459.pdf.

ripple throughout an entire supply chain and pose severe problems. However, moving beyond this system so late in the current phase of globalization will be costly and companies will be reluctant to do it. Therefore, we argue in favor of BRI support for absorbing costs of eliminating “just-in-time” inventory management, both through grants and subsidies for increased storage capacity as part of BRI infrastructure investment (which can also be done as part of AIIB projects and those of other financial vehicles), but also by covering, in an initial phase, some of the revolving costs of the maintenance of stocks. There is a precedent for this, with the China Development Bank supporting Chinese companies engaged in BRI projects that ran into implementation problems as a result of the pandemic.²⁸ Chang²⁹ writes that “Beijing will have to shoulder more financial costs if it wants to the BRI to make significant headway in the near term” referring to loan structuring, but it could just as well apply to shouldering the costs of a more sustainable business model for supply chain resilience. Boo and Simpfendorfer write that “a less enthusiastic attitude toward the BRI [...] may mean reduced investments into BRI’s smaller, less critical markets where there are limited opportunities to connect such investments to the global supply. Central Asia, sub-Saharan Africa and Eastern Europe will accordingly see a short-term dip in BRI-related activity, relative to Southeast Asia.”³⁰ To avoid this becoming a longer-term trend, a greater commitment to supporting key supply chain actor transition may be called for.

These ideas are summarized in Fig. 2.

²⁸ Russel, D. (2020). The coronavirus will not be fatal for China’s Belt and Road Initiative but it will strike a heavy blow. South China Morning Post, 19 March 2020, <https://www.scmp.com/comment/opinion/article/3075624/coronavirus-will-not-be-fatal-chinas-belt-and-road-initiative-it>.

²⁹ Chang, F.K. (2020). Lack of Demand: The Coronavirus Pandemic and China’s Belt and Road Initiative. Foreign Policy Research Institute, 27 April 2020, Philadelphia, PA, USA, <https://www.fpri.org/article/2020/04/lack-of-demand-coronavirus-pandemic-belt-and-road/>

³⁰ Boo, B.C., Simpfendorfer, B. (2020). Will COVID-19 Encourage China to Digitize the Belt and Road Initiative? Marsh MacLennan, 13 May 2020, <https://www.brinknews.com/coronavirus-brings-the-opportunity-to-digitize-chinas-belt-and-road-initiative-bri-covid-19/>

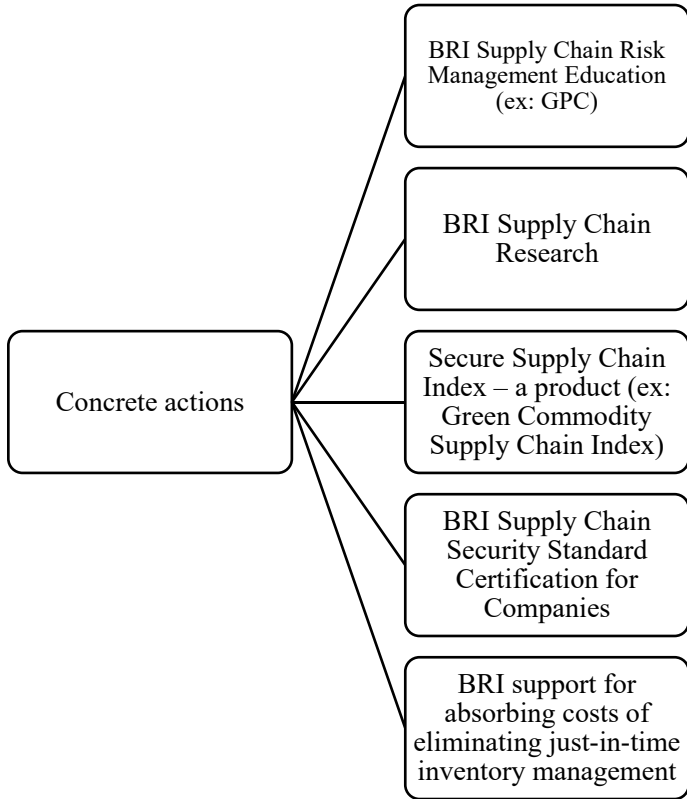


Fig. 2 Concrete actions to support supply chain resilience (Source Author)

6 CONCLUSION

The Belt and Road Initiative has been developed through international partnerships channeling resources that can be credibly mobilized by China in the long term, although private and non-China funding are becoming

more and more common.³¹ It is ostensibly anchored in critical infrastructure investment needs, especially in the developing world, and in the potential gains stemming from growth in trade and capital mobility, as well as the relatively rapid structural changes China is undergoing into a consumption economy which exports capital and innovation. However, recent systemic shocks such as the pandemic have underscored the vulnerability of globally distributed supply chains and, by extension, of global initiatives for interconnectivity such as the BRI. It has also opened a new chapter in the criticism addressed to China by the US and some EU states as a systemic rival, focusing on the unsustainability and systemic dangers of BRI interconnectivity, riding on the growth in popularity of the ideas of decoupling, strategic autonomy and “slowbalization”.

The present article has argued that the success of the BRI requires a consequent focus on supply chain resilience as a main ingredient of the BRI proposition to partner states, in addition to the already-stated ideals of win-win cooperation. A series of proposals have been advanced in this regard, but these proposals actively require new levels of coordination between BRI countries and stakeholders. This impetus for cooperation would be welcome in more normal times, as a further contextual argument for closer ties, however the current uncertainties and supply shocks, as well as the growing Great Power confrontation between China and the US, which extends to the pursuit of influence in third countries, makes such cooperation less likely.

Zhang³² emphasized that the coronavirus will not reverse globalization, but rather change it by restructuring global production chains toward making them multi-directional and less fragile by de-emphasizing cost as the single variable in planning. He concluded that “[t]he previous wave of globalization driven by cost-efficiency has delivered extraordinary benefits to humanity, but it has also created winners and losers. The ongoing pandemic is a stark reminder that we must heed the needs of the losers; otherwise, we will all lose”. Resilience and sustainability will have

³¹ Caba-Maria, F., Georgescu, A., Mureşan, L., Muşetescu, R. C. (coord.) (2020). Promoting the Belt and Road Initiative and 17 + 1 Cooperation in Central and Eastern Europe, from the Perspective of Central and Eastern European Countries”, Eikon, 2020, ISBN: 978-606-49-0389-1, <https://mepei.com/report-policy-analysis-promoting-the-belt-and-road-initiative-and-17-1-cooperation-in-central-and-eastern-europe-from-the-perspective-of-central-and-eastern-european-countries/>

³² Zhang, Y. (2020). A New Wave of Globalization. China-US Focus, 14 May 2020, <https://www.chinausfocus.com/finance-economy/a-new-wave-of-globalization>.

to become bywords of the BRI, not just prosperity and exchange, if the initiative is to prosper in the post-pandemic global landscape.

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The Future of “Belt and Road”:
A Theoretical Perspective



The History, Silk, and Future Road

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1 THE BIRTH OF THE NEW SILK ROAD AND ITS GOALS

The Chinese president¹ and leader of the Communist Party of China envisioned the “Chinese Dream”² and explained³ that the Silk Road policy shall be based on the five principles of peaceful coexistence among states with different historical paths⁴ and also political systems. Through the BRI, China seeks to “build a bridge of friendship and cooperation across the Eurasian continent” especially with the EU, as both are founded on similar values; the Chinese “harmony without uniformity” and the EU’s “united in diversity”,⁵ on the basis of the five principles of connectivity.⁶

¹ Often found in literature as “One Belt One Road” (“OBOR”) (Yi Dai Yi Lu), see: Kneissl, Karin. *Wachablöse. Auf dem Weg in eine chinesische Weltordnung*. Wien: Frank & Frei, 2017, pp. 35–37; “Silk Road Economic Belt” and “21st Century Maritime Silk Road”, see: Linggui, Wang. Preface and Acknowledgments, in Linggui/Jianglin 2017, p. 1; but also “New Silk Road”, see Hartmann, Wolf D., Wolfgang Maennig, Run Wang. *Chinas neue Seidenstasse. Kooperation statt Isolation. Der Rollentausch im Welthandel*. Frankfurt am Main: Frankfurter Allgemeine Buch, 2nd Edition, 2018, p. 36.

² Xi, Jinping. *The Governance of China*. Beijing: Foreign Language Press, 2014, pp. 61–62. In the West, right from the beginning it was perceived as a rivaling plan to the “American dream”. See: Noesselt, Nola. *Chinesische Politik*. Baden-Baden: Nomos, 2016, pp. 48–53; French, W. Howard. *Everything Under the Heavens. How the Past Helps Shape China’s Push for Global Power*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2017, p. 258.

³ Xi, Jinping. *The Governance of China*. Beijing: Foreign Language Press, 2014, pp. 395–396.

⁴ For more about the five principles see Qingmin, Zhang. *Contemporary China’s Diplomacy*. Beijing: China Intercontinental Press, 2014, pp. 108–119 and 132–149. Deepak talks about the implementation in the BRI of the “Three-Nos policy. That is non-interference in the internal affairs of other nations; not to seek the so called ‘sphere of influence; and not to strive for hegemony or dominance’”. See: Deepak, Bali Ram. *The Belt and Road Initiative: Why Globalization Drives in Asia and Beyond Need to be Integrated*, in Linggui/Jianglin 2017, p. 15; Yiwei describes the values of the BRI as a product of Chinese Wisdom. See: Yiwei, Wang. *The BRI: the Chinese Wisdom*, in Linggui/Jianglin 2017, pp. 141–148.

⁵ Xi, Jinping. *The Governance of China*. Beijing: Foreign Language Press, 2014, pp. 309–311.

⁶ See: Xi, Jinping. *The Governance of China*. Beijing: Foreign Language Press, 2014, pp. 315–319. This is the speech of Xi in Nazarbayev University, Astana, Kazakhstan (September 7, 2013), in which the new Silk Road was announced, titled “the Silk Road Economic Belt”. The announcement of a “Maritime Silk Road” was made a month later, on October 3, 2013 at the Peoples Representative Council of Indonesia. See: Xi, Jinping. *The Governance of China*. Beijing: Foreign Language Press, 2014, pp. 320–324.

The BRI also aims⁷ to strengthen policy consultation, road connection, unimpeded trade and enhance monetary circulation, while it will make sure to increase understanding between the peoples of the participating states. Along the way, the goal of a digital road was added. At the same time, the BRI interconnects and utilizes the Asia Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB).⁸

It is clear that China is now becoming a producer of international public goods ranging from security to infrastructure. Its operation is not one-dimensionally aimed at supporting third parties, but constitutes a strategic choice that benefits its own economy as well as its international presence, while tackling the over-accumulation of goods.

This is a strategy that has much in common with the old SR which functioned as a kind of early internationalization whose “most compelling weapon was... not the sword but trade”. It was a kind of “grand strategy” which “was built on commerce much more than on war” (Kaplan 2018, pp. 11–2). I would argue by analogy that the same is true for today’s BRI which is rooted in connectivity rather than hard conflict, although according to Hillman the BRI “is at root an imperial project” in which “connectivity is often fetishized”⁹ and which “is a product of China’s rise as well as a tool for exercising and increasing its power”.¹⁰ Cole¹¹ also argues that the BRI constitutes a Chinese “grand strategy” which represents “an important linkage among economic, energy security, and national security concerns”.¹²

⁷ Xi, Jinping. *The Governance of China*. Beijing: Foreign Language Press, 2014, p. 318.

⁸ The AIIB was set up at China’s initiative after Western powers refused to increase its involvement in the US-designed international institutions after World War II. A war during which the contribution of the Chinese people was forgotten. See: Mitter, Rana. *Forgotten Ally. Chinas World War II, 1937–1945*. Boston – New York: Mariner Books, Houghton Mifflin Harcourt.

⁹ Hillman, Jonathan E. *The Emperor’s New Road. China and the Project of the Century*. New Haven and London: Yale UP, 2020, p. 36.

¹⁰ Hillman, Jonathan E. *The Emperor’s New Road. China and the Project of the Century*. New Haven and London: Yale UP, 2020, p. 209.

¹¹ Cole, Bernard D. *China’s Quest for Great Power. Ship, Oil, and Foreign Policy*. Annapolis Maryland: Naval Institute Press, 2016, p. 167.

¹² Cole, Bernard D. *China’s Quest for Great Power. Ship, Oil, and Foreign Policy*. Annapolis Maryland: Naval Institute Press, 2016, p. 195.

2 OPTIONS AND CHANGES

A closer look at China's policy reveals that in the 1980s and 1990s, it sought to adapt to the then-dominant international system. To join the international institutions, and in fact with the help of those who created them (mainly the United States and the UK). After that, especially in the first decade of the twenty-first century, it sought to upgrade its position in the IMF and the World Bank. It attempted to gain more structural power within them, such as more votes. The West refused to acknowledge China's growing gravitas in the global system.

What was the significance of such a refusal, and when did it arise? The West, and most importantly the United States, wanted China to join the international institutional system the West had created after the end of World War II. After engaging in some ping-pong diplomacy, it supported this accession. Besides, it was taking advantage of the clashes between the Soviet Union and China unfolding at the time. When China began performing the great economic "miracles", the West wrongly awaited China's transformation into a Western-style country.

At the beginning of the twenty-first century, the West was involved in international terrorism. It did not pay much attention to China. Even when the West was facing head-on its geopolitical rivals from 2000 to 2014, it considered weakened, yet defensively developed Russia as its main enemy. Only after 2014 did the United States begin to perceive China as its main strategic competitor.

Therefore, in phase three after 2014, global power dynamics began to shift in favor of China. The financial crisis severely limited the capabilities of the United States, and even more so of the EU. At the same time, Obama announced a US global strategy pivot by refocusing from the Atlantic to the Pacific. Schmalz¹³ argues that the BRI was part of the Chinese response to this plan. He claims China chose to tackle the US repositioning with soft-power tools; with a hegemonic geo-cultural narrative regarding the future of the region and Eurasia, with funds and infrastructure as its means.¹⁴ A narrative aiming, according to Jianglin (2020, p. 11), at "challenging the US dominance in Asia", if not in

¹³ Schmalz, Stefan. *Machtverschiebungen im Weltsystem. Der Aufstieg Chinas und die große Krise*. Frankfurt am Main: Campus, 2018, p. 360.

¹⁴ Schmalz, Stefan. *Machtverschiebungen im Weltsystem. Der Aufstieg Chinas und die große Krise*. Frankfurt am Main: Campus, 2018, p. 362.

the world as a whole. As the pandemic crisis erupted, this narrative was enriched with the argument that “China’s leaders see us [the US] as a nation in imperial decline”,¹⁵ no longer able to achieve many things.

China seeks to become heard within the pre-existing Western system as an equal member with its own rights, interests, and perceptions. This is what the West is denying, mainly the US¹⁶ and to a lesser extent the EU. China is the emerging power which the United States treats with the suspicion characterizing the “existing ruler”, who considers China to be “the key challenge of the twenty-first century”. It seeks the mobilization of all its allies against China, fully aware nonetheless that their relations are complex and that it cannot demand that they become frontal,¹⁷ nor that they fully coincide with those of the United States, especially in the field of economy¹⁸; on the other hand, it must not allow for a rift among the Western powers to be created in the confrontation with China.

Even in this third period, despite its empowerment and frustration over how it is treated, China, in distinct from Russia, does not break the prevailing rules and procedures permeating the global stratum. It remains within those lines. It continues to be a pragmatist, believing in continuity, “stability and harmony”.¹⁹ It does not want to overthrow them. It does not give up its participation in institutions such as the UN, the Paris Climate Agreement, the IMF, and the World Bank. It does feel, however, “forced” to supplement them with a “parallel” institutional

¹⁵ Friedman, Thomas L. How China lost respect for the U.S. NYT IE, March 25, 2021.

¹⁶ Of particular interest in the US–Chinese relations are the ten dialogues between Chinese and American scientists, see: Hachigian, Nina. *Debating China. The U.S.–China Relationship in Ten Conversations*. New York: Oxford UP, 2014. Given the scope of this analysis, I would single out the 1st, 10th and especially the 5th discussion (pp. 88–110).

¹⁷ Gutschker, Thomas. Geeint gegen Peking. FAZ, 25.03.2021.

¹⁸ Frankenberger, Klaus-Dieter. Amerika, China und wir. Europa kann im Wettbewerb mit den Autokratien nicht neutral sein. FAZ, 29.3.2021.

¹⁹ Benedigter, Roland, and Verena Nowotny. *China. Situation und Perspektiven des neuen weltpolitischen Akteurs*. Mit einem Vorwort von W. Schüssel. Wiesbaden: Springer Verlag, 2014, pp. 150–151.

system. However, where it cannot be upgraded, it moves on to new institutions such as the AIIB²⁰ and the BRI which, nonetheless, also operate on the basis of the existing rules.

3 OBJECTIVES

The question pending answer is what it is exactly that China is seeking to achieve with the BRI, and in what manner.

In my opinion, the BRI utilizes China's thorough knowledge of the West, which is better than the West's knowledge of China. It envisions overcoming China's inability to have many allies. With the BRI plan, it seeks to develop its relations with its immediate neighbors, especially to the West and the South, despite the difficulties arising with India.²¹ The latter sees the whole plan as a scheme by China to safeguard its geostrategic profits against it, especially with regard to intermediate states such as Nepal and Bhutan, but also to its competitors, in particular Pakistan. The BRI, according to India, represents an interesting tool for the economy, which is nonetheless geopolitically problematic. This conviction is also shared by Japan.

The West is promoting the argument that China has become so powerful in recent years, that at this point it is simply showing off. Both

²⁰ For the composition of votes and capital see Jeong, Hyung-Gon. Deepening of Northeast Asia Economic Integration through the BRI: A Korean Perspective, in Linggui/Jianglin 2017, p. 26) Table 1 p. 23.

²¹ For the Chinese-Indian economic relations see: Bardhan, Pranab. *Awakening Giants. Feet of Clay. Assessing the Economic Rise of China and India*. Princeton (NJ) and Oxford: Princeton UP. For their position in the international economic stratum and their competition see: Winters, L. Alan and Shahid Yusuf. *Dancing with Giants. China, India and the Global Economy*. Washington-Singapore: The International Bank for Reconstruction and Development/The World Bank and The Institute of Policy Studies, 2007, especially Yusuf, Shahid, Kaoru Nabeshima, and Dwight H. Perkins. *China and Indian Reshape Global Industrial Geography*, in Winters/Yusuf 2007, 35–66; and Dimaranan, Betina, Elena Lanchovischina and Will Martin. *Competing with Gants: Who Wins, Who Loses?* In Winters/Yusuf, 67–100, 2007. For their geopolitical rivalry see Emmott, Bill. *Rivals. How the Power Struggle between China, India, and Japan will shape our next Decade*. Orland-Austin-New York: Harcourt. For the 1963 War its aftermath see: Lintner, Bertil. *China's India War. Collision Course in the Roof of the World*. New Delhi: Oxford UP, 2018, pp. 32–120. The same study analyzes the history of China's descent into the Indian Ocean from 1986 to the present with the BRI (pp. 254–276). For the cooperation of the two states in joint projects see: Lijun, Chen. *The BRI and Production between China and India*, in Linggui/Jianglin 2017, pp. 171–178.

with its economic plans, through which “it shall impose colonial relations”, but also with its geopolitical aspirations to the detriment of its neighbors, as well as of other strong forces, especially those of the West.

China’s “new mood” is now perceived in the West in a hostile manner as a policy that has become more aggressive, more confident, as well as more arrogant.²² This is a time when, according to Western commentators, Asian forces are seeking a multipolar world with a multipolar Asia, whereas the United States wants a multipolar Asia but a monopolistic world, yet China strives for a multipolar world but a monopolistic Asia.²³ The European Parliament considers the BRI “was perceived quite positively at first” by the EU, “but in recent times has come to be viewed much more negatively”.²⁴

The most distinctive new institutions are the Chinese contribution to the creation of the BRICS organization with their own bank, and even more so the establishment at its own initiative of the AIIB bank and the BRI. The AIIB is being set up in parallel with the Asian Development Bank, which is mainly influenced by Japan. Despite multiple initial US attacks and pressure on its allies, this new bank includes China’s direct competitors in the region such as India, but also close US allies such as Australia, the UK, Germany, and South Korea, alongside countries with which China has differences, such as the Philippines and Vietnam.²⁵

The involvement of Western powers in the AIIB with the simultaneous denunciation of all European states participating in the BRI constitutes an extreme case of hypocrisy. They participate in the AIIB envisioning influence and profits through the development of the BRI, yet they consider the countries participating in the latter to be almost suspicious. Greece and I personally have been targeted numerous times by large press groups in the West because, as I shall explain below, the Greek government had a

²² Hirn, Wolfgang. *Der nächste Kalte Krieg: China gegen den Westen*. Frankfurt am Main: S.Fisher, 2013, p. 206.

²³ Hirn, Wolfgang. *Der nächste Kalte Krieg: China gegen den Westen*. Frankfurt am Main: S.Fisher, 2013, p. 208.

²⁴ European Parliament – INTA committee. *EU-China trade and investment relations in challenging times*. Brüssel: Policy Department for External Relations of the Union, 2020, p. 44.

²⁵ Schmalz, Stefan. *Machtverschiebungen im Weltsystem. Der Aufstieg Chinas und die große Krise*. Frankfurt am Main: Campus, 2018, p. 365.

peaceful conceptualization of cooperation with China with which it shares 5000 years of parallel life.

In my opinion, the formation of such subsystems as the AIIB and the BRI, but also of the Ancient Civilizations Forum, a Forum set up at the initiative of Greece and China which I envisioned 25 years ago,²⁶ operate as a grid within the International System that contributes to China's autonomous presence within it. It organizes a presence that looks more collective and interconnected. It also interknits in a peaceful way the process of China's rise to the international stratum and its empowerment in conditions known to everyone, which are yet denied institutional recognition. The system, the dominant forces, do not allow it and the country chooses the road of a subsystem grid formation, however within the limits of the system itself.

For the West and the EU, in particular, it is a thousand times better for China to pursue a network of subsystems within the grand structure than to be on a collision course with the current dominant, international, institutional apparatus. It is a thousand times better for the Chinese intelligence to dream of an international peace and a complex international system "Under Heaven" (Tianxia)²⁷ than to accept conflict. A war between great powers in the age of advanced atomic, chemical, and biological weapons must be avoided at all costs, as well as a global political landscape that will submit to the dilemma between submission and war. In this context, the peaceful development of the BRI policy could be proven to be extremely useful. Otherwise, China's demand for Western subjugation could easily lead to the "Thucydides Trap".²⁸

²⁶ Kotzias, Nikos. Greece foreign policy in the twenty-first century. For a new energetically, patriotically, strategy in the time of Globalisation. Athens: Kastaniotis 2010 (in Greece).

²⁷ Zhao, Tingyang. *Alles unter dem Himmel. Vergangenheit und Zukunft*. Berlin: Suhrkamp, 2020; Bell, Daniel. "Realising Tianxia: Traditional Values and China's Foreign Policy". In *China Visions of World Order: Tianxia, Culture, and World Politics*, edited by Ban Wang, 129–146. Durham, NC: Duke UP, 2017.

²⁸ Allison, Graham. *Destined for War. Can America and China Escape Thucydides's Trap?* Boston-New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2017.

4 CRITICAL AND POLEMIC VOICES: CAUSES AND FUNCTION

In all these variants of China's response to the United States, ventures such as the BRI and the AIIB are considered to be embankments and a source of difficulties. Geopolitics is back, and the United States is having a hard time playing the big game in Asia as the UK did in the past, but also its divide and conquer "game". The West is seeing, albeit with some delay, the rise and new power of China, the new crossword puzzle created in Southeast Asia, which appears to be rather baffling.

The fact that this "type" of projects such as the BRI is peculiar, engenders difficulties. It does not seek to "steal raw materials" but, by investing in third countries, to tie those to China and prevent new tensions from being used by forces outside Southeast Asia.

The fact that China is not a new Soviet Union also plays an important role. Its main strength lies in technology and the growing economy. Moreover, the two strongest forces in the world have completely different characteristics, while the "US supremacy" is not a given. The United States is a country that has assumed a dominant role in the international system at a historically unprecedented young age. Just a century after the Civil War, it became the strongest powerholder in the world. It was "fortunate" enough to succeed another hegemonic power, the UK, which shared similar values and principles, even the same language and many cultural features. The United States has the greatest dynamism and resilience among all hegemonic powers in history. It has the most vigorous market and the most entrepreneurs who believe in innovation, the best universities in the world. The country's relatively young age renders it somewhat risky, but also impetuous. The United States knows it must prevent China from rising now, before it grows stronger. In this it needs the mobilization of its partners.

China, by contrast, is the oldest force in the current international system. It seeks to return to where it belonged for centuries, up until 300 years ago. It lacks the US dynamism and its youthful vigor. On the other hand, it relishes much larger reserves of patience. It has a different sense of time, especially when it comes to history. It is not in a hurry and knows how to wait. China is wiser, but also less daring. For thousands of years now, it has had a highly educated bureaucracy ranging from the Mandarin to the CCP, and a leadership that understands the modern issues associated with new technologies, with most of them having studied

science and having work experience in this field. As for the BRI, it is not in a hurry. It believes it could contribute to upgrading China, to bringing order to both domestic and foreign projects, and to unifying them, since “cooperation among industry, finance and investment should be actively promoted” (Jianglin 2020, p. 25). It believes that, despite the problems arising in some countries with the debts and the behavior of the Chinese working these, in the end, results will be positive.

Hamilton and Ohlberg argue that the BRI is a Trojan Horse employed by China to control third countries, their stance on international issues, but also critical infrastructure areas. With promises for financial aid and investment, China is setting the stage for its military development; all of them claim lacking empirical support, as will be seen in [Chapter 5].²⁹

The strong Western Forces sought to prevent the participation of small and medium-sized states in the BRI, arguing that through this initiative China is attempting to orchestrate relations of fierce competition with the West. In a second phase, a series of conditions were formulated, at least as expressed in literature, in order for this Chinese initiative to be accepted by the powerholders in the West. The terms were clear. The West required co-management for a Chinese-inspired venture created mainly by China and funded by it. The West also pursued a similar project with a similar name several years earlier.³⁰ It did nothing, however, to promote and implement it. It showed no interest in allocating the required funds, forming the required collaborations, and “wasting” organizational means.³¹ On the other hand, the Western demands could not be accepted by China. This is because they sought through their

²⁹ Hamilton, Clive und Mareike Ohlberg. *Die lautlose Eroberung. Wie China westliche Demokratie unterwandert und die Welt neu ordnet*. München: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 2020, pp. 180–184.

³⁰ Clinton proposed the New Silk Road Project and the Silk Road Strategy in 1999 and 2006. See: Zhengwei, Yang. *The Dual-Track Drive of Trading and Humanity. Reflections on the Construction of the Belt and Road*, in Linggui/Jianglin 2017, p. 152. The first US plan for a “new Silk Road” was made in 1997. See: GovTrack. “H.R. 2867 – 105th Congress: “Silk Road Strategy Act of 1997”. March 23, 2021. <https://www.govtrack.us/congress/bills/105/hr2867>. There is a similar Korean plan for Central Asia. See: Jeong, Hyung-Gon. *Deepening of Northeast Asia Economic Integration through the BRI: A Korean Perspective*, in Linggui/Jianglin 2017: 21–30.

³¹ Western demands from China sometimes appear excessive. It is said that the history of foreign interventions in China “is too important to be left in the hands of the Chinese party-state”. See: Bickers, Robert. *Out of China. How the Chinese ended the Era of Western Domination*. Cambridge (Mass.) Harvard UP, 2017, p. 406.

imposition to subjugate this project to the pursuits of third powers. China, however, has had and still has its own narrow national motives for promoting the BRI.

Contrary to the voices overestimating China's capabilities and exaggerating in the polemic regarding the BRI, Professor Chu Shulong underestimates China's capabilities.³² Kroenig's assessment of the BRI is similar (2020, pp. 176–7). He estimates that 2014 was the “year in which great power rivalry returned”. The year that “China began its island building campaign in the South China Sea” and President Xi launched the BRI, an initiative which is “a sign of Chinese weakness, not strength” (p. 190). In other words, the BRI is not an expression of a lucrative aggressive policy for China, but rather a refuge for its weaknesses in the wake of the big game. As the reader comes to realize, the critique toward the Chinese venture of the BRI covers the full repertoire of the analysis: from newly found strength and aggression to weakness and losses.

5 GREECE OF THE WEST: CHINESE BRI: COOPERATION OR DEPENDENCE?

Greece and China have historically formed a special relationship. A relationship that enables Greece to undertake a special role in Western relations, especially the Sino-European. A possibility that irks some circles in the West who promote Greek-Chinese cooperation as a relationship of dependence and subversion. The arguments used against Greece's participation in the BRI are rather typical, and I will examine them in detail after explaining first what I mean when I argue for a parallel history of the two states and cultures.

Greece is a relatively small country on the global political stratum, yet its historical heritage, its 4000-old culture, its sciences, philosophy, and institutions constitute a heritage for all mankind. The “Athenian discovery” that people build institutions and can change them was revolutionary and led to the creation of direct democracy 2500 years ago. Greece is the matrix of Western civilization in the broadest sense. On the other hand, China is the mother of the developed state administration. With Tianxia,

³² Shulong, Chu. *China and the United States in Southeast Asia*, Denoon (Ed.), 2017, pp. 333–358.

it also raised the issue of peoples' right to establish and change leadership when those disrupt their relations "with the Harmony of Heaven". Its culture is also a fundamental matrix of the culture of today's states in Southeast Asia and of much of the world. Discoveries in science and in state management are a legacy for all mankind. It is a state with 5000 years of continuity.

Greece and China are connected by many through their parallel course, despite the difference in sizes and options. The two societies began posing fundamental questions 3000 years ago regarding the essence of humanity, man's mission, where he comes from, and where he goes. What the answers are to the questions: "who are we, what is the meaning of life, how is right and virtuous life defined?" Mencius, Confucius, Zisi, Xun Zi, Plato, Epicurus, Socrates, Aristotle, and dozens of other intellects in Greece and China raised the fundamental questions of human existence parallelly and simultaneously. Topics that were also expressed through forms of art such as poetry, ancient Greek tragedy, and Chinese opera.

Greece, therefore, which shares a "parallel history" with China, can understand it better than the old colonial powers that led it to the Century of Humiliation. From this point of view, Greece can play the role of a bridge of understanding and cooperation between the EU and China. To contribute to the twenty-first century being a world of cooperation and understanding worldwide.

Greece, together with China, set up the Ancient Civilizations Forum, a platform for cooperation and exploitation of culture and the cultural "industry" of the participating states.³³ The forum offered the possibility for interconnection in the field of culture between countries with a large and years-long cultural history, while for the Chinese side, this was in a way a cultural BRI. It was a forum for peace and soft power.

In the study of international relations, there can be found a whole stream focusing on cultural diplomacy. Of particular interest to us

³³ The participating countries were: Peru, Bolivia, Italy, Armenia, Iran, Iraq, Egypt, Greece and China. Parallelly, there is a number of entry requests (Hellenic Republic MFA, 2018).

is the World-systems theory in the field of culture,³⁴ the Geocultural Scenarios,³⁵ and the Geocultural Power, which acknowledges that culture, history, and religion conflate with world politics,³⁶ transforming into a form of soft power,³⁷ especially for China which regards them as a bridge between the East and the West.³⁸ Related to the above is the theory of the geo-cultural exploitation of “Heritage” countries such as China, but also India, Greece, Armenia, the Arab world, and the world of the indigenous Latin American population. Western commentators lack perspective and representations. Most try to explain the phenomenon one-dimensionally as an attempt to “update” the cultural heritage from antiquity. They have no experience of how evidence from this distant past remains diachronically present in some peoples. Even when one visits an ancient theater such as the Odeon of Herodes Atticus and Epidauros, those in Aegina and Larissa, many of which are located in the center of modern cities and inside archeological parks for modern cultural performances, one has a completely different feeling that exacerbates if they watch the performances under the Acropolis. And, unfortunately, a portion of the intellectuals and literary representatives of states with a history no older than one and two centuries are not able to perceive this kind of representation of peoples with ancient history, thus reacting aggressively against this historical continuity.

Winter³⁹ offers an excellent description of the geopolitics associated with Heritage, in particular, with the SR and the BRI. He analyzes how cultural heritage is utilized and updated through the interconnection of the past with the present and the future. How it imbues the present as a living memory and becomes the object and agent of cooperation that

³⁴ Wallerstein, Immanuel. *Geopolitics and Geoculture: Essays on the Changing Worldsystem*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1991.

³⁵ Hannerz, Ulf. “Geocultural Scenarios”. In *Frontiers of Sociology*, edited by Peter Hedstrom and Bjorn Wittrock, Leiden: Brill, 2009: 267–288.

³⁶ Winter, Tim. *Geocultural Power. China’s Quest to Revive the Silk Road for the 21st Century*. Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press: 2019, p. 7.

³⁷ Winter, Tim. *Geocultural Power. China’s Quest to Revive the Silk Road for the 21st Century*. Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press: 2019, p. 16.

³⁸ Winter, Tim. *Geocultural Power. China’s Quest to Revive the Silk Road for the 21st Century*. Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press: 2019, p. 17.

³⁹ Winter, Tim. *Geocultural Power. China’s Quest to Revive the Silk Road for the 21st Century*. Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press: 2019.

facilitates modern actions, collaborations, trade, investments, and cultural exchanges. From one point of view, this constitutes an upgrade of the historical role of culture and its relatively autonomous operation and dynamics.

Under my term as Minister, after the establishment of the Forum, Greece entered into an agreement with China on the BRI. There was interest and profit on both sides. It was an act of cooperation followed by other EU Member States. In this regard, some “Western sources”, especially the Anglo-Saxons and the Germans, launched three accusations: (a) That Greece had handed over an important port of the country and by extension (b) through this agreement it had become economically dependent on China. As a result, (c) it had rendered itself an easy target for blackmail in order to block EU decisions on behalf of China.

As for the ports and especially that of Piraeus, Sommer⁴⁰ lambasts Greece with all sorts of arguments, although he cynically admits that what really bothers him is that the new ports that China uses in Europe jeopardize Hamburg’s hitherto important position as “China’s door to Europe”. As the ancient Greeks said, truth shall always spring from the head of Athena, goddess of wisdom. What is it, therefore, that the German analyst argues for? If the port is Greek, and Greece cooperates with the BRI, then this poses a danger to the West. Whereas if it is in Germany, then it represents an excellent investment that contributes to the security and stability of Europe!

As Hamilton and Ohlberg write, the Germans cry without batting an eye to the fact that their country is the end of the modern Silk Road, and more specifically the port of Hamburg, as over 550 Chinese companies have settled there alone.⁴¹ The same applies to the Chinese-European rail links connecting 60 Chinese cities with 50 European ones, centered on the German city of Duisburg.⁴² Furthermore, since 2013, China has been purchasing airports. “—it took 9.5% of London Heathrow Airport in 2013, 49.9% of France’s Toulouse Airport in 2014, and 82.5% of

⁴⁰ Sommer, Theo. *China First. Die Welt auf dem Weg ins Chinesische Jahrhundert.* München: C.H. Beck, 2019.

⁴¹ Hamilton, Clive und Mareike Ohlberg. *Die lautlose Eroberung. Wie China westliche Demokratien unterwandert und die Welt neu ordnet.* München: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 2020, pp. 143–144.

⁴² Hillman, Jonathan E. *The Emperor’s New Road. China and the Project of the Century.* New Haven and London: Yale UP, 2020, pp. 44–46.

Germany's Hahn airport near Frankfurt".⁴³ It also acquired Volvo in Sweden. But, again, the Chinese purchase of ports, airports, and railways in Germany and other northern countries is a sign of economic activity, whereas the forced, as the EU and Berlin itself suggest, sale by Greece of the port of Piraeus to the Chinese COSCO is a case of undermining of the EU, a threat to Europe's security and a testament to China's policy of EU disintegration.⁴⁴

The German positions regarding the port of Piraeus and its place in Chinese plans contain yet another absurdity. As is well known, the conditions imposed by Germany on Greece in the memoranda era⁴⁵ during the Greek debt crisis included the obligatory privatization both of ports and airports.⁴⁶ As for the 14 airports, those were acquired by the German company Fraport,⁴⁷ whereas the railways were quitclaimed to the Italian railways and not the Chinese, as some in Berlin and Brussels were projecting a few years ago.⁴⁸ In the port of Piraeus and its commercial department, however, no European company appeared as a potential buyer except the Chinese COSCO. In other words, Germany forced Greece to sell the port which went to the only potential buyer, and then blamed—under the auspices of the German press and “analysts”—the Greek government for this sale!⁴⁹

⁴³ Corre, Phillippe, *Le. Chinese Investments in European Countries: Experience and Lessons for the “Belt and Road” Initiative*. In M. Mayer (ed.) *Rethinking the Silk Road*, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-10-5915-5_10, 2017, Palgrave, p. 62.

⁴⁴ It is indicative that Corre only uses ¼ of the article for the case of Piraeus, and just 2 paragraphs for dozens of Chinese purchases in Germany and the rest of central-northern Europe. There is political expediency in such choices.

⁴⁵ Kotzias, Nikos. *Greece Debtcolony. European Empire und Germans primacy*. Athens, Pataki Edition, 2013 (in Greece).

⁴⁶ See: Hartman, Wolf D., Wolfgang Maennig, Run Wang. *Chinas neue Seidenstasse. Kooperation statt Isolation. Der Rollentausch im Welthandel*. Frankfurt am Main: Frankfurter Allgemeine Buch, 2nd Edition, 2018, p. 54.

⁴⁷ Hartman, Wolf D., Wolfgang Maennig, Run Wang. *Chinas neue Seidenstasse. Kooperation statt Isolation. Der Rollentausch im Welthandel*. Frankfurt am Main: Frankfurter Allgemeine Buch, 2nd Edition, 2018, p. 54.

⁴⁸ Hartman, Wolf D., Wolfgang Maennig, Run Wang. *Chinas neue Seidenstasse. Kooperation statt Isolation. Der Rollentausch im Welthandel*. Frankfurt am Main: Frankfurter Allgemeine Buch, 2nd Edition, 2018, p. 55.

⁴⁹ Hillman seems to be ignoring the historical-economic context of the sale of the port of Piraeus which he supposedly analyzes in chapter five of his book, when he simply writes that “China has used its checkbook to take the port of Piraeus”. See: Hillman, Jonathan

Let us now turn to the most outrageous claim, according to which cooperation with the BRI enables China to sit at the EU table.⁵⁰ According to Hillman,⁵¹ “Brussels -and especially Germany and France- worry that Chinese investments are eroding unity within the EU, weakening the state” in the east and south of the EU. And this is because “China is developing a comprehensive systematic alternative” to its benefit. Because these countries “are a bridge into the EU, the grand prize”. It is no coincidence the allegation that the Chinese “investments have been disproportionately concentrated on Balkan states”.⁵² In fact, Hillman underlines, as he fails to present the views of the “sub-category” states in a completely unethical manner, the “EU concerns about China’s growing investments” in Greece,⁵³ which was helping China creep “through a ‘Balkan back door’”⁵⁴ using the BRI to this end.⁵⁵

Let us see, however, what the truth really is. In an ETNC report,⁵⁶ Seaman, Huotari, and Otero cumulatively calculated (2000–2016) the Chinese Foreign Direct Investment in the EU, ranking the UK as the first host country with 23%, followed by Germany with 19%, Italy with 13%, and France with 11%, with these four countries making up 2/3 of total FDI, which then rose to 75%! The fifth country was Finland with 7%, followed by Portugal. The population of both of these countries at the bottom of the list is smaller than that of Greece! Nonetheless, for the international press and some in the Western academic community,

E. The Emperor’s New Road. China and the Project of the Century. New Haven and London: Yale UP, 2020, p. 23 and Chapter 5.

⁵⁰ Sommer, Theo. China First. Die Welt auf dem Weg ins Chinesische Jahrhundert. München: C.H. Beck, 2019, pp. 141–142.

⁵¹ Hillman, Jonathan E. The Emperor’s New Road. China and the Project of the Century. New Haven and London: Yale UP, 2020, pp. 79–80.

⁵² Hillman, Jonathan E. The Emperor’s New Road. China and the Project of the Century. New Haven and London: Yale UP, 2020, pp. 81–87.

⁵³ Hillman, Jonathan E. The Emperor’s New Road. China and the Project of the Century. New Haven and London: Yale UP, 2020, p. 90.

⁵⁴ Hillman, Jonathan E. The Emperor’s New Road. China and the Project of the Century. New Haven and London: Yale UP, 2020, p. 92.

⁵⁵ Hillman, Jonathan E. The Emperor’s New Road. China and the Project of the Century. New Haven and London: Yale UP, 2020, p. 94.

⁵⁶ Seaman, John, Mikko Huotari, Miguel Otero-Iglesias. Chines Investment in Europe. A Country-Level Approach. ETNC Report December 2017, p. 26.

the problem was Greece with less than 0.3% of all Chinese FDI over the same period.

Until 2016, China's investments in Germany amounted to one to two billion a year. Then, in 2016 they reached 12 billion, which translates to 1/3 of China's total FDI in the EU,⁵⁷ while in 2017 China acquired a large part of the shares of Deutsche Bank with which it took "a controlling position at Deutsche Bank". At the same time, it acquired the port of Friedrichshafen in Germany, machine factories, robots, electronics!⁵⁸ These are assets of incomparable multifaceted value in relation to the port of Piraeus. Be that as it may, those investments were made in Germany and, as we have already established, they served Europe in contrast to the investments made in Greece.

The statistics we compiled in Athens indicated that Greece had almost zero investment in China while Germany and the UK, still an EU member at the time, had billions with thousands of companies operating there. On the other hand, in 2016–7, the period when this full-throttle attack against Greece erupted with the systematic dissemination of fake news, 22.5% of Chinese investments in Europe involved the UK and 21.7% Germany, whereas only 0.67% took place in Greece. The numbers speak for themselves. In 2017, China's investments in Greece were again below 1%, while at the same time 75% were in the UK (\$ 70 billion in Chinese FDI), Italy (31 billion),⁵⁹ Germany (\$ 20 billion), and France (\$ 13

⁵⁷ Huotari, Mikko. Germany Changing Take on Chinese Direct Investment: Balancing Openness with Greater Scrutiny. In Seaman/Huotari/Otero-Iglesias, p. 61.

⁵⁸ Huotari, Mikko. Germany Changing Take on Chinese Direct Investment: Balancing Openness with Greater Scrutiny. In Seaman/Huotari/Otero-Iglesias, p. 62.

⁵⁹ In 2015, "China's acquisition of Pirelli made Italy the top destination of Chinese FDI in Europe," while in terms of "per capital inflows of Investment" Portugal tops the list, as in 2017 it recorded inflows of 9 billion in Chinese investments, 20 times the size of the Cosco investment in Piraeus! It is only logical, then, to talk about hypocrisy. See: Zeneli, Valbona. Mapping China's Investments in Europe. *The Diplomat*, March 14, 2019. <https://thediplomat.com/2019/03/mapping-chinas-investments-in-europe/>, 25.3.2021, p. 4.

billion),⁶⁰ whereas in Greece total Chinese investments until 2016 did not exceed 600 million.⁶¹

In the context of these investments, another argument was added: did the Chinese find a door to the EU from the south of Europe and knock from the back? Such arguments are well established in English and German far-right absurdity. It is well known that for centuries England treated the island of Ireland with suspicion and paranoia as the “back door for the French Catholics” to undermine the English monarchy and Church.⁶² We also know where this paranoid perception has led; to the ongoing conflicts around the Irish issue. Germany, however, invoking the “stab-in-the-back” narrative, shied away from admitting its defeat in World War I, blaming its crushing on the “stab-in-the-back” myth (*dolchstoßlegende*) by the “Jews and the left”. Amid this climate, it was easier to head into World War II and pursue extreme anti-Semitism!⁶³

In order for one not to bother with the real numbers and the lies constructed around them, those with hostile feelings toward Greece in 2015–8 dug up as evidence false interpretations of the way Greece had voted in the Council, deliberately recycling fake news regarding statements by the Greek Government. Sommer argues that China intends through the BRI and other economic relations to gain leverage over countries such as Greece, in order to directly influence EU policy. As evidence, he cites three cases in which Greece, under blackmail, imposed a veto in favor of China.⁶⁴

The first case cited by Sommer concerns the temporary refusal of EU member states to tighten control over Chinese investment in the EU. He decries the Greek stance, falsely claiming that the country cited in

⁶⁰ Zeneli, Valbona. Mapping China’s Investments in Europe. *The Diplomat*, March 14, 2019. <https://thediplomat.com/2019/03/mapping-chinas-investments-in-europe/>, 25.3.2021, p. 3.

⁶¹ For the period 2003–2016, see: Tonchev, Plamen. China’s Growing Economic and Political Clout through Investment in Greece. In Seaman/Huotari/Otero-Iglesias, p. 70.

⁶² Kotzias, Nikos. *Political System and Identity. Globalization and the case of the United Kingdom*. Athens: Kastaniotis 2008 (in Greece).

⁶³ Kotzias, Nikos. *Greece Debtcolony. European Empire und Germans primacy*. Athens, Pataki Edition, 2013 (in Greece).

⁶⁴ Sommer, Theo. *China First. Die Welt auf dem Weg ins Chinesische Jahrhundert*. München: C.H. Beck, 2019, pp. 453–457.

its objections the Chinese investment in the country.⁶⁵ Does he cite any sources depicting in a realistic way the negotiations within the Council? No, none. Was this the first time German publicists employed such fake news? No. They attempted it in a systemic manner against Greece in the second decade of the twenty-first century, when Berlin imposed on Greece a “Debt-Colony” regime.⁶⁶ This invocation for the confession of the sources of Greece’s objections is also made by Benner, Ohlberg, and Poggetti.⁶⁷ Whom do these three quote?⁶⁸ “Politico” magazine, which, in turn, uses rumors. European Politico is known for its fake news against Greece. It also fails to quote a Greek official stating such a thing. On the contrary, with an air of absolute authority, it literally cites “a Western European trade official” who, according to Politico, “did not attend the negotiations but was briefed on them” (!) by a third source, who stated that “Greece explicitly mentioned China” as the cause of its veto.⁶⁹

In other words, an unsubstantiated hubris is machinated against a government that was disliked by some wings of the EU establishment. Afterward, “academic researchers” in Germany, the UK, and the United States, refer to texts by journalists, using them to make analyses and “prove” that, when it comes to the BRI, Greece was being blackmailed by China’s Checkbook. These journalists, in turn, cite third-party analysts. However, even these third-party analysts have no direct knowledge of the facts. They resort to citing conscripted journalists. The latter cynically admit they have no real source. In order to play the fake news game, they refer to the testimony of an “official” who, although did not hear themselves the Greek representative stating that for which they are being accused, since the said official was not actually present and did not

⁶⁵ Sommer, Theo. *China First. Die Welt auf dem Weg ins Chinesische Jahrhundert.* München: C.H. Beck, 2019, p. 455.

⁶⁶ Kotzias, Nikos. *Greece Debtcolony. European Empire und Germans primacy.* Athens, Pataki Edition, 2013 (in Greece).

⁶⁷ Benner, Thornsten, Jah Gaspers, Mareike Ohlberg, Lucrezia Poggetti, and Kristin Shi Kupfer. “Authoritarian Advance: Responding to China’s Growing Influence in Europe”. Global Public Policy Institute, March 18, 2021, p. 16.

⁶⁸ Benner, Thornsten, Jah Gaspers, Mareike Ohlberg, Lucrezia Poggetti, and Kristin Shi Kupfer. “Authoritarian Advance: Responding to China’s Growing Influence in Europe”. Global Public Policy Institute, March 18, 2021, footnote 25, p. 45.

⁶⁹ Cerulus, Laurens and Jacob Hanke. “Enter the dragon”. Chinese investment in crisis-hit countries gives Beijing influence at the European Union’s top table. Politico, April 10, 2017, κατέβηκε στις 28.3.2021.

participate in the meeting, but was nonetheless told about it. This whole scenario constitutes the epitome of how fake news is set up internationally. How, from a lying journalist to an acclaimed scientist, a non-existent fact can be erected which then becomes a “basis for thoughtful scientific analysis”. Because, after all, what is the essence of fake news? It is news which cannot be controlled; which, if someone attempts to cross-check as I do, they will “discover” there essentially exists no evidence; it is news which the alleged source did not hear first-hand, nor were they present during the alleged debate. That is, as we say in Greece, “the treasure was nothing but coal after all”. And had I not been the minister myself to know that I or anyone else never said something like that, I would not have looked into the matter so persistently. I feel nothing but shame on behalf of those who organize and employ such methods. The main thing is that the constant invocation obscures the original non-existent “source” through which all this misery finds ground. And it was not just one.

The truth is that in the EU-China relations, those who have the most extended and systematic relations with the latter are Germany. Germany’s economic relations with China are over a hundred times more valuable than those of Greece. Additionally, China’s largest trading partner in the EU, with the largest investments in China itself, is Germany. According to conservative German newspaper FAZ, China overtook the United States and has become the EU’s most important trading partner. And 48% (!) of European trade with China is carried out by Germany, while runner-up France does not even reach 9%!⁷⁰ The question is, then, why were some Germans bothered by Greece’s relationship with China? The reason is simple; they expect the least powerful EU member states to submit to Germany’s choices in order for the latter to increase its own bargaining power and profits and, at the same time, expand its control over them.

While Greece is blasted for a forced and advantageous, as it turned out, sale agreement of the port of Piraeus, German Commerzbank agreed with a Chinese bank to support the BRI with 5 billion euros! A choice which, according to Sommer is right, since the EU must have a realistic policy toward China without being ashamed.⁷¹

⁷⁰ Frankenberger, Klaus-Dieter. Amerika, China und wir. Europa kann im Wettbewerb mit den Autokratien nicht neutral sein. FAZ, 29.3.2021.

⁷¹ Sommer, Theo. China First. Die Welt auf dem Weg ins Chinesische Jahrhundert. München: C.H. Beck, 2019, p. 456.

As a second veto, Sommer cites the fact that Greece prevented the BRI from adopting a decision against China in terms of human rights violations in the country.⁷² In this case as well, even the smallest first-hand evidence to substantiate the claims are nowhere to be found. What was really happening in the EU in 2017? When it came to human rights, Europe's strong forces were applying double standards. If they wanted to exert pressure on a particular country such as Egypt or China, they would table resolutions against them at the Council of Foreign Ministers. They refrained from such tactics in the cases of countries with which they shared special ties. The feeble German policy regarding the human rights situation in Turkey is well known.

I, therefore, asked the Council to agree on the criteria for convicting third countries on human rights and to apply them uniformly. It was the only way to integrate EU policy. We agreed that the Commission should prepare these criteria. But what exactly happened the day after the agreement in the Council of Ministers? At the meeting of the Ambassadors, Permanent Representatives of the EU Member States to the UN in Geneva, the representatives of the European Commission, and two other States re-debated the resolution we had previously agreed at the highest level, that of Ministers, preventing it from moving forward. Greece rejected, as it should, the attempts to undermine the Council and bypass EU procedures. That is why, when the Commission presented the proposals to the Council, I agreed with the criteria. The issue I raised was to include additional countries with severe human rights violations that some states avoided naming, and we did.

It is impressive the way that vessels of fake news from the Grand Forces systematically hide the truth, resort to lying, and weave negative stereotypes for anyone with a unique voice who does not immediately succumb to their desires. I was accused because I demanded, and it was finally unanimously accepted, the formulation of uniform, coherent criteria on the subject and their fair application. As Confucius says, it is impressive how a man can live without any truth.⁷³

⁷² Sommer, Theo. *China First. Die Welt auf dem Weg ins Chinesische Jahrhundert.* München: C.H. Beck, 2019, p. 143.

⁷³ Konfuzius. *Die Weisheit des Konfuzius. Einleitung und Nachwort,* U. Gräfe. Frankfurt am Main: Insel Verlag, 1964, p. 27 §22.

The third case of veto use cited by Sommer⁷⁴ is when Greece immediately blocked the joint announcement regarding the “Chinese violations” in the China Sea. What really happened? The Philippines unilaterally appealed to the International Court of Arbitration without the consent of China. A process that clearly leads nowhere but to propaganda as it turned out later, when the Philippines refrained from using the Arbitration ruling in their favor. A few weeks before the Arbitration announced its decision, which concerned the application of international law on maritime areas and the rights of islands, major countries such as the UK and Germany demanded that the Council issue a statement welcoming the decision, although we had not been notified about it, nor had it been published. I refused. I explained that a decision concerning maritime zones and islands, the subject of our dispute with Turkey, was not to be welcomed unless it was announced to us first. Greece did not have access to decisions that had not been made public, unlike those who were pointing fingers at us.

When the roughly 475-page-long decision was published, we studied it at the Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs and gave our consent.⁷⁵ If the nonsense about “Greece not giving its consent in order to avoid conflict with the blackmailing China” was true, would I not have chosen to remain in the line of veto? And why is it anti-European for a Foreign Minister to support a decision that he and his team have previously studied? Especially when the content of this decision directly intersects with the vital interests of his country? Finally, I must emphasize that China has never sought to assert pressure on Greece, not even by implying anything.

On a concluding note, I must note here that my consent to the announcement was accompanied by a condition which the Council accepted, but has since faded from memory when I ceased to be Foreign Minister. I argued, and I was right, that if the EU is to have an opinion on

⁷⁴ Sommer, Theo. *China First. Die Welt auf dem Weg ins Chinesische Jahrhundert.* München: C.H. Beck, 2019, p. 144.

⁷⁵ More realistically, Hillman argues that “Greece helped soften an EU statement on China’s claims in the South China Sea”. This constitutes yet another variation of the well-known fake news from supposedly respected Anglo-Saxon newspapers which, in order to fight the policy of the government I was part of, shamelessly engaged in the generation of false news that can now be found in “serious” books. See: Hillman, Jonathan E. *The Emperor’s New Road. China and the Project of the Century.* New Haven and London: Yale UP, 2020, p. 90.

whether and to what extent international law is properly applied in such a distant sea as the South China Sea, then it should render it a condition for EU candidates to accept International Law, the Law of the Sea and the rulings of the International Courts of Justice and Arbitration. For while “China has ratified the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea”,⁷⁶ Turkey, a candidate for EU membership who enjoys special relations with the EU, is rejecting it. The conclusion was simple; the EU cannot be losing sleep over East Asia while remaining indifferent to Europe itself and the seas surrounding it.

⁷⁶ Denoon, B.H. David. Conclusions, in Denoon (ed.), 2017, p. 431.

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China's "Belt and Road" Initiative as a Soft Power Apparatus in Mediterranean

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We should increase China's soft power, give a good Chinese narrative, and better communicate China's message.

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Xi Jinping, President of the People's Republic of China

I PROLEGOMENA ON THE FOUNDATIONS OF CONTEMPORARY “SOFT POWER”

Power is the main concept in politics at local, national, and international levels. Since the beginning of history, power has been occupying the dominant position in human and community relations. In order to comprehend international politics and relations, the study of power is of paramount importance. However, politics is the pursuit and exercise of power and those international politics are mainly power relations. A bibliography of international politics reveals that power has been the most decisive means for accomplishing national interests. Concepts of power can be traced back to ancient philosophers. Predominantly, in Confucian political philosophy the concept of power is intersected with the order of universe and the natural harmony by linking human beings, nature, and the cosmos. Confucian thought stressed the perfectibility of a person.

In the Greek philosophy, according to Aristotle's thought humans were political animals. He considers power as the foundation and explanation of historical process and, consequently, defines power as a source for change. Correspondingly, Ibn Khaldun's—the Arab historian, who developed one of the earliest nonreligious philosophies of history—analytical framework perceives “change” as a cyclical process, which can be achieved with charismatic leadership. Despite a long history of discussions and argumentation, international relations raised in terms of cooperation is a political imperative constructed in terms of power.

However, power is understood to be transactional, where the transaction is more significant as it requires partnership of “mutual trust, inclusiveness and balanced governance mechanism” as well as “harmony between humanity and nature”.¹ While outlining power, it is essential to make a distinction between power and influence. Hence, political power is an integrated concept that comprises the apparatus of political authority and sovereignty. Nevertheless, influence connotes a change of behavior through consent by convincing rather than via the enactment of force and/or threatened sanctions.

¹ Xi Jinping (2017 & 2020): *The Governance of China, II & III*. Foreign Languages Press. Beijing, China.

Dahl's "The Concept of Power"² puts on an interplay and/or interchange discourse between a "conceptual" and a strict "operationalized" exchange. Dahl also accentuates "power-over" by noticing that "A has power over B to the extent that he can get B to do something that B would not otherwise do", thus pointing to how "power is a relation, and that it is a relation among people".³ Within this context, thirty-three years later, Nye defined power as the ability to influence the behavior of others to get the desired outcomes.⁴ Besides, Nye makes known the notion of "smart power" as the "balance of hard and soft power"⁵ in international politics.

The "smart power" implies the ability of a given nation-state to combine hard and soft power into a successful strategy. According to Nye the use of hard power would be more costly—both economically and politically—, whereas it is conceivable to note that soft power is intangible, in the logic that it does not necessitate extensive resources and has limited consequences in case of failure. Nye similarly emphasizes the significance of style: since "soft power" is a matter of seduction, behaviors (such as arrogance or overconfidence) might be hurtful or disadvantageous. Nye, in an attempt to elucidate the "soft power" as not a normative concept, he expanded the discourse by including the realm of cyber power in his book "The Future of Power".⁶

With regard to new media hegemonic presences and the technological changes that restructure the twenty-first-century international politics, Nye's thought concentrates on the cyberspace as power differential actor. Particularly in Part II ("Diffusion and Cyber power"), he navigates the obsolete discussion over power politics into a new direction by counting on the increasingly importance of non-state actors in the domain of digital technology. In fact, Nye's approach in particular chapters is spurious as he contains some faults (for instance, São Paulo was identified as Brazil's

² Dahl, R. A. (1957): The concept of power. *Behavioral Science*, 2, pp. 201–215. <https://doi.org/10.1002/bs.3830020303>.

³ Dahl, R. A. (1957): The concept of power. *Behavioral Science*, 2, pp. 202–203. <https://doi.org/10.1002/bs.3830020303>.

⁴ Nye, Joseph S. (1990): *Bound to Lead: The Changing Nature of American Power*. Art of Mentoring Series (reprint Ed.). Basic Books.

⁵ Nye, Joseph S. (2005): "On the Rise and Fall of American Soft Power". *New Perspectives Quarterly*, 22(3), pp. 75–77.

⁶ Nye, Joseph S. (2011): *The Future of Power*. Public Affairs.

capital). Whatever the case may be, the foundations of “soft power” lie in a nation-state’s “culturalism” as opposed to the “hard power” dimensions. Issues, discussions, questions, and considerations over development across regions have cumulatively affected both people in any given society and national and international societies.

In any case, the concept of soft power certainly influenced the Chinese academic community as well as the political leadership. A former Professor Wang Huning, a leading Chinese political theorist and member of the Standing Committee of the Politburo since 2017, has evaluated Nye’s stringent stipulation regarding the resources of soft power: culture, political values and ideas, and foreign policies. He accentuated the necessity of strengthening Chinese soft power with an emphasis on culture, stating, “If a country has an admirable culture and ideological system, other countries will tend to follow it... It does not have to use its hard power which is expensive and less efficient”.⁷ The well-disposed Wang’s statement outlines mild power as the culture that represents the power of a country. Years later, Chen Xiansi offered an extensive clarification of soft power. He encompassed culture, diplomacy, multinational organizations, overseas investments, tariff reduction, foreign student exchanges, and foreign aid.⁸ According to Glaser and Murphy,⁹ the discourse became more sophisticated as scholars started to analyze soft power in the context of China’s current society with China’s peaceful rise and development, which also can be termed as “soft power with Chinese characteristics”. Besides, it should be stated that the domestic and foreign policy features of “soft power” development must be professed as an organic whole. In view of this, Professor Men Honghua pointed out that China’s soft power discussion should be enriched with Chinese practices, which will be further explained in the discussion below on cultural diplomacy.¹⁰ Thus,

⁷ Wang, Huning (1993): “Culture as National Soft Power: Soft Power.” *Journal of Fudan University*, March. 3, p. 91.

⁸ Chen, Xiansi (2006): “On China’s soft power in Southeast Asia”. *Southeast Asian Studies*, no. 6, pp. 43–48.

⁹ Glaser Bonnie S. and Melissa E. Murphy (2009): “Soft power with Chinese characteristics-the ongoing debate”. Center for Strategic & International Studies Report https://csis-website-prod.s3.amazonaws.com/s3fspublic/legacy_files/files/media/csis/pubs/090310_chinesesoftpower_chap2.pdf.

¹⁰ Men Honghua (2007): “An Evaluation of China’s Soft Power and Promotion Strategy, China’s Soft Power Strategy”. Zhejiang: Zhejiang Renmin Chubanshe.

the process in generating China's own soft power model becomes very important.¹¹ Besides, the importance of China as soft power is as much correlated to national development and well-being as it is to cultivating its international brand image.

Generally, culture is considered by most Chinese scholars, the heart and soul of soft power as well as one of the key resources for state power; it is an imperative apparatus for ensuring and/or promoting the spirit of a harmonious nation-state. China has achieved impressive gains both in terms of soft power cultural resources and of the ability to convert the resources into desired foreign-policy solid outcomes. Moreover, Chinese culture includes the values of Marxism and Socialism as its main features, along with elements of other significant to the world cultures that have been transferred to its cultural system.

2 SOFT POWER IN THE ERA OF THE BELT AND ROAD INITIATIVE

China is an emerging great power in the twenty-first century. According to the USA's National Intelligence Council/NIC statement, the rise of China to a great power status will re-establish to "*the position it held two centuries ago when China produced approximately 30% of the world's wealth*".¹² In 2007, Chinese President Hu Jintao in his speech—throughout the 17th Congress of the Chinese Communist Party—referred to the need for China to invest in actions pertinent to soft power. Consistently, in the 18th National Congress of the Communist Party of China (2014) President Xi Jinping prolonged China's soft power strategy: "*We should increase China's soft power, give a good Chinese narrative, and better communicate China's message to the world*".

China's arrangements as soft power have since been both noteworthy and rapid. Among the 2020–35 goals to be achieved, President Xi Jinping drew stages to be taken to heighten China's soft power and the grander appeal of its culture. In addition, he has stressed the need to have a profound understanding of how important and necessary it is to improve

¹¹ Cao, D. (2010): "Summary of research on soft power in recent years". <http://hgc41062.chinaw3.com/index/mag-article.php?num=1272&page=9>.

¹² National Intelligence Council/NIC-USA (2008): "Global Trends 2025: A Transformed World", p. 7, https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/94769/2008_11_global_trends_2025.pdf.

the country's international communication and to develop a voice in international discourse that matches with China's comprehensive national strength and international status.¹³

China's soft power is expected to escalate significantly in the coming decades. Certainly, China will further strengthen and deepen its soft power through forward-looking cooperation and interconnected actions under President's Xi novel "Belt and Road Initiative" (BRI).

This particular initiative is also a unique approach toward a "community of shared destiny" as well as a distinct message to the nation-states to develop their own development routes while working to upsurge interconnectedness. It can be *sensu lato* understood as China's soft power narrative. Besides, greater interconnectedness—driven by the forces of multilateralism, digitalization of economy, sustainable energy, and even intercultural agendas—will accelerate structures that facilitate cooperation, social solidarity, harmony, and a peaceful future.

The political history of the Southern European Region is one of the longest and most complex issues in the whole Mediterranean Sea. Many times, the natural process in the region has been rudely and/or brutally interrupted by actors of all kinds and, thus, adding to the deficiency of the regional harmony and developmental equilibrium. Within this context, the "soft power" apparatus is imperative as it directly influences the complexity of international relations. Since geopolitical restructures and intercultural manifestations have been the dominant trends in the Southern European Region, the "soft power" apparatus comes to be of paramount importance in today's world of growing interdependence that eventually will generate a community of shared destiny.

Nevertheless, soft power—within the framework of the "Belt and Road Initiative"—constitutes a powerful apparatus that further expands the connectedness value system with China. Due to the remarkable pace of economic and social change, China presents in the twenty-first century a compound image as a superpower globally. It is worth noting the fact that China overtook the USA as European Union's (EU) biggest trading partner; China was the main partner for the EU as the trade volume between China and the European Union turned the tide and reached

¹³ Xinhua (2021): "Xi Focus: Xi stresses improving China's international communication capacity". June 1, http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2021-06/01/c_139983105.htm.

a record high of more than 800 billion U.S. dollars in 2021, up 27.5 percent year on year.¹⁴

Above all, the "Belt and Road Initiative" establishes in the Southern European Region a trustworthy "soft power" nation-state image as China:

- safeguards trade mechanisms, economic growth, and solid outcomes;
- improve bilateral and multilateral relations;
- magnifies and strengthens technological position in the world;
- makes certain a harmonious development of the regional development;
- nurtures cutting-edge conditions for peace and the people's well-being;
- builds harmony between humanity and nature.

Driven by the movement of peaceful progress in the post-Cold War period, connectedness and cooperation have been more broadly and effectively practiced by Chinese authorities with numerous counties of the Southern European Region. Predominantly, multilateral cooperation has gained new energies around the Region, and multilateral collaboration has turned out to be the focal canal for finding ways and resources to intensify the "Belt and Road" narrative.

3 THE WORLD PLAYERS IN THE SOUTHERN EUROPEAN REGION

Region is a generic notion that does not have a unified meaning, classification, and/or connotation. Meaning is consequently reliant on the context for which the notion is used. According to Cohen, "region" refers to geographic, political, and cultural proximity and adjacency connected by historic migrations and common historic background. According to

¹⁴ Xinhua (2022): "European companies show confidence in Chinese market with continued investment". 05 April, <https://english.news.cn/20220405/7958ac4367124a3d823887a6b1eabab4/c.html>.

this definition, we can denote that the Southern European Region can be demarcated as a region.¹⁵

Southern European Region represents an interreligious, cultural, commercial, and academic bridge between the Middle East countries, North African states, and the European Union (EU). Much of the countries of this region were absorbed into the European Union and NATO. Few of them have not been yet members of the EU but they have taken in the new strategic document of the European Union.¹⁶

These are the causes for the Southern European Region still playing an imperative geopolitical role in the international politics. Indeed, as a peripheral zone in the wider Mediterranean waterway and by comprising countries that are sitting at the crossroads on great powers, Southern European Region has become a site of competition among the USA, France, Russia, the United Kingdom, and Germany. Further to the conflicting, yet contradictory interests among the above powers inserting themselves into the politics of Southern Europe, there are important divisions within and among the countries of the region itself.

In any case, the geopolitics in this region has been altering fast in the twenty-first century, somewhat because of nation-states' national agenda and partway because of transformational changes at the international levels. Alongside them are a number of resident regional powers—namely Italy, Spain, Greece, Israel, and Turkey—, which bring with them very different national priorities and strategic narratives about regional tensions and international responsibilities.

Old and new history is perforated with cases of hegemonic nation-states, which act as the enforcers of geopolitical order by exercising their hard power and/or by shifting the geopolitical landscape in and around the Southern European Region. Countless occasions, documented by plentiful authors, researchers, and the UN Commission of Experts, demonstrate examples of NATO, the USA, and the United Kingdom that abruptly—and in other cases violently—disintegrated and/or decomposed the Southern European nation-states' sovereignty. Since the British Empire until the post-Cold War period, dominant countries have often

¹⁵ Cohen, S. B. (2003): *Geopolitics of the world system*. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, p. 40.

¹⁶ European Union (2016): "A Global Strategy for the European Union's Foreign and Security Policy" <https://europa.eu/globalstrategy/en>.

employed means of power to bind the nation-states of the Southern Europe Region in dependent relationships.

In the twenty-first century, the Region has assimilated renewed significance as a zone of political tensions, upheavals, and external interventions. The USA and NATO make most of the interventions in this Region because of its geopolitical importance. Without doubt, the Southern European Region epitomizes the political, military, and economic junction of Europe, Asia Minor, and Africa.

Accordingly, it could be said that the geopolitics of the Southern European region critically transect the Eurasian conflictual dynamics (East–West) as well as the imbalanced North–South economic and political relations. It is not accidental that the American military presence—accompanying by NATO—is overlapped with Washington’s hegemonic strategies. Hitherto, “hegemony” does not only denote military dominance, but also impact and cultural control. Gramsci’s notion of hegemony is based on “...as the organ of one particular group, destined to create favourable conditions for the latter’s maximum expansion”. According to Gramsci the interests of a given group need to be understood and offered as the interests of all and, therefore, to be accepted as common and/or universal: “the development and expansion of the particular group are conceived of, and presented, as being the motor force of a universal expansion, a development of all the national energies”.¹⁷

For the Southern Europeans and their communities, the use of control practices and military power constitutes an unwanted phenomenon, which is directly linked to the diminution of the nation-states’ sovereignty. On top of it, there is the rise of political mistrust in Southern Europe about the so-called “western world”. An important adjunct to this is the fact that there are U.S. and NATO navies aggressively patrols in Southern Europe and the Mediterranean Sea like the one that exist in the South China Sea, the Black Sea, and the Arctic Ocean. More precisely, the political administration of Obama, Trump, and Biden indorsed a trillion-dollar nuclear arms upgrade. Biden’s official “Foreign Policy Plan” regards the purpose of nuclear weapons as deterrence. M. Szmigiera has pointed out that “the United States led the ranking of countries with highest military spending in 2021, with 801 billion U.S. dollars dedicated to the military and according to the U.S. Congressional Budget Office, the outlays for

¹⁷ Gramsci, Antonio (1971): *Selections from the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci*, New York, International Publishers.

defence will rise from a low of 596 billion U.S. dollars in 2014, to 915 billion U.S. dollars by 2031”.¹⁸

This is the largest since World War II (even adjusting for inflation), and it’s even more notable for what it emphasizes: building more nuclear weapons, preparing for and/or expanding America’s global military presence. Never has it been clearer that the USA deploys its military might to advance its corporations’ interests. The USA has over 800 formal military bases in 80 countries, a number that could exceed 1,000 if we count troops stationed at embassies and missions and so-called “lily-pond” bases, with some 138,000 soldiers stationed around the globe. For several decades, the USA and NATO have operated out of bases and facilities throughout Southern Europe and the Middle East.

4 CHINA AS SOFT POWER IN SOUTHERN MEDITERRANEAN/EUROPE

China has evidently taken a more dynamic and energetic role in the international sphere as Beijing has altered Deng Xiaoping’s notion of “keeping a low profile” to President Xi’s paradigm of “striving for achievements”.

The alteration from the bipolar to a polycentric world system has amplified the significance of regions and has consequently enhanced the importance of Southern Europe and Mediterranean countries. China uses multiple categorizations to refer to Southern Europe and Mediterranean countries. In other words, there is no single monolithic cartography. Overall, the term—for instance—“Mediterranean” and the associations that the so-called “West” attaches to it are absent from the discourse of Chinese officials. China uses several classifications to refer to the Mediterranean countries. In other words, there is no single solid cartography. Although there are concerns about nation-states’ difficulties to cope with the current economic climate, notably because of record levels of unemployment or levels of technological disparities, they are eager to point out the importance of an international cooperation, particularly with China. The Southern Europeans recognize the importance of “soft power” as a main driver for economic, cultural, and educational growth and development. Ultimately, it is in their profound trade originalities and cultural

¹⁸ Szmigiera Magdalena (2022): “Countries with the highest military spending 2021”. Statista, Apr 29, 2022. <https://www.statista.com/statistics/262742/countries-with-the-highest-military-spending/>.

creativities that the roots of their eagerness for Chinese “soft power” prospects lie.

Despite the obvious differences in values and political structures, Southern European’s most comprehensive partnership over the past few years has been with China. The Southern Europeans perceive China not only as an equilibrium of cultural diversity between East and West but, equally important, as an advanced educational force globally and a leading technological power in the twenty-first century. The key element in this case is China’s new emphasis on socialist democracy, on the “Belt and Road Initiative” and on cultural confidence as a means of achieving peaceful development and cooperation and a community of shared future. What draws Southern Europeans’ deep strategic synergy with China is that both have experienced unbroken cultural continuity over a very long timescale and benefit from an immense accumulation of cultural heritage.

Nevertheless, Southern Europeans prefer China to initiate a more comprehensive, soft power approach rooted in primarily developmental and cultural ties. They appreciated, for instance, President Xi’s visit in Greece in 2019 when he called for deeper cooperation in the context of Beijing’s Belt & Road Initiative, highlighting Greece’s favorable geographical location and “particular advantages” in the shipping sector. “It is our duty to upgrade our current cooperation in all sectors”, he wrote in an article, which appeared in *Kathimerini*, adding that China and Greece should take lessons from “the deep wisdom of their ancient civilizations” and jointly foster the creation of “a new type of international relations based on respect, justice and mutually beneficial cooperation”.¹⁹

Furthermore, President Xi—during the Cypriot counterpart Nicos Anastasiades, who attended the Second Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation—underlined the fact that “Cyprus will continue to be an important partner of China in the European Union”.²⁰

In addition, President Xi’s visit in Italy to sign a Memorandum of Understanding between Italy and China on the Belt and Road Initiative was perceived by *Instituto Affari Internazionali* as an action that “may help Beijing drive a wedge in the Euro-Atlantic alliance, undermining EU

¹⁹ *Kathimerini* (2019): “Xi eyes deeper cooperation on occasion of visit to Greece” <https://www.ekathimerini.com/246317/article/ekathimerini/news/xi-eyes-deeper-cooperation-on-occasion-of-visit-to-greece>.

²⁰ *Xinhuanet* (2019): “Xi meets Cypriot president”. http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2019-04/25/c_138009513.htm.

efforts to find a common stance vis-à-vis China, while weakening the US in its ongoing tug-of-war with China over trade and global leadership”.²¹

Xi also inaugurated a Chinese cultural center at the site of the former Chinese embassy, which was bombed during NATO’s 1999 air war against Serbia over Kosovo. With helicopters flying above and scores of police keeping guard, Xi also took a tour of the Belgrade fortress. The visit will “open a new page” in relations between the two countries, Xi said in a speech.²²

Besides, French President Emmanuel Macron welcomed Chinese State Councillor and Foreign Minister Wang’s visit, saying, “It is of great significance for France and China to maintain strategic communication”. France highly appreciates China’s commitment to making its COVID-19 vaccine, once available, a global public good, and is ready to deepen cooperation with China in the fight against the virus and to push for more results in bilateral cooperation in economy, trade, agriculture, and other areas.²³

5 BUILDING A COMMUNITY OF SHARED FUTURE FOR HUMANKIND WITH MEDITERRANEAN PEOPLE

Many scholars and analysts refer to the French historian Fernand Braudel’s quote: “the Mediterranean is not a border, but a place for trade”.

Certainly, the Mediterranean has long been considered a peripheral region in wider Southern Europe and the Middle East dynamics. Today, however, it has become a site of great power competition. In particular, the broader region of Southern Europe, including the Middle East, has entered its most turbulent period since the end of the Cold War II, as it appears an increase of violence and the rise of separatism in several areas.

According to Alessandro Lazzarini, “the Mediterranean has a substantial strategic value for China. On one hand there is Europe, China’s main export destination and promising source of advanced technology. As the

²¹ Istituto Affari Internazionali (2019): “President Xi Jinping arrives in Italy”. <https://www.iai.it/en/news/president-xi-jinping-arrives-italy>.

²² AP (2016): “China’s President Xi arrives in Serbia” <https://apnews.com/article/6a3e11cff99e4ecf87a382e91faf29a0>.

²³ Xinhuanet (2020): “French President Macron meets Chinese FM”. http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2020-08/29/c_139326876.htm.

end point of the Belt and Road Initiative, Europe occupies a strategic importance for the success of the Initiative in the coming years".²⁴

The Southern Europeans welcome the possibility of a greater engagement with China in cultural and economic terms including a formal dialogue. They have also been very eager to develop new forms of relations as part of their noticeable internationalization strategy. Nevertheless, China's new focus on culture and harmonious development as a central driver for its Belt and Road implementation is unique in terms of scope and scale. Indeed, China's Belt & Road Initiative is "the world's largest platform for international cooperation, providing trade, finance collaboration and social and cultural cooperation".²⁵ As the world is faced with severe challenges "China is offering its solution to several global problems, not only through capital and investment, but also through win-win cooperation. The initiative could be an antidote to the rise of anti-globalization".²⁶

Increasing ties between China and Greece, and largely between China and Europe, are giving the Mediterranean region an opportunity to regain its place in the world. Strategically located at the other end of the Maritime Silk Road, Greece could be China's "gateway to Europe", Premier Li Keqiang stated in 2014.²⁷ This opportunity is compounded by the growing market for Chinese and European goods. Meanwhile, the enlargement of the Suez Canal in 2015 has doubled the traffic flow between the Red Sea and Southern Europe and the Mediterranean Sea, allowing for the transit of larger vessels, reducing transit time between Asia and Europe, and raising the competitiveness and visibility of Mediterranean ports. As Elodie Sellier noted, "given its strategic position, the port at Piraeus can capitalize on the geographical proximity of the Suez Canal to become a major distribution hub for Chinese goods to Europe,

²⁴ Lazzarini Alessandro (2020): "China's Belt and Road Initiative in the Mediterranean: Drivers and Implications", p. 3, https://www.academia.edu/44455842/Chinas_Belt_and_Road_Initiative_in_the_Mediterranean_Drivers_and_Implications.

²⁵ Gouliamos Kostas (2017): "Belt and Road Initiative conducive to better global governance". Interview in China Today http://www.chinatoday.com.cn/english/spc/2017-05/13/content_740800.htm.

²⁶ Gouliamos Kostas (2018): "Amid high expectation, Belt and Road Initiative brings more win-win results to Europe. Interview in China Daily Xinhua <http://global.chinadaily.com.cn/a/201805/14/WS5af968a5a3103f6866ce846f.html>.

²⁷ Sellier Elodie (2016): "China's Mediterranean Odyssey". The Diplomat (19.04), <https://thediplomat.com/2016/04/chinas-mediterranean-odyssey/>.

not least because more than 80 percent of trade between China and the European Union is maritime”.²⁸

This approach has created an extensive perception of China as a key player in global affairs because of its rising economic influence and, thus, as a country looking for a peaceful and harmonious cooperation. Over the last few years, China has become essential to the world economy. As the world’s second largest economy, it has made a consistently large contribution to world GDP growth. Building on its economic achievements, it is becoming progressively principal in world politics. China is also now more determined, marking to institute itself as a regional as well as a global power.

President Xi Jinping offers a long-term view of China’s ambition²⁹ and in his report to the Chinese Communist Party’s 19th Congress, he stated two grand objectives:

- (a) From 2020 to 2035, China will become a “fully modern” economy and society and
- (b) This is to be followed by a further 15 years to 2050, when China’s mission for national wealth and power will come to completion as it assumes great power status.

As the initiative of the Belt and Road takes shape, the nurturing of this perception and the China’s global role becomes increasingly vital. China’s infrastructure projects complement national development programs throughout the Region, while its substantial investments, trade, and aid come at a time when Europe suffers from a polymorphous crisis’ tiredness. Overall, China’s announcement of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) in 2013 indicated a change in its role—inter alia—in Southern Europe and the Middle East.

Connecting China to states across Southern Europe, the Mediterranean, Eurasia, and the Asia Pacific Ocean region, the BRI is the most important foreign policy initiative the country has undertaken since its arrival as a power with global interests. Because Southern Europe and the

²⁸ Sellier Elodie (2016): “China’s Mediterranean Odyssey”. *The Diplomat* (19.04), <https://thediplomat.com/2016/04/chinas-mediterranean-odyssey/>.

²⁹ Rudd Kevin (2017): “Xi Jinping offers a long-term view of China’s ambition”. *Financial Times* 22.10.2017 <https://www.ft.com/content/24ecae8a-b5a1-11e7-8007-554f9eaa90ba>.

Middle East are crucial to the BRI, China's approach to the region is becoming more ambitious and complex on economic, diplomatic, and—to a lesser degree—security issues. In particular, for some scholars “while China's increasing economic exposure in the Mediterranean sets the stage for a more proactive foreign policy, its involvement in regional security dynamics is still limited”.³⁰

Moreover, China's determination to a stable, peaceful, and harmonious environment conducive to its foreign affairs has been reflected in two Chinese “white papers”.

- (a) “Vision and Actions on Jointly Building Silk Road Economic Belt and 21st-Century Maritime Silk Road”³¹
- (b) “China's Arab Policy Paper”.³²

In particular, “Vision and Actions” states cooperation priorities for developing relations with countries that participate in the BRI: political coordination, facilities connectivity, unimpeded trade, financial integration, and people-to-people bonds.

The absence of military cooperation in “Vision and Actions” further supports the Chinese narrative that the BRI is a development-centered initiative rather than part of a geopolitical strategy.

Further to “white papers”, Chinese corporations have been active throughout the Region, often focusing on projects that lend themselves to the BRI objective of connectivity.

³⁰ Lazzarini Alessandro (2020): “China's Belt and Road Initiative in the Mediterranean: Drivers and Implications”, p. 1, https://www.academia.edu/44455842/Chinas_Belt_and_Road_Initiative_in_the_Mediterranean_Drivers_and_Implications.

³¹ National Development and Reform Commission, China—the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and Ministry of Commerce of the People's Republic of China, with State Council authorization (2015): “Vision and Actions on Jointly Building Silk Road Economic Belt and 21st-Century Maritime Silk Road”. First Edition March 28. https://reconasia-production.s3.amazonaws.com/media/filer_public/e0/22/e0228017-7463-46fc-90940465a6f1ca23/vision_and_actions_on_jointly_building_silk_road_economic_belt_and_21st-century_maritime_silk_road.pdf.

³² China - the State Council of the People's Republic of China (2016): “Full text of China's Arab Policy Paper” [Updated: Jan 13,2016 9:18 PM Xinhua] https://ecfr.eu/wp-content/uploads/BRI_Map.png.

Ports and industrial parks have been central to such cooperation, as they create an economic chain that links China to Southern Europe, the Middle East, and the Mediterranean.

For instance, Cyprus meticulously appreciates China's connectivity vision, noticing the "Belt and Road" initiative as a project of the century and as a transcontinental long-term multilateralism program. Cypriot political, business, cultural, and scholar communities as well as the people of the country firmly support China's gigantic project and they work faithfully with Beijing to deepen and strengthen cooperation in the joint construction of the "Belt and Road" Initiative. It is worth noting the fact that President Xi Jinping and Cypriot President Nicos Anastasiades in November 2021, ahead of the 50th anniversary of the establishment of bilateral diplomatic relations, jointly decided to upgrade the China-Cyprus relationship to a strategic partnership. Moreover, the BRI framework brings China and Cyprus closer, letting the two states to discuss China's new role in the Mediterranean region and, specifically, in the Eastern Mediterranean area. Located in a hub position between Europe, Asia, and Africa, Cyprus plays a role of paramount importance for China's Maritime Silk Road Initiative (MSRI). Within this framework, Beijing can utilize. Cyprus not only the geographical advantages, but equally important the beneficial ports' location along with the advanced shipping sector and financial services. It reserves to be mentioned that Cyprus is the EU's largest, most prominent management center and among the top three in the world, while the global Cypriot shipping companies manage around 20% of the world's third-party managed fleet as well as the third-largest merchant fleet in Europe and the 11th largest globally.³³ Overall, Cyprus further boosts the throughput capacity of China's "Belt and Road" sea-land link with Europe.

Consistent with Beijing's approach to the international affairs, China has one more reason to expand its presence as a soft power across the Region. China is providing public goods that can contribute to the region development and stability. In view of this, the sustainability of China's "Belt and Road Initiative" in the Southern Europe/Mediterranean will depend on whether Beijing can further.

³³ Cyprus Shipping Chamber (2022): "Cyprus: A Leading Maritime Center". <https://csc-cy.org/cyprus-a-leading-maritime-center/>.

- (a) generate strategic operations as soft power and, consequently,
- (b) help defuse tensions in the region while respecting each country's internal concerns.

It is within this context China has introduced the BRI and has employed more globally oriented political discourses and approaches. One example is the aim of achieving a "shared destiny for all mankind" or a "global community of shared future".

At the 19th CPC National Congress, Xi Jinping has underlined the fact that Beijing finds itself in "a key period for realizing the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation" and is "more confident, and more competent, than any time in history" to grasp the "historic opportunity".³⁴

A "community of shared future for humanity" will be essential for China to address along with its Southern Europe and the Mediterranean partners the many challenges of the twenty-first century. These challenges are intensified by an extremely volatile world economy that can cause very sudden and widespread changes at the community level. However, China along with Southern Europe and the Mediterranean Region countries represent one of the oldest and most influential cultures in the world. Undoubtedly, China has become more proactive in multilateral agendas, by initiating remarkable projects in the region. However, it would be of paramount importance for China to further deepen and secure "soft power" actionable ingenuities within the framework of the "Belt and Road" Initiative; a project that is commonly regarded as the accurate direction for the progress of humankind based on universally shared values of peace, development, fairness, justice, democracy, and freedom.

³⁴ Xi Jinping (2017): "Report at the 19th Chinese Communist Party National Congress, secure a decisive victory in building a moderately prosperous society in all respects and strive for the great success of socialism with Chinese characteristics for a new era". October 18, http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/special/2017-11/03/c_136725942.htm.

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The “Pan-Securitization” of the EU’s Connectivity Policy and China–EU Cooperation

Zuokui Liu

In her State of the Union address in September 2021, the European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen proposed the “Global Gateway” initiative (GGI). In December 2021, the European Union (EU) announced the launch of the GGI, marking a key step in the EU’s efforts to foster connectivity. The EU’s introduction of GGI, on the one hand, is to share a piece of “cake” of the global connectivity market; on the other hand, is to compete with China’s “Belt and Road” initiative (BRI). In her address, President von der Leyen stated that, “We are good at financing

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roads. But it does not make sense for Europe to build a perfect road between a Chinese-owned copper mine and a Chinese-owned harbour". Hence, "we have to get smarter when it comes to these kinds of investments".¹ She declared that the EU's GGI is based on values and provides partners with transparency and good governance. At the press conference of the EU's GGI communication document in December 2021, von der Leyen explicitly announced that the GGI is a "true alternative" to the BRI.²

The application of the "securitization" concept and the expansion of its boundaries are significant focuses in security study and decision-making after the Cold War. The Copenhagen School, represented by Barry Buzan and Ole Weaver, played an important role in promoting the study of securitization.³ In their view, security is "the move that takes politics beyond the established rules of the game and frames the issue either as a special kind of politics or as above politics", and "securitization can thus be seen as a more extreme version of politicization".⁴ They define "securitization" as "the discursive process through which an intersubjective understanding is constructed within a political community to treat something as an existential threat to a valued referent object, and to enable a call for urgent and exceptional measures to deal with the threat".⁵ This relatively broad research approach to security theory is helpful for understanding and explaining the tendency of pan-securitization. The so-called pan-securitization refers to the process of securitization in the non-security field or the performance of excessive traditional security in the non-traditional security field.⁶

¹ Ursula Von der Leyen, 2021 State of the Union Address, 15 September 2021, https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/SPEECH_21_4701

² Jessica Parker, EU launches €300bn bid to challenge Chinese influence, 1 December 2021, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-59473071>.

³ Holger Stritzel, *Security in Translation: Securitization Theory and the Localization of Threat*, London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014, pp. 11–37.

⁴ Barry Buzan, Ole Weaver, and Jaap De Wilde, *Security: A New Framework for Analysis*, Publisher: Lynne Rienner, 1998, p. 23.

⁵ Barry Buzan and Ole Weaver, *Regions and Powers: The Structure of International Security*, Publisher: Cambridge University Press, 2004, p. 491.

⁶ Guo Rui and Chen Xin, "Pan-Securitization and Risks of East Asian Armament Security," *Journal of International Security Studies*, Iss.5 2018, pp. 39–53.

This article examines the proposing process and connotation of the EU’s connectivity initiative from the perspective of pan-securitization and argues that the inclusion of connectivity into the security domain is an important performance of pan-securitization, which makes connectivity extend to new dimensions, and be shaped into a more complex discourse system. At the same time, the authors attempt to analyze the opportunities and challenges of China–EU connectivity against the backdrop of pan-securitization.

1 THE EVOLUTION OF CONNECTIVITY CONNOTATION: BEYOND “SOFT” AND “HARD” CONNECTIVITY

Connectivity has a long history and has formed different characteristics in different countries and regions. The systematic and comprehensive practice of promoting connectivity in the contemporary sense started with the Eurasian Connectivity Project in the 1990s. China, the EU (European Community), and Russia all carried out numerous connectivity projects, actively implemented infrastructure construction activities, and the flow of materials, personnel, capital and commodities across the Eurasian continent. The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) put forward a strategy for connectivity within the region. In October 2009, the 15th ASEAN Summit, with the theme of “Enhancing Connectivity, Empowering Peoples”, elaborated the importance of ASEAN connectivity.⁷ In October 2010, the 17th ASEAN Summit adopted the “Master Plan on ASEAN Connectivity”. ASEAN’s connectivity strategy prioritizes three areas: physical connectivity, institutional connectivity, and people-to-people connectivity.⁸ ASEAN not only accelerates the connectivity construction at home, but also actively promotes its cooperation experience to the Asia–Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC). There are many studies on the implications of Asian connectivity, especially the connectivity of ASEAN, for BRI construction. It can be said that China’s

⁷ Wang Qin and Li Nan, *The Strategy of ASEAN’s Connectivity and Its New Development*, *Asia–Pacific Economic Review*, Iss. 2, 2014, pp. 115–120.

⁸ Master Plan on ASEAN Connectivity, <https://www.usasean.org/system/files/downloads/MPAC.pdf>.

connectivity initiative is very rich in content, and the experience from ASEAN and APEC contributed considerably.⁹

Later on, China gradually becomes an advocate and torch bearer of a new round of connectivity construction, constantly enriching the connotation of connectivity and areas of cooperation. In April 2013, when attending the Boao Forum for Asia Annual Conference, Xi Jinping stated that, “China will increase connectivity with its neighbors, actively explore the building of a regional financing platform, advance economic integration within the region and thus increase its competitiveness”.¹⁰ In October 2013, at the APEC leaders’ informal meeting held in Bali, Indonesia, Xi Jinping proposed that APEC should follow the trend and compose an excellent chapter on connectivity. He made four proposals.

First, APEC needs to build a connectivity landscape connecting and covering both shores across the Pacific, based on which the sub-regional economic corridors will be boosted and a big Asia-Pacific market covering 2.8 billion population in 21 economies will be created. APEC needs to ensure the free flow of factors of production in the region, steadily improve the balanced development of members across the Pacific and ultimately realize the integration. Second, APEC needs to break the bottlenecks hindering connectivity and create the investment and financing partnerships among governments, private sectors, and international organizations. China is willing to explore expanding investment and financing channels for infrastructure development and proposes to establish the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank. Third, APEC needs to expedite connectivity and infrastructure development within the framework of regional and international cooperation. Members should uphold the concept of mutual benefit and complementarity, adhere to an open, transparent, cooperative, and all-win principle, enhance communication and exchanges, and actively participate in such cooperation. Fourth, APEC needs to enable the people in the Asia-Pacific to forge closer ties in economy, trade, finance, education,

⁹ Alicia Garcia Herrero and Jianwei Xu, *Why Do Asia and Europe Need More Connectivity? Some Ideas from the European and ASEAN Experience*, Bruegel, https://www.eria.org/Why_Do_Asia_and_Europe_Need_More_Connectivity.pdf

¹⁰ “Full text of Xi Jinping’s speech at opening ceremony of Boao Forum,” April 10, 2013, http://www.china.org.cn/business/Boao_Forum_2013/2013-04/10/content_28501562.htm.

science, culture, and other areas through connectivity and enable them to deepen mutual understanding and trust between the people.¹¹

Since then, China’s connectivity initiative has preliminarily formed a system and later developed into a clear “five-pronged approach”, that is, policy coordination, facility connectivity, unimpeded trade, financial integration, and people-to-people bonds, which constitute the core of the BRI. The “five-pronged approach” enriched the academic understanding of the traditional concept of connectivity, brought the connectivity issue to multiple fields of international relations, and became a conceptual innovation with extensive and rich connotations.

Several years after the inauguration of BRI construction, with China’s growing influence in the field of connectivity, the international competition for the discourse power in connectivity has become increasingly fierce. European think tanks and research institutes watch closely the progress of China’s connectivity construction. The EU’s attitude has undergone significant changes from wait-and-see, cautious participation, skepticism, and even stigmatization of the achievements of the BRI.¹² The EU actively introduced connectivity plans: it released the “Connecting Europe and Asia—Building Blocks for an EU Strategy” in 2018, the “Globally Connected Europe” document in July 2021, and the GGI in December 2021. By strengthening coordination with the US’ “Build Back Better World” (B3W), the EU’s attempt of hedging China’s influence and discourse power in connectivity has become increasingly clear, thus makes connectivity an important area of China–EU competition.¹³ The EU adopts the joint approaches of “guarding against China”, “confronting China”, and “cooperating with China” in the field of connectivity, which are consistent with the EU’s overall view of China as a

¹¹ “President Xi Jinping Makes Remarks on Promoting the Connectivity in the Asia Pacific at the 21st APEC Economic Leaders’ Meeting”, October 8, 2013, https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/wjb_663304/zzjg_663340/yzs_663350/gjlb_663354/2716_663436/2718_663440/201310/t20131011_513826.html.

¹² Liu Zuokui, *Europe and “the Belt and Road” Initiative: Responses and Risks* (2019), Beijing: China Social Sciences Press, 2019, pp. 1–8.

¹³ D’Andrea & Partners, *A Globally Connected Europe: the EU’s Answer to the Belt and Road Initiative?* August 16, 2021, <https://www.dandreadpartners.com/a-globally-connected-europe-the-eus-answer-to-the-belt-road-initiative/>.

partner, competitor, and systemic rival. Due to the complexity of connectivity, the EU adopts a differentiated approach and identifies specific areas for cooperation, competition, and confrontation.

Connectivity can be roughly divided into two aspects: “hard connectivity” and “soft connectivity”. “Hard connectivity” involves economic infrastructure construction, including connectivity in physical and digital manners, while “soft connectivity” involves connectivity in fields such as rules, logistics, finance, and people-to-people exchange. The “soft” and “hard” sides are combined with each other and constitute the complete picture of connectivity.¹⁴ However, with the new development of the situation, the divide between “soft connectivity” and “hard connectivity” is no longer so clear, and the research on connectivity has basically done beyond the previous classification. For example, after data and information, industrial chain and mechanism competitiveness are included in the scope of connectivity studies, it becomes difficult to define whether it is “soft connectivity” or “hard connectivity”, and a trend of integration of the two is emerging in some fields.

The integration of “soft” and “hard” security in connectivity makes the fields involved overlap with one another and continue to extend, and a trend of “pan-securitization” emerged in policy-making. The “pan-securitization” of connectivity mainly presents the following characteristics: (a) The objects and contents involved in connectivity are enlarged, and the list of connectivity products is getting longer; (b) The security of “soft” and “hard” connectivity is becoming increasingly influencing one another. Decision-makers are constantly seeking absolute security awareness, and economy, information, ecology, technology, resources, public, network security, etc., as the main content of connectivity, appear in the look of new security concepts, the boundaries are ambiguous, and many problems are involved which generate extensive influence; (c) The definition of content is becoming increasingly spatialized. The “nationalization” or “regionalization” of public space security is emerging, from insisting on self-governance to excessive intervention by the state or institutions, and building security enclosures in national or regional public spaces; (d) The fight for discourse power is becoming fiercer, new vacuum spaces in the security field are investigated, and the in-depth impact of connectivity security is constantly amplified.

¹⁴ “Ning Jizhe: ‘Hard Connectivity’ and ‘Soft Connectivity’ Jointly Bring Benefits to BRI Peoples”, *Chinese Industry & Economy*, Iss. 6, 2019, p. 17.

2 THE EVOLUTION OF “PAN-SECURITIZATION” OF THE EU’S CONNECTIVITY

The “pan-securitization” of the EU’s connectivity has been evolving. In the initial stage, the EU started from the key assets of connectivity, continuously expanded its content, lengthened the list of connectivity assets, and included them in the scope of investment security screening. The EU attempted to improve its discourse power by standardizing the expression and practice of connectivity discourse and incorporating into the fields of ideology, values, and norms. With the further clarification of connectivity narratives, the EU pointed out the security risks of connectivity toward China, tagged China as a rival, and finally made connectivity an integral part of China–EU competition. The EU strengthens security legislation in the field of critical infrastructure and joins its so-called “like-minded” partners to deal with China’s influence and discourse power in the field of connectivity, so as to complete the “pan-securitization” process.

2.1 *Implementing the Security Screening Mechanism over Foreign Investments*

In recent years, the EU has continuously expanded the scope of connectivity products, included them in the security screening list, thus pan-securitized the connectivity issue. The EU’s foreign investment security screening mechanism plan was proposed in 2017, adopted in 2019, and entered into force in 2020.¹⁵ It aims to deal with the possible security risks caused by foreign investments in the EU’s important strategic assets and is a relatively comprehensive security framework and policy. It is notable that the EU has expanded the scope of connectivity products, mainly including the following aspects: (a) critical infrastructure, whether physical or virtual, including energy, transport, water, health, communications, media, data processing or storage, aerospace, defense, electoral or financial infrastructure, and sensitive facilities, as well as land and real estate crucial for the use of such infrastructure; (b) critical technologies

¹⁵ Regulation (EU) 2019/452 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 19 March 2019 Establishing a Framework for the Screening of Foreign Direct Investments into the Union, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32019R0452>.

and dual use items, including artificial intelligence, robotics, semiconductors, cybersecurity, aerospace, defense, energy storage, quantum and nuclear technologies as well as nanotechnologies and biotechnologies; (c) supply of critical inputs, including energy or raw materials, as well as food security; (d) access to sensitive information, including personal data, or the ability to control such information; or (e) the freedom and pluralism of the media.

It can be seen that, from the perspective of the broad concept of connectivity, the EU has included a large number of connectivity products in the sphere of investment security screening, so that if foreign investors want to get access to the EU market, they are bound to face strict security screening. The trend of abusing security screening is very obvious.

2.2 *Promoting the New Strategy of Eurasian Connectivity*

In September 2018, the EU released the joint communication “Connecting Europe and Asia—Building Blocks for an EU Strategy”, which comprehensively elaborated the EU’s new strategy for promoting Eurasian connectivity. The EU underlines the promotion of “sustainable, comprehensive and rules-based connectivity” and further portrays connectivity as a matter of standard, value, and security. “Sustainable Connectivity” focuses on driving productivity and creating growth and jobs, ensuring market efficiency and fiscal viability. It promotes decarbonization of the economy and respects high standards, based on environmental impact assessments, particularly standards of transparency, good governance, and public consultations. “Comprehensive connectivity” underlines that connectivity is about networks, which indicate transport links, by air, land, or sea, or digital networks, from mobile to fixed, from the internet backbone to the last mile, from cables to satellites. It also means energy networks and flows, from gas, including liquified natural gas, to electricity grids, from renewables. Internationally agreed practices, rules, conventions, and technical standards, supported by international organizations and institutions, enable interoperability of networks and trade across borders. Because such connectivity is closely related to people’s lives, their security vulnerabilities require extensive attention. Therefore, “rules-based connectivity” stresses that rules and

regulations are required for people, goods, services, and capital to move efficiently, fairly, and smoothly.¹⁶

In the document, the EU highlights the importance of connectivity and security and argues that:

The world depends increasingly on sophisticated data networks and transfers, energy connections, perfectly timed value chains and the mobility of people. Managing these flows means finding the right balance between facilitating them and ensuring their safety and security. In an era of hybrid threats and terrorism, ‘flow security’ matters. Access to trade routes remains dependent on an adequate political and security environment and is subject to addressing challenges, such as transnational organized crime and any kind of illicit smuggling and trafficking, cybersecurity and attacks on transport and energy security. These challenges cannot be addressed solely through the internal or external policies of countries or entities. The EU should engage with partner countries to make transport connectivity with Asia safer and more secure, in particular in area of cybersecurity.¹⁷

These concerns have some factual basis and rationality, but since the EU has magnified such concerns, connectivity has been included in the scope of values, ideologies, and rules of competition.

In September 2019, the EU and Japan signed the “Partnership on Sustainable Connectivity and Quality Infrastructure”. The two partners underline the environmental and financial sustainability of connectivity and commit to promoting rules-based and values-based connectivity, freedom, and openness.¹⁸ From the perspective of the EU’s connectivity strategy, its intention to tackle China has become increasingly crystal. It is one of the EU’s goals to compete with China for the discourse power in connectivity and to avoid the impact of China-style connectivity becoming

¹⁶ European Commission, “Joint Communication to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee, the Committee of the Regions and the European Investment Bank: Connecting Europe and Asia—Building Blocks for an EU Strategy”, Brussels, September 19, 2018, JOIN (2018) 31 final. https://www.ecas.europa.eu/sites/default/files/joint_communication_-_connecting_europe_and_asia_-_building_blocks_for_an_eu_strategy_2018-09-19.pdf, pp. 2–3.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

¹⁸ EEAS, “The Partnership on Sustainable Connectivity and Quality Infrastructure Between European Union and Japan”, October 9, 2019, https://www.ecas.europa.eu/sites/default/files/the_partnership_on_sustainable_connectivity_and_quality_infrastructure_between_the_european_union_and_japan.pdf.

global. The “pan-securitization” of the EU’s connectivity has entered a stage with more detailed concepts and specific measures.

2.3 *Repositioning China–EU Relations*

The EU released the “EU–China—A Strategic Outlook” document in March 2019. The most notable part of the document is the four identities of China, namely “a cooperation partner with whom the EU has closely aligned objectives, a negotiating partner with whom the EU needs to find a balance of interests, an economic competitor in the pursuit of technological leadership, and a systemic rival promoting alternative models of governance”.¹⁹ The document systematically interprets the connotation of “rival” and proposes clear countermeasures at multiple levels. This document covers aspects of politics, economy, trade, investment, and people-to-people exchanges. The EU now identifies China as a “systemic rival” and puts forward preventive measures in various fields. This is unseen in the past decades since the establishment of diplomatic relations between China and the European Community in 1975. In the document, connectivity is also raised as an important component. The EU emphasizes that the principles of its participation in connectivity are financial, environmental, and social sustainability, transparency, open procurement, and level playing field. The EU stresses that China–EU connectivity cooperation should be carried out in a mutually beneficial and transparent manner. By doing this, the EU de facto sets up standards for China–EU connectivity cooperation. At the same time, the EU underscores that systemic challenges and security threats from China should be guarded against. To this end, the EU proposes some guiding opinions. First, to fully address the distortive effects of foreign state ownership and state financing in the internal market, the Commission will identify before the end of 2019 how to fill existing gaps in EU law. Second, to safeguard against potential serious security implications for critical digital infrastructure, a common EU approach to the security of 5G networks is needed. To kickstart this, the European Commission will issue a Recommendation following the European Council. Third, to detect and raise awareness

¹⁹ “EU-China-A Strategic Outlook,” 12 March, 2019, <https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/default/files/communication-eu-china-a-strategic-outlook.pdf>, p. 1.

of security risks posed by foreign investment in critical assets, technologies, and infrastructure, Member States should ensure the swift, full, and effective implementation of the Regulation on screening of foreign direct investment.²⁰

2.4 *Competing for the Discourse Power in a Broader Field*

On 1 December 2021, the European Commission published the “Global Gateway” initiative communication document and raised a new European strategy to promote smart, clean, and safe connectivity in the digital, energy, and transport sectors, and to strengthen health worldwide, education, and research systems. The GGI aims to mobilize up to EUR 300 billion of investment between 2021 and 2027 to underpin a durable global recovery. The initiative aims to boost investment, promote democratic values and high standards, good governance and transparency, equal partnerships, green and clean, safe infrastructure, and catalyze private sector investment. It is value-oriented and based on the EU’s high social, environmental, financial, and labor standards. To ensure that EU enterprises are more competitive in third-country markets, the EU will establish the European Export Credit Facility. In addition, the EU will mobilize grants of EUR 2.4 billion for sub-Saharan Africa and EUR 1.08 billion for North Africa to support the production of renewable energy and renewable hydrogen.

The GGI is a comprehensive initiative on the EU’s connectivity strategy, covers a wide range of fields, and defines the EU’s basic position, approach, and vision in the field of connectivity. The features of the document are four-fold. (a) Compete for the dominance of connectivity rules and continue to emphasize rules-based, transparent, and sustainable connectivity. (b) Its content is extensive and diverse. In addition to traditional connectivity fields, such as infrastructure and energy, data, information, industrial chain, supply chain, and even social systems and mechanisms are included, and the boundary between “soft” and “hard” connectivity becomes increasingly fuzzy. (c) Values are underlined. The EU takes the observance of so-called “universal values” such as democracy, human rights, and the rule of law as prerequisite and tries its best

²⁰ Ibid., pp. 8–10.

to prevent or even exclude partners with different values. (d) The legislation in connectivity is strengthened. The initiative focuses on regulating the behavior of foreign actors entering the European market or cooperating in third-party markets. Entering the European connectivity market will be subject to a series of regulatory conditions, such as the principle of competitive neutrality, the General Data Protection Regulation, and supply chain regulation.

2.5 *Following the American Leadership*

At the end of 2019, at the “Indo-Pacific Business Forum” during the ASEAN Summit, the US announced the launch of a new initiative dedicated to infrastructure construction in the Asia–Pacific region: the Blue Dot Network (BDN). Initiated jointly by the Overseas Private Investment Corporation, Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, and Japan Bank for International Cooperation, the initiative aims to “bring together governments, the private sector, and civil society to encourage adoption of trusted standards for quality, global infrastructure development in an open and inclusive framework”.²¹ It is a landmark project for the US to respond to China’s BRI.

In order to put the BDN into practice, high-level US officials frequently visited Europe to persuade European leaders on the ground of information security, tried to rule out China from Europe through the “Clean Network” and BDN, and promoted transatlantic cooperation in the field of information security. Built on these efforts, the Biden administration proposed the B3W in June 2021, which was recognized by the EU, the British, German, French, and Italian leaders, and was included in the communiqué of G7 summit held that month. According to White House, the B3W is a “values-driven, high-standard, and transparent infrastructure partnership led by major democracies to help narrow the USD 40 + trillion infrastructure need in the developing world”.²² The core principles of the initiative include: (a) value-driven; (b) good governance and strong standards; (c) climate-friendly; (d) strong strategic

²¹ “Blue Dot Network,” <https://www.state.gov/blue-dot-network/>.

²² White House, “Fact Sheet: President Biden and G7 Leaders Launch Build Back Better World (B3W) Partnership”, June 12, 2021, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2021/06/12/fact-sheet-president-biden-and-g7-leaders-launch-build-back-better-world-b3w-partnership/>.

partnerships; (e) mobilizing private capital through development finance; (f) enhancing the impact of multilateral public finance.²³

The US and EU are trying to provide a liberal-market-version alternative through in-depth coordination, competing with Chinese companies for the market and the Chinese government for “sphere of influence”. In July 2021, the EU released the “Globally Connected Europe” document, in which B3W is mentioned. Although the “Globally Connected Europe” and B3W may differ in key areas of implementation and ways of advancing, there is a high degree of consistency in emphasizing values, the role of democratic states, private investment, and multilateral institutions, which reflects transatlantic coordination on the principles of connectivity.

3 OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES FOR CHINA–EU CONNECTIVITY COOPERATION IN THE CONTEXT OF “PAN-SECURITIZATION”

3.1 *Opportunities*

1. The China–EU connectivity cooperation has a sound foundation and the potential can be further tapped. China and the EU have been a top trading partner in goods for each other for a long time, and economic and trade cooperation has maintained strong resilience, which will continually drive their connectivity cooperation. At present, China–EU connectivity cooperation has yielded fruitful results. For example, central and eastern Europe has become the region with the most achievements of BRI construction in Europe; the rapid development of the China–Europe Railway Express has provided a marked public product for Eurasian continent; the Hungary-Serbia Railway has become an important attempt for China to go global in terms of technology and standards; Port Piraeus at Greece is a success example for Chinese merger, acquisition, and localized management; the success of China’s infrastructure projects in the Western Balkans is a demonstration that China’s equipment manufacturing group has achieved results in terms of going global.

²³ Ibid.

Connectivity embodies huge development opportunities, which will determine the future direction of the global landscape to a certain extent, and is an important driving force for going in-depth and pragmatic of China–EU cooperation. Especially after the end of the COVID-19 pandemic, there is huge potential in “service trade +” in connectivity (such as logistics, cloud, and data). In the broader field of infrastructure construction, due to the huge funding gap, China and the EU, which hold different expertise, can highly complement with one another.

2. Connectivity calls for international cooperation, and it is difficult for the EU to get separated from China completely. It is not easy for the GGI to be completely isolated from the BRI. Although the EU attempts to compete with China’s BRI, cooperating with China is inevitable in specific fields and regions. In July 2021, while attending the “Central and South Asia: Regional Connectivity. Challenges and Opportunities” conference held in Uzbekistan, the EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Josep Borrell mentioned the connectivity platform jointly built with China and reiterated the promotion of synergy between the BRI and the “Pan-European Transport Network” plan. Although the EU has set a large budget for connectivity construction, the funding gap remains remarkable, and private investment must be leveraged. In addition, the EU has stated that it welcomes international financial cooperation, and China and the EU can cooperate in this field and jointly create high-quality connectivity projects. China’s BRI has always adhered to the principle of openness and sharing. In August 2018, President Xi Jinping emphasized at the symposium marking the fifth anniversary of the BRI that, the BRI “does not aim at a geopolitical or military alliance, nor will it establish a small bloc or set up a ‘China club’. It is an open and inclusive process and we expect a world without differentiating countries by ideology and playing the zero-sum game. As long as countries are willing to join, they are welcome”.²⁴ His words point out the distinctive feature of the BRI as an inclusive development platform. From the European point of view, European enterprises are generally optimistic about the force of Asian and European market integration, and their interest

²⁴ Xi Jinping addresses a symposium marking the fifth anniversary of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), August 28, 2018, http://en.chinaapw.com/news_detail.php?id=336.

in the Chinese market is growing. China’s economic infrastructure market is huge and bears remarkable development potential. The EU cannot ignore the Chinese market when promoting its connectivity construction and has an interest in cooperating with China.

3. China is competitive in the overseas infrastructure market. China has rich experience in infrastructure construction and huge application scenarios in the domestic market. In the process of going global, China’s strong competitiveness in the equipment manufacturing industry, the accumulation of rich market application scenarios, and efficient financing solutions ensure China’s connectivity is an important driving force for growth. Chinese people are pragmatic, pay attention to efficiency, solidarity, and cooperation, and have left a good reputation in many countries along the BRI. In promoting Eurasian connectivity, although the EU started early, it encountered significant frustrations. In the early stage of Eurasian connectivity, the EU tends to use connectivity as a tool for promoting democracy, and when implementing infrastructure cooperation in Central Asia and Trans-Caucasus, strict political conditionalities are attached. At the beginning of the twenty-first century, under the instigation of external forces, “color revolutions” occurred in these regions, resulting in political turmoil, unfinished infrastructure, and political projects, and the EU’s infrastructure construction model was questioned. Therefore, in the new round of competition in connectivity, the Chinese model still retains strong competitiveness, and we should be confident in this.
4. The European plan could run into heavy resistance. The political credibility of European countries is not necessarily reliable, which is manifested in three aspects. First, the long colonial history of European countries is a burden for them to carry out investment cooperation with developing countries; Second, developing countries cherish sovereignty and autonomy, stay alert of foreign interference, and attach political conditionality such as “democratic values” to cooperation is not necessarily desirable; Third, European politicians are good at creating ideas, and so far, these initiatives are still in the stage of “empty talk” and have not yet been implemented, thus, their effectiveness remains to be examined. In addition, it remains to be seen whether European politicians can persuade the private sector to join the “adventure”. On the one hand, enterprises

are profit-oriented, and their goal of entering a country is to make profits. If these political plans cannot be turned into effective business models, it will increase the resistance of enterprises to get access to markets. In addition, enterprises often pursue mutual benefit and do not agree with the “black-white” confrontational thinking of European politicians. Therefore, persuading them to join the hostile camp against China is not necessarily in line with their intentions.

3.2 *Challenges*

1. The concepts of the two sides are quite different and it is difficult to be compatible with each other. The BRI has distinct Chinese characteristics, embodying the strong heritage of Chinese culture such as “great harmony in the world” (天下大同), “cherishing men from afar” (怀柔远人), and “harmony in diversity” (和而不同). This makes the BRI an international public good rooted in Chinese soil. The GGI embodies the colonial mindset of Eurocentrism. Europe used to be an important birthplace of thoughts, institutions, and technologies in world history and made important contributions to the development of human civilization, but it also led to European megalomania over its development path. Guided by European values, the GGI focuses on exporting European ideas, institutions, and standards, reflecting the self-centered behavior of Europe.

In the context of “Great Changes Unseen in a Century”, the BRI reflects China’s efforts to further promote global development cooperation. It is essentially a de-geopoliticized concept, emphasizing cooperation rather than confrontation, win-win rather than zero-sum game, connection rather than decoupling, globalization rather than deglobalization. The ultimate goal of the BRI is to contribute Chinese wisdom to the peaceful development of all mankind, build an open world economy, promote global governance, and build “A Community with A Shared Future for Mankind”. The EU is very concerned with the changes in the global geopolitical landscape and the competition between major powers in recent years. It believes that the world has entered a “new era of hyper-competitiveness”, and the competition for influence among major powers has heated up. Europe must participate in the competition, rather than becoming a playground for major powers.

To this end, European leaders have resumed traditional geopolitical thinking and put forward the GGI, which is an important part of the EU’s participation in global geopolitical competition. In the EU’s multiannual financial framework from 2021 to 2027, the infrastructure investment is raised to fill the funding gap, which makes European countries less interested in infrastructure investments from China. In the context that the EU views China’s economic development model and political system as serious challenges, China’s proposed connectivity solutions are increasingly seen as tools to serve the country’s “competing value systems”. Therefore, the investment in connectivity has become not only economic, but also strategic.²⁵

2. “Pan-securitization” has poisoned the atmosphere of China–EU cooperation. The tendency of “pan-securitization” makes policymakers and executors bear a strong and sensitive sense of absolute security. In non-traditional security fields, such as economic, ecological, information, technological, resource, public, and network security, traditional security thinking has been rising.²⁶ This phenomenon is also witnessed in connectivity. The EU believes that China poses a serious challenge to the rules-based multilateral international order, and has increasingly emphasized so-called “security issues” in cooperation with China. Security screening of Chinese investments has been tightened by the EU in transport and digital projects, while some Member States even excluded Chinese enterprises from digital cooperation. Although there are many common interests between China and the EU, and the industries of the two sides will not be decoupled, their cooperation in connectivity is heavily influenced by security concerns. In the context of COVID-19, China–EU connectivity cooperation is conducive to global economic recovery, but Europe is paying more attention to protecting the security of supply chains and value chains, trying to reduce its dependence on China’s industrial chain, and its willingness to cooperate with China in connectivity is decreasing.

²⁵ Ian Anthony, Jiayi Zhou, Jingdong Yuan, Fei Su and Jinyung Kim, “China–EU Connectivity in an Era of Geopolitical Competition”, SIPRI Policy Paper 59, March 2021.

²⁶ Guo Rui and Chen Xin, “Pan-Securitization and Risks of East Asian Armament Security,” *Journal of International Security Studies*, Iss. 5, 2018, pp. 39–53.

Meanwhile, the security and technical standards, legislations, and other aspects of digital connectivity in China and the EU are quite different, or contradictory. This makes the prospects of China–EU digital connectivity cooperation even more uncertain. Moreover, the EU and the US may cooperate on digital governance and formulate a coordinated approach to China.²⁷ All these are not conducive to China–EU connectivity cooperation.

3. The existing cooperation on connectivity between China and the EU has been seriously affected by the pandemic, and the prospects for cooperation in the post-epidemic era are unclear. The COVID-19 interrupted the China–EU connectivity cooperation dramatically. Due to the pandemic, the mutual understanding between China and the EU has deteriorated significantly, and the EU’s decision-makers are becoming more unfriendly to China. This negative perception has affected the EU’s economic cooperation with China. The layout of the European industrial chain has switched from “efficiency first” to “equal emphasis on efficiency and security”, and even “security first”. Even German companies, which traditionally share close ties with China, are diversifying faster in high-tech sector, raising trade and investment barriers to China. The Federation of German Industries’ attitude toward China evolved from being pragmatic to radical, actively pushing the EU institutions to identify China as a “systemic rival”. In September 2021, President of the Federation of German Industries Siegfried Russwurm emphasized that China poses a threat to European companies and must draw a “red line” for such issues as human rights, and set more stringent conditions for Chinese investors getting into the German market.²⁸ The European Union Chamber of Commerce in China published several reports to analyze the changes in China’s business environment. While the institute points out that there is still a lot of room for pragmatic cooperation between China and the EU, it finds

²⁷ Ian Anthony, Jiayi Zhou, Jingdong Yuan, Fei Su and Jinyung Kim, “China–EU Connectivity in an Era of Geopolitical Competition”, SIPRI Policy Paper 59, March 2021.

²⁸ German Economic Community Requires “Red Line” towards China, Deutsche Welle, September 4, 2021, <https://p.dw.com/p/3zuh6>.

that Chinese enterprises face greater operational resistance and pressure in Europe, and the risks of decoupling and industrial chain restructuring are growing.

4. China–EU connectivity cooperation is heavily influenced by the US. The US is an important external factor affecting China–EU relations. After Trump came to power, the intensity of China-US competition increased, and Europe has become an important stage for their competition. The US takes the central and eastern European countries as breakthrough and suppresses China in the fields of economy, trade, science and technology, and people-to-people exchanges. The American high-level leaders repeatedly coerced European countries to pick sides on the grounds of information security, and have proposed “Clean Network” and BDN to push China out of the European region. After Biden took office, the US has stepped up efforts to win over European countries, especially central and eastern European countries, promoted the construction of a so-called democratic united front against China, stigmatized the achievements of the BRI, and hindered Chinese companies from investing in European markets. This makes the resistance that BRI construction faces grow tremendously. While both Europe and the US emphasize the ideological foundation of connectivity, the challenges faced by China–EU cooperation have increased.

4 CONCLUSION

Now, the EU’s investment in connectivity has entered a new stage, and China’s BRI, after 10 years of construction, is turning to high-quality development. The global connectivity market is vast and can fully accommodate the two major economies, while China and the EU can also leverage their comparative advantages to contribute to the economic and social development of developing countries. In the process of cooperation, China and the EU can start from less controversial areas such as green finance, energy, and climate change, make good use of the existing connectivity cooperation platform, and carry out more “small but refined” projects, so to consolidate the foundation of bilateral pragmatic cooperation more firmly.

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Educational Belt and Cultural Road: Back to the Future of Great Civilizations

Evripidis St. Stylianidis

1 INTRODUCTION

A Chinese proverb says, “the shortest path is the path you know” and a Greek one says, “the straightway is the shortest ways of all.”

It is inconceivable how far and at the same time how close to each other these two countries, China and Greece, are. The depth of their cultural roots and the duration of their historical journey throughout

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the centuries justify the mutual respect, spiritual communication, cultural understanding, and their multilevel cooperation.

I will attempt to analyze this relationship between our countries and I would like to thank the publishers and editors of this Volume.

2 A WORLD MADE OF GLASS

The Covid-19 pandemic has shown how fragile our world is.

It reminded us of the true meaning of international cooperation, the value of communication, the power of humanism, and the weight of mutual respect and solidarity. It also reminded us that just one person is enough to destroy everything, while we do not know if we all together can save even that person.

Closed borders, collapse of tourism, and mandatory self-restraint at home (in our village, in our country) presented the characteristics of an unprecedented financial situation, a new society, and a new and unknown way of life where man must adapt in order to survive. Primordial values and traditional ways, which were the pillars of old historical civilizations, such as the Chinese and the Hellenic civilizations, had to be thought of again. These very values and ways are looking for their expressions through modern politics.

It became clear that everyday problems which have meanwhile arisen on a global scale need international cooperation in order to be tackled properly, since they cannot be solved by individuals.

Recent developments justify the strategy of *Belt and Road Initiative* because it prioritizes the connection, interface and cooperation of different countries, markets, communities, and civilizations.

Interconnected means of transportation, power supply chain, national nutritional self-sufficiency, energy security, teleworking, telemedicine, tele-education, artificial intelligence, applied robotics, e-Government, safe

of Denmark and of Belgium as well as the Presidents of Germany, Austria, and Hungary for his contribution in favor of the development of bilateral relations. Moreover, he worked as a Researcher at the European Public Law Organization in Greece (EPLO, 1996–2001) as well as an Attorney at law. Dr. E. Stylianidis' Publications include a series of scientific articles and contributions in Greece and abroad. He has written 8 books and monographies in Greek, German and English.

and fast transportations and communications, e-commerce, and digital information are only a few technological tools of an unpredictable world, which is coming up and which we have to be prepared for—“being a world made of glass where we all live in, that’s why we must not throw stones to each other.”¹

The global health crisis has shown that our countries and our civilizations constitute complementary and not opposing forces which, under conditions of cooperation, can attain development in harmony, peace, and safety of our planet, as well as prosperity and freedom of mankind.

“*The Belt and Road Initiative*” has early enough underlined the need of interconnection between East and West, Asia and Europe, China, Hellas, and Cyprus. The first positive impact on economy has already stood out of the important investment of COSCO in the harbor of Piraeus, the Greek ship owners’ orders from the Chinese shipyards as well as the rapid commercial and touristic development among the three countries mentioned above.

The size of the two countries may look asymmetric, however, the success and the perspective of their cooperation lies in the strength, endurance, and depth of the civilization they represent. China is the only nation on the planet who named Greece after its real name (“Xilà” which means “Hellas”) and this is an indication of great respect and appreciation—feelings which the Greek people reciprocated as it was quite evident when the Olympic Games Flame was handed out to Beijing in 2008 by Athens 2004.

With respect to the Greek-Chinese relations, the added value of the “*Belt and Road Initiative*,” is not limited to the field of economic cooperation; it also focuses on the field of Education and Culture where both countries can contribute a lot, both to each other and also to mankind.

Spiritually, scientifically, and technologically, but mainly in the scale of values, the Greek-Chinese cooperation can undoubtedly provide answers to current and future dilemmas.

Our two great civilizations do possess the timeless depth and dynamism to want and be able to solve new problems and offer perspective and hope to new generations.

¹ Evripidis St. Stylianidis, The painful adjustment in our lives. Time for national self-sufficiency (journal ESTIA, 8 April 2020) (In Greek: Ευριπίδης Στ. Στυλιανίδης, «Η επώδυνη προσαρμογή στη ζωή μας. Ωρα για εθνική αυτάρκεια». Άρθρο στην εφημερίδα ΕΣΤΙΑ, 8 Απριλίου 2020).

What remains to be done is to draft and schedule the appropriate policy to be implemented in the academic, political, cultural, and financial fields.

3 ECONOMIC COOPERATION “BORDERS CROSSED BY GOODS ARE NOT CROSSED BY ARMIES ...”

Since the antiquity and the Byzantine period, the “Silk Road” has always connected the southeastern part of Europe where Greece is located with the heart of the Chinese territory. The presence of Alexander the Great (356–323 BC) in western China can historically explain the respect the Chinese show toward Greece’s civilization. As already mentioned, the Chinese are the only people in the world who have given Greece its true name “Xīlǎ.” Xīlǎ conveys the word “Hellas” into Chinese, as Hellas is the name the Hellenes themselves are using for our country. Greece is a name that is being used by the West for purely accidental and diplomatic reasons. The Chinese also call us “Da Yuen,” which means “Great Ionians.” This refers to the Hellenic Kingdom of Bactria 250–125 B.C., which for over two centuries developed trade and had commercial relations with China and India.

According to tradition, in 554 A.D. Orthodox monks were carrying, hidden in their hollow sticks, silkworms to “Vassilevousa” (Constantinople), then the capital of the Eastern Roman Empire (Byzantine) under the Emperor Justinian. Since then and up until today the production of silk has begun and thrived in the region of Thrace in the North Eastern part of Hellas.²

Although nowadays Greece and China are different in the size of their population, religion, political systems, and language, the mutual respect they have developed due to their distinct civilizations brought them politically close several times in the recent times.

The most dynamic modern opening between our two countries took place in 2006 and it was accomplished by the Greek Government of Costas Karamanlis. Personally, I was fortunate to coordinate this opening, both in my capacity as Deputy Foreign Minister at the time and later as Minister of Education of my country.³ Since then, intergovernmental and

² Evripidis St. Stylianidis, “Thrace: The Greek Model of an Open Democratic Society” ed. Minoas, Athens 2018.

³ gr.china-embassy.org: Joint Statement of the overall Strategic Partnership between the People’s Republic of China and the Hellenic Republic, Beijing, 19 January 2006,

transnational contacts between our two countries have continued at a very high level, while the respective business missions have brought a dramatic improvement in bilateral economic relations. In 2019 our bilateral trade volume had more than doubled, reaching €5 billion.

Oil, marbles, minerals, cotton, medicines, machinery, shipping equipment, and a wide variety of quality food products are just a few of the items that Greece exports to the Chinese market. This trade keeps expanding. At the same time, Greece in the first quarter of 2020 was the second country, after Lithuania, which experienced the largest percentage increase in exports (33%) to the Chinese market. This success can be attributed to the exchange of official visits in Shanghai and Athens between the Greek Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis and the Chinese President Xi Jinping respectively, and importantly during the global pandemic. The two leaders' respective official visits to each other's country also highlight the spirit of solidarity and the mutual respect between our two peoples and Governments.

The emblematic Chinese investment by COSCO in the port of Piraeus that started during my time as Government Minister in 2006 also highlights the unique role of the small but strategically important Greek market for the Chinese products wishing to enter into the large and competitive European markets. Piraeus Port's location which is the first large European port that a large containership with Chinese products calls when entering the Mediterranean Sea from the Suez Canal makes this investment strategic.

In my capacity as Minister responsible for promoting the bilateral economic relations between our two countries, I had the opportunity to meet several times with the CEO of COSCO at the time, as well as with Ministers of the Chinese Government to discuss this investment. Based on the mutual trust developed between us and the obvious complementarity of both countries' interests, we laid the ground for this great investment agreement later signed between the Greek Prime Minister Costas Karamanlis and the former Chinese President Hu Jintao.

Let me bring some examples that bear testament to the fact how our two countries complement each other:

last retrieved on 01.21.2021 (in Greek: gr.china-embassy.org: «Κοινή δήλωση συνολικής Στρατηγικής Εταιρικής Σχέσης μεταξύ Λαϊκής Δημοκρατίας της Κίνας και της Ελληνικής Δημοκρατίας», Πεκίνο 19 Ιανουαρίου 2006, τελευταία ανάκτηση 21.01.2021).

China is producing goods that the Greek merchant fleet carries to the rest of the world. China is looking for a way to the European markets and Greece is helping China in offering its ports as gateway to Europe for the Chinese goods.

In its shipyards, China is building commercial ships which Greek shipowners are using to expand their fleet. The Greek commercial fleet is already the strongest in the world. China, although in comparison to Greece is a hugely larger country with a population of 1.4 billion, with a GDP of \$10.3 trillion (No. 2 economy in the world), No. 1 in the world in terms of exports and foreign exchange reserves (\$3.1 trillion in 2017), it sees the usefulness of Greece, which with its international prestige and global network can become China's business partner, supporter, and effectively play the complementary role of a bridge and gateway to and from the EU and the world.

After all, it is a strategic choice of Greece to maintain a strong relationship with the West, but also to extend a stable and reliable hand of cooperation and friendship to the East.

Let me also underline here that the Greek-owned or Greek-flagged merchant fleet carries today a higher percentage of energy entering the Chinese market by sea (oil, LNG, LPG, etc.). Greek ship owners have built and continue building more than 1,000 ships worth \$ 50 billion in Chinese shipyards. Additionally, only in 2015 COSCO has chartered 113 vessels belonging to Greek interests, having paid 1 billion euros in freight.

China's appreciation of the Greeks and the recognition of Greece and Cyprus as a complementary and friendly market of particular importance was expressed in practice by Chinese President Xi Jinping, whose visit to Athens (11/11/2019) was crowned by the signing of 16 Bilateral Agreements in the fields of Justice, Investment, Shipping, Agricultural Products, Banking and Financial Cooperation, and Education and Sports.⁴

In 2017 alone, COSCO's investment as well as other direct Chinese investments in the sectors of transport, energy, and telecommunications exceeded \$1.3 billion, while another €800 million are planned for the construction of the 4th pier in the port of Piraeus and the car terminal.

⁴ Hellenic Republic—Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Section B5—International Economic Relation: China's international economic position and Greece-China bilateral economic-trade relations.

As President Xi Jinping eloquently put it: “Piraeus is the head of the Dragon.” This portrays Greece as the key partner of the Chinese *Belt and Road Initiative*, to be followed by its membership in the China-CEEC COOPERATION Initiative (17 + 1).

This development confirms the ancient Greek saying that “Borders crossed by goods are not crossed by armies.”⁵

4 EDUCATION AS THE BELT OF SECURITY IN THE RAIN OF A DANGEROUS GLOBALIZATION AND CLONING OF THE CULTURES (MCDONALDIZATION)

“Where is the Life we have lost in living?

Where is the wisdom we have lost in knowledge? Where is the knowledge we have lost in information?”

Eliot’s lines from the First Chorus of the Ten Choruses from “The Rock” are nearly prophetic, if we consider that they were written in the first third of the twentieth century, between the 1st and the 2nd World War, and that they are tragic rumination on how Education is imperiled by the unrestrained accumulation of more information that is not susceptible of being transformed into Knowledge and thence to Wisdom, which constitutes the ultimate end of the Spirit and the Intellect.

Nowadays, Globalization has come to be the other end of closed systems and of the divided world—a result of the Cold War of the last century. It may have created a rapid development in the sciences, in technology, in economics, and in society, but it has also internationalized problems.⁶

It encouraged the cloning of civilizations. It struck the wealth of cultural diversity. It sought the leveling homogenization of value models, destroying gradually the supreme values, the quality, and the diversity of national cultures. This sweeping current of “McDonaldization” threatens the timeless values that gave birth to great civilizations, such as the Chinese and the Hellenic ones.

⁵ www.mfa.gr, «Greece and China», last retrieved on 01.20.2021 (in Greek: www.mfa.gr, «Η Ελλάδα και η Κίνα», τελευταία ανάκτηση 20.01.2021).

⁶ Petros Papakonstantinou, *Human Beings and Robots, the challenges of artificial intelligence*, ed. Livani, Athens 2020 (in Greek: Πέτρος Παπακωνσταντίνου, *Άνθρωποι και Ρομπότ, οι προκλήσεις της τεχνητής νοημοσύνης*), Εκδόσεις Λιβάνη, Αθήνα 2020).

Values such as Harmony, Democracy, Reconciliation, Mutual Respect, International Cooperation, and Culture are all foundations of World Peace.⁷

We claim that Humanity is progressing because technology is evolving, which is a positive issue.

But man has two legs.

If one leg is that of Technology, then that leg has become hypertrophic. If the second is that of Humanities and Philosophy, then it has remained atrophic.

Thus, we are facing the risk of losing balance, of endangering the Harmony that has always been a central element of both the Chinese and the Greek philosophy. And as the former President of the Hellenic Republic, Professor Prokopios Pavlopoulos, pointed out:

Our fundamental conclusion is that Technology is one of the noblest attainments of the Intellect. The evolution of the human intellect is powered by the incessant and unimpeded transformation of information into knowledge and of knowledge into Science, that is to say Wisdom. The fact that comparing human life in modernity to past life forms is impossible, since the discrepancy in scientific standards is unbridgeable, stands as an irrefutable witness to the character of technological progress and the improvement of human life. The improvement affects every part of our lives, including life expectancy, living conditions as well as the way we develop our personalities by taking part in economic and political life but also in scientific creativity. Our potential in every discipline becomes increasingly more productive, the highest expression of this quality productivity being the National Sciences, even though the Humanities do not lag far behind. The fact that recent technological progress is slower than expected should not be attributed to the means with which technological progress equips us but rather to our own priorities, which our own attitudes and decisions determine.⁸

⁷ The Economist, *The World in 2050. Great Changes. Great Challenges*, ed. Minoas, Athens 2012 (in Greek: *The Economist, Ο Κόσμος το 2050. Μεγάλες αλλαγές. Μεγάλες προκλήσεις*, εκδ. ΜΙΝΩΑΣ, Αθήνα 2012).

⁸ Prokopios Pavlopoulos, *From the Industrial Revolution to the Technological one—to the constellation of an uncertain future*, ed. Gutenberg, Athens 2019 (in Greek: *Προκόπιος Παυλόπουλος Πρόεδρος Ελληνικής Δημοκρατίας, «Από τη Βιομηχανική Επανάσταση στην Τεχνολογική-στον αστερισμό ενός αβέβαιου μέλλοντος»*, Εκδόσεις Gutenberg, Αθήνα 2019).

Deng Xiaoping, the 88-year-old former President of China, answered aptly this question from a very early stage (1992). The leader of a country that today is running the research and dynamically promotes new technologies, artificial intelligence, robotics, communications, modern science, and the extroversion of the real economy at unprecedented speeds, without forgetting the deep historical roots of Culture and the importance of Education as a Safety Zone from value derailments that can hurt not only the Homeland but the Universe as a whole:

From my long political and military experience I have learned that unity is of prime importance and that to achieve unity people must have common ideals and firm convictions. Over the past several decades we have united the people on the basis of firm convictions that enabled them to struggle for their own interests.

The initiative and work of the famous Chinese Hellenist Luo Nian Sheng (1904–1990), who after his Greek studies dedicated his life to translate classical Greek works and studies of over 10 million words into Chinese, showed the path that the two peoples must follow to bring the two civilizations closer. This direction was further reinforced by the work of Professor Chen Minhua, who translated into Chinese 20 books dwelling on Ancient Greece.

The two countries should also overcome the linguistic obstacle that divides them and be refamiliarized with one another. Every effort of mutual study of the two languages and their respective studies should be made.

The establishment of a Center for Greek Studies at Beijing University, a Chair of Greek Language at the University of Shanghai, the teaching of the Chinese language at the Greek Universities, the establishment of the Confucius Cultural Center in Greece and Cyprus, and the student exchange programs between China, Greece, and Cyprus are bases of bidirectional and systematic communication that leads with certainty to a Strategic Partnership between the two countries in many fields, namely in science, research, philosophy, politics, economics, etc. The deep historical root, the mutual respect, and the complementarity of the different mentality and thinking between the two civilizations give birth to a set of modern Educational Values that can contribute to global Cooperation, Peace, and Balance, that is, to World Harmony.

Who else can offer such a service more fully to Humanity and the newly formed States that are only 2–3 centuries old, if not Cultures like the Chinese and the Greek that have endured for thousands of years and continue up until today to play a leading role? It is probably the most appropriate moment for an Educational Cooperation between our Universities, as this will be a smart and rewarding investment from which the new generation of Greeks and Chinese will benefit.⁹

5 THE “ROAD” INITIATIVE AS A COMMON PERSPECTIVE FOR THE FUTURE OF GREAT CIVILIZATIONS

The difference between the Western and the Chinese culture has not produced, as one would expect, an interesting intellectual game of getting to know one another and benefit from each other’s inherent wisdom, but, as portrayed by some analysts, as Samuel Huntington, has become a source of possible clash, as inspiration for his essay the “The Clash of Civilizations.”

Graham Allison, Professor of Governance at Douglas Dillon Chair at Harvard University’s Kennedy School of Government, predicted the difficult relationship between the United States and China by developing the “Thucydides trap” theory.¹⁰

According to the ancient Greek historian Thucydides, “the rise of Athens and the fear it instilled in ruling Sparta made war inevitable.” Historically, rising forces that come into the fore feel a growing sense of entitlement, thus gaining more influence and respect. On the other hand, established forces tend to treat those rising forces as challengers and become more defensive and insecure. Communication between them is difficult and in such an environment misunderstandings are enlarged. Thus, with the involvement of third parties, trivial and manageable things can cause wars, even though the protagonists never wanted to fight against each other.¹¹

⁹ Wu Bangguo, Chairman of the Standing Committee of the People’s National Assembly of P.R. of China, “Speech at the FORUM of trade and economic cooperation between China and Greece”, Athens 23 May 2006.

¹⁰ Graham Allison, “Destined for war: Can America and China Escape Thucydides’ Trap?”, Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2017.

¹¹ Graham Allison, China vs USA. The next clash of civilizations, in: Foreign Affairs, The Hellenic Edition 49, December 2017 – January 2018, p. 92.

The Greeks have the knowledge and the historical depth to interpret and combine Western individualism that protects rights and promotes individual freedom, with the Chinese sense of order and harmony which stems from respect for the hierarchy and from a deep sense of discipline. In the words of Confucius, “knowing your place,” something that Plato also described in the “Ideal State.”

Greece can understand the self-confidence of the United States, which as a global political, military, and economic superpower for the last 245 years feels committed to the missionary protection of the Republic, as the only just form of governance, and the rules of international law. But Greece can also realize the self-assurance of China that it has almost reached the second position of the world order with 5000 years of history. China presents a different sense of time; it devises a strategy with patience and depth, not for years to come, but for generations to come.

Greece is in a unique position among countries of the Western world to combine the wisdom of an old great civilization such as the Chinese, with the reflexes of the new Western democracies. Greece stands in the middle of the “Silk Road” that connects East and West and knows the versatility of the mind of the eternal Ulysses, as Homer pointed out, the objectivity and the deeply realistic analysis of Thucydides, the strategic mind and the efficiency of the invincible Alexander the Great, the far-reaching visibility of the emblematic two-headed Eagle, which during the times of the Byzantine Empire was used to symbolize the Byzantium’s foreign policy, with one head facing East and the other facing West. Finally, Greece is in such a position to see both sides of the coin, as she is the heir of the phenomenally multifaceted diplomacy promoted by the founder of the modern Greek State, Ioannis Kapodistrias, who had also served as Minister for Foreign Affairs of Russia before coming to Greece. Kapodistrias, before becoming the first Governor of Greece, had greatly contributed to the cessation of wars in the heart of Europe and to the establishment of the first and most solid Federation of the world, Switzerland.

It is precisely because of the aforementioned historical and cultural reasons that Hellenism can be of immense usefulness in assisting both the West and the East to bypass the modern “Thucydides trap” and help East and West to meet again, not only to recreate a shaking balance of power, but mainly to bring closer the Governments of the two sides and to render them reminiscent of history, culture, and the modern political perception and mentality that China professes.

The Belt and Road Initiative is far from a mono-dimensional approach. It concerns the Governments, i.e. politics; the Markets, i.e. trade and economy; the Peoples, i.e. society; and the Nations, i.e. cultures.

Based on this perception, Xi Jinping, the Leader of China and initiator of the “Belt and Road Initiative” states that:

The initiative has evoked the historical memory of participating countries. The ancient Silk Road was more a route of trade. In the course of friendly exchanges between the Chinese and other peoples along the route, a Silk Road spirit featuring peace, cooperation, openness, inclusiveness, mutual learning and mutual benefit has taken shape. We should inherit and carry forward the Silk Road spirit, combining China’s development with that of other countries involved in the Initiative and the Chinese Dream with dreams of other peoples, and imbue it with new life.¹²

6 THE IMPORTANCE OF THE LEGAL CULTURE FOR THE EXPANSION OF THE BELT AND ROAD INITIATIVE¹³

It is of pivotal importance for the Greek-Chinese cooperation to realize that the development capital today includes mainly intellectual property rights, rather than the previously preferred vesting security interests on real estate.¹⁴ This is because in times of globalized economy¹⁵ the market

¹² Xi Jinping, President of the People’s Republic of China, «The Governance of China II», FOREIGN LANGUAGES PRESS Beijing, China 2017.

¹³ Evripidis St. Stylianidis, *Constitutional Revision 2019, a missed opportunity or a new Beginning?* Ed. European University Cyprus-Nomiki Bibliothiki Athens 2020 (in Greek: Ευριπίδης Στ. Στυλιανίδης, «Συνταγματική Αναθεώρηση 2019, Χαμένη ευκαιρία ή νέο Ξεκίνημα;», Εκδ. Ευρωπαϊκό Πανεπιστήμιο Κύπρου-Νομική Βιβλιοθήκη 2020).

¹⁴ A. J. Wurzer/C. B. Frey, *Growth and Wealth Creation in a Knowledge Economy: The Role of IP-Managers*, in Wurzer/Dreyer, *IP-Manager*, Carl Heymanns Verlag, 2009, p. 359 ff.; W. Bird, *IP valuation*, in A. Jolly, *The Handbook of European Intellectual Property Management*, 3rd ed. KoganPage, 2012, pp. 222–226.

¹⁵ With respect to knowledge as the object of globalized commercialization see N. Lyberis, *EU Law and Globalization: Overlapping between Industrial Property Law and Banking Law*, in *Cypriot Nomiko Vima*, issue 1/2019, p. 72 ff., esp. p. 83 ff. (in Greek: Νικόλαος Λυβέρης, «Ενωσιακό δίκαιο και παγκοσμιοποίηση: επαλληλία μεταξύ δικαίου βιομηχανικής ιδιοκτησίας και τραπεζικού δικαίου», σε *Κυπριακό Νομικό Βήμα* τ. 1/2019, σ. 72 επ. ιδίως 83 επ.

rewards, but also government policies stimulate innovation, which may indicatively refer wholly or partly to the manufacturing process, raw materials, intermediate industrial products, final product, production process, outer configuration, shape and pattern of the product, trade secrets, and other distinctive features and technical creations.

Greek industrial property law sufficiently harmonized with European and international bilateral and multilateral trade cooperation agreements, regulates the Greek market in a development-promoting manner, a local market which serves as the gateway to the EU. Greek IP law provides effective legal instruments for the grant and the protection of a wide range of rights on intangible assets. Such rights are among other things, patents, industrial designs, trademarks, supplementary protection certificates for medicinal products and plant protection agents, plant varieties, trade secrets, copyright, and more rights.¹⁶

The incentives to foster investment capital and to establish and set up production units in the primary and secondary sectors, as well as in the services sector, have recently been upgraded and have become particularly attractive. These include measures, such as strong tax incentives with conditional tax exemptions, short litigation proceedings related to strategic investments, a sound legal framework, and effective procedures protecting intangible property rights against imitation and counterfeiting, not only domestically and in the rest of the EU but also on the external borders of the EU, to which Greece and Cyprus belong.¹⁷

¹⁶ With respect to patents as a mechanism for the mobilization and amortization of investments *M.-Th. Marinos*, Patent Law, Sakkoulas 2013, p. 10; *N. Lyberis*, Patents (p. 377 ff), Supplementary Protection Certificates (SPCs) and Pediatric Extension thereof (p. 390 f.), Designs (p. 398), in: Greek Law Digest – The Official Guide to Greek Law, 3rd ed. 2019 (www.greeklawdigest.gr); see also the recent study of the EU Intellectual Property Office entitled: IP rights intensive industries and the economic performance in the EU (<https://euipo.europa.eu/ohimportal/en/web/observatory/ip-contribution>).

¹⁷ Relevant topics were discussed on 23.9.2019 in Athens between the Hellenic Patent Office Management and high-ranking officials of the Chinese Intellectual Property Agency (CNIPA) headed by His Excellence the Deputy Commissioner of CNIPA Mr. Gan accompanied by the Director General and other Directors of said Agency. Subsequently a meeting for exchange of legal attitudes on key aspects of Intellectual Property matters took place between said official Chinese Delegation, the Head of the Department of International Legal Affairs of the Greek Patent Office and the independent intellectual property Law Firm Vayanos Kostopoulos, represented by Dr N. Lyberis, Managing Partner and Adj. Assistant Professor at the European University Cyprus.

Particularly noteworthy are recent improvement interventions in two critical areas of government's policy for the development of economy, namely the upgrading of the role of the Anti-Trust Commission and the Energy Regulatory Authority, two independent administrative bodies, the latter of which monitors and grants an ever-growing number of authorizations for the operation of business units for the production, transmission, and management of various forms of energy, while the former ensures the observance of the rules of free competition and the order in all sectors critical to the market economy.

Greek-Chinese cooperation in the above areas has much to gain due to common features of strategic importance in the field of economic development and cooperation. These common characteristics include, but are not limited to, cultural values and traditions, the internationally recognized inventiveness of individuals and business entities in high-end technology (IT, AI, IoT, etc.), the highly internationalized extroversion of these entities, the mutual exploitation of raw materials and investment projects, maritime trade with strong shipping, as well as unique geophysical and geopolitical data, such as ports and diverse geographical formations that ensure rapid and economically attractive access to EU and Balkan markets.

7 EPILOGUE: A STRATEGY FOR THE BENEFIT OF THE PEOPLE

The Belt and Road Initiative Strategy is of course based on the transnational cooperation sought by Governments by means of political diplomacy, trade, and economic cooperation developed through market economic diplomacy. The main goal and driving force of this strategy, however, is the development of human relations.

This mutual acquaintance and mutual respect between the two peoples, the Chinese and the Greek, is developed mainly through Tourism and is strengthened through Educational and Cultural Cooperation.

For this reason, in 2017 and 2020, respectively, the direct flight connections of Air China connecting Beijing to Athens and Air Shanghai, connecting Juneyao to Athens, were launched. At the same time, a Greek-Chinese Bilateral Aviation Agreement was drafted on 16/1/2020, the signing of which is imminent, and which modernizes the framework of cooperation for the first time since 1973.

In 2019, more than 200,000 Chinese tourists visited Greece, showing an annual increase of more than 30% since 2017. However, they constitute only 0.64% of all incoming tourists in Greece because the Pandemic cut off that rising momentum. However, the facilitation of VISAS to Greece and Cyprus will surely create a new dynamic once the situation normalizes.

The direct contact and communication between the two Peoples is further deepened by the forthcoming educational cooperation between Universities, because this is the most serious investment that the two great cultures can make in the future. The next generation of Greeks and Chinese will form the Zones of Bilateral Cooperation and will walk the common Road of Education and Culture.

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The Belt and Road Initiative and the Future of Global Governance

Xiujun Xu

In Autumn 2013, President Xi Jinping proposed the Initiative of jointly building the Silk Road Economic Belt and the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road (the Belt and Road Initiative, the BRI) when he visited Kazakhstan and Indonesia respectively. With the development of the BRI, China's leadership in global governance has entered a new historical stage. In May 2017, President Xi Jinping pointed out in his keynote speech at the opening ceremony of the BRI Forum for International Cooperation

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that “Deficit in peace, development and governance poses a daunting challenge to mankind”.¹ The joint work on the BRI construction is a Chinese solution to the three kinds of deficit. Over the past 10 years and more, the five kinds of connectivity, namely, “policy connectivity, facilities connectivity, trade connectivity, financial connectivity and people-to-people connectivity”, have deepened. We have gradually embarked on a path of transformation toward high-quality development. China adheres to the principle of “wide consultation, joint contribution and shared benefits”. It upholds both the law of market economy and international prevailing rules. A number of new progress and achievements have been made in promoting the BRI construction with high quality and high standards. The reason why more and more participants have responded to the Initiative is that it conforms to the new situation of globalization, and provides a new platform for addressing the challenges of globalization and global issues through connectivity and common development.

1 BACKGROUND OF THE BRI

The BRI was proposed under a profound international and domestic background, and is deeply in line with the development trend of the times. From the international perspective, economic globalization is facing serious challenges and the global governance system is undergoing profound adjustments; from the domestic perspective, China’s reform and opening up has entered a new historical stage and has taken on a new historical mission.

1.1 Profound Adjustment of the Global Governance System

Regarding the process of economic globalization, Chinese President Xi Jinping has divided it into the following three historical stages along the line of development of the world market: First, the stage of colonial expansion and the formation of the world market. By means of trickery, occupation by power, and colonial expansion, Western countries basically completed the division of the world by the First World

¹ Xi Jinping, Work Together to Build the Silk Road Economic Belt and the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road—Keynote Speech at the Opening Ceremony of the Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation, (http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2017-05/14/c_136281563.htm).

War, and all peoples in all regions of the world were drawn into the capitalist world system. Second, the stage of two parallel world markets. After the end of the Second World War, a number of socialist countries were born, and colonial and semi-colonial countries became independent, and two camps of socialism and capitalism were formed in the world, while two parallel markets were formed in the economy. Third, the stage of economic globalization. With the end of the Cold War, the two camps no longer existed, the two parallel markets ceased to exist, the interdependence of all countries was greatly strengthened, and economic globalization developed and evolved rapidly. After the outbreak of the international financial crisis in 2008, the stage of economic globalization we are in has taken on new historical characteristics. After the international financial crisis, international trade has plummeted, international investment activities have shrunk, various forms of protectionism have emerged, and many externally oriented economies have been hit hard. For this reason, some economists have doubts about the development trend of globalization and believe that the world is developing in the direction of de-globalization.

Against this backdrop, some countries have been pursuing protectionist and unilateralist policies for the sake of their own interests, and this has triggered a chain of negative reactions. Due to the emergence of economic and social problems, governments are hoping to maintain a stable economic and social order through policy adjustments. This is supposed to be a positive action to deal with the problems and challenges, but some countries only care about their own interests in the process of policy adjustment, which has given rise to various forms of protectionism. In particular, the spillover effects of the policies of major global economies are strong. Policy adjustments in one country often lead to corresponding countermeasures in other countries, which in turn make the country have to implement further policy adjustments. In this vicious circle, countries are forced to increase the strength and frequency of policy adjustments. The chain reaction triggered by policy adjustments not only undermines the continuity and predictability of national policies, but also erodes the foundations of international cooperation and economic globalization, and the global multilateral economic and trade mechanism is thus subject to great challenges.

The profound transformation of the economic globalization process has brought about a profound transformation of the global economic governance system, and has put forward higher requirements for the

global economic governance system. Facing the development and evolution of the world economic situation, global economic governance needs to keep pace with the times and change with the times. “Adhering to multilateralism, seeking to build and share together, establishing close partnership and building a community of human destiny is the inevitable trend of global economic governance under the new situation”.² At this new stage of history, “global economic governance should be based on equality, better reflect the new realities of the world economic landscape, increase the representation and voice of emerging market countries and developing countries, and ensure equal rights, opportunities and rules for all countries in international economic cooperation. Global economic governance should be open-oriented, adhere to open concepts, policies and mechanisms, adapt to changes in the situation, accept good advice, fully listen to the suggestions and demands of all sectors of society, encourage the active participation and integration of all parties, refrain from exclusive arrangements, and prevent the closure of governance mechanisms and fragmentation of rules. Global economic governance should be driven by cooperation. Global challenges require global responses, and cooperation is an assured choice. Countries should strengthen communication and coordination, take care of each other’s interests and concerns, discuss rules, build mechanisms and meet challenges together. Global economic governance should aim at sharing, advocate participation by all, benefit all, and not engage in one-man rule or winner-takes-all, but seek to share benefits and achieve win-win goals”.³ BRI is not only a Chinese solution to global economic governance, but also a fundamental way to promote an open, inclusive, balanced, and win-win economic globalization.

1.2 *China’s Economic Development Enters a New Era*

Since the founding of The People’s Republic of China, especially since the reform and opening up, China’s economy has developed rapidly, which

² Xi Jinping, “Seizing the Opportunity of a Global Economy in Transition and Accelerating Development of the Asia-Pacific”, November 10, 2017, http://language.chinadaily.com.cn/2017-11/13/content_34467022.htm.

³ Xi Jinping, “A New Starting Point for China’s Development, A New Blueprint for Global Growth”, September 3, 2016, http://english.qstheory.cn/2016-12/20/c_1120052535.htm.

has created a miracle in the world's economic history, achieving a high GDP growth rate of about 10% per year on average. China has become a world economic leader and has made significant contribution to the steady growth of the world economy. According to the International Monetary Fund (IMF), China's gross domestic product (GDP) at market exchange rates increased from \$305.3 billion in 1980 to \$9.635 trillion in 2013, and per capita GDP increased from \$309 to \$7080 over the same period. It is worth noting that China's total GDP reached \$6.066 trillion in 2010, surpassing Japan to become the world's second largest economy. At the same time, China's economy is getting closer to that of the United States. In 2013, China's total GDP accounted for about 60% of the U.S. GDP, compared to about 10% in 1980. When measured in terms of purchasing power parity (PPP), China's economy occupies an even more important position in the global economy. Back in 1999, China's total GDP in PPP terms reached 3.33 trillion international dollars, with a 7.1% share of the world economy, surpassing Japan's total economy. In 2014, China's total GDP in PPP terms reached 18.28 trillion international dollars, rising to 16.5% of the world economy, surpassing the United States as the world's largest economy.⁴

In terms of trade, since the reform and opening up, China has gradually developed a road to promote reform and development by opening up, and has grown from a marginal country in the world trade system to a world trade power. After joining the World Trade Organization, China has been more actively responding to the trend of deepening global industrial division of labor, giving full play to its comparative advantages, undertaking international industrial transfer, vigorously developing foreign trade and actively promoting two-way investment, achieving leap-forward development of open economy and reshaping China's relationship with the world with its own efforts at a new height. In 1978, China's total trade in goods was about US\$21,086 million. In 2001, when China first joined the World Trade Organization, China's total trade in goods was about US\$509.651 billion, of which US\$266.098 billion was exported, ranking sixth in the world. In 2007, China's exports of goods reached US\$1.220 trillion, surpassing the U.S. exports of US\$1.148 trillion, making it the world's largest goods exporter. In 2013, China's total trade in goods reached US\$4.159 trillion, surpassing the U.S. total trade

⁴ International Monetary Fund, World Economic Outlook Database, October 2019 (<http://www.imf.org/weo>).

in goods of US\$3.909 trillion for the first time, leaping to become the world's largest goods trading country.⁵ The rapid development of China's foreign trade, especially the rapid growth of export trade, has enabled China to accumulate a large trade surplus, which has accumulated capital and technology for domestic economic development and is of positive significance in improving the economic structure, accelerating the industrialization process, promoting domestic technological progress, enhancing the economy's ability to resist risks and driving domestic employment. However, the huge amount of foreign exchange reserves resulting from the sustained surplus will also affect the independence of domestic monetary policy, increase the pressure of currency appreciation and the difficulty of preserving and increasing the value of foreign exchange reserves, and become an excuse for other countries to provoke trade frictions.

In terms of international direct investment, China has become the most important destination and source of foreign direct investment in the world. The United States has long played a world-leading role in attracting foreign investment, with most of the world's major cross-border mergers and acquisitions and new business ventures abroad taking place in the United States. However, in the wake of the 2008 financial crisis, the global FDI landscape began to change profoundly. Data from the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) show that U.S. FDI inflows fell 53.1% to \$143.604 billion in 2009 from \$306.366 billion the previous year and remained at \$2013.93 billion in 2013. Meanwhile, China's FDI inflows have grown steadily, from about \$800,000 in 1979 to \$57 billion the following year; in 2013, China's FDI inflows reached \$123.911 billion and became the second largest FDI destination in the world.⁶ In the first half of 2012, China had overtaken the United States in terms of the size of foreign investment attracted. Although the United States overtook China in attracting foreign investment in the second half of 2012, this has reflected a dramatic change in the pattern of global foreign direct investment flows after the financial crisis. Emerging markets and developing economies have seen a growing trend in attracting foreign investment, while developed economies, represented by the United States, have become less attractive

⁵ UNCTAD Database, March 10, 2020 (<http://unctadstat.unctad.org>).

⁶ Ibid.

to foreign investment. This makes it necessary to strengthen investment cooperation with emerging and developing economies.

Thanks to its continued economic development, China's position and role in the world economy is increasing and its interaction with the outside world is growing. On November 29, 2012, when visiting the Road to Revival exhibition at the National Museum, President Xi Jinping said, "Achieving the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation is the greatest dream of the Chinese nation since modern times".⁷ However, in a community of shared future for mankind where you have me and I have you, we must build a world of lasting peace, universal security, common prosperity, openness, inclusiveness, cleanliness, and beauty to realize the dream of the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation. In this sense, the BRI becomes a realistic choice for China's new historical mission, and an important pillar to manifest China's image as a responsible great power.

2 CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE BRI TO GLOBAL GOVERNANCE

As a major international cooperation initiative that responds to the development trend of globalization and the needs of the global governance era, the BRI has promoted the development and innovation of the concept of global governance, forcefully responded to unilateralism and protectionism in the international community, and provided a model for countries around the world to participate in global governance with a new concept. At the same time, the BRI provides a new platform for countries along the route to participate in global governance through interconnection and common development, and injects new momentum into the construction of global governance mechanisms and cooperation in key issue areas.

2.1 *Cooperation Concept*

The BRI international cooperation advocates the Silk Road Spirit of "peace and cooperation, openness and inclusiveness, mutual learning, mutual benefit and win-win cooperation", the principle of "mutual

⁷ "General Secretary Xi Jinping Explains 'Chinese Dream'", *Guangming Daily*, November 30, 2012, p. 1.

consultation, construction and shared benefit” and the sense of a community of shared future for mankind. Together, they form the concept system of the BRI, which is a critical development of the traditional concepts of international relations.

On September 7, 2013, President Xi Jinping delivered a speech at Nazarbayev University in Kazakhstan, pointing out that the valuable inspiration left by the ancient Silk Road is “unity and mutual trust, equality and mutual benefit, inclusiveness and mutual appreciation, and win–win cooperation”.⁸ On June 5, 2014, President Xi Jinping delivered an important speech at the opening ceremony of the Sixth Ministerial Conference of the Sino-Arab Cooperation Forum, clearly stating that “for thousands of years, the Silk Road has carried the spirit of peace and cooperation, openness and inclusiveness, mutual learning and learning, and mutual benefit and win–win situation”.⁹ On May 14, 2017, President Xi Jinping attended the opening ceremony of the BRI International Cooperation Summit Forum in Beijing and delivered a keynote speech, once again emphasizing that “the ancient Silk Road stretched for thousands of miles and lasted for a thousand years, accumulating the Silk Road Spirit of peace and cooperation, openness and inclusiveness, mutual learning, mutual benefit and win–win cooperation”, and emphasizing that the BRI will be built into a road of peace, prosperity, openness, innovation, and civilization.¹⁰ Accordingly, openness and inclusiveness are the basic characteristics of international cooperation concept of the BRI, mutual learning is the important means of international cooperation of the BRI, and mutual benefit and win–win cooperation are the value goals of international cooperation of the BRI.

Secondly, the Silk Road Spirit is embodied in the principle of “common development and sharing”, which is the basic principle of international cooperation of the BRI. It was proposed that China and Afghanistan should adhere to the principle of the BRI, which is based on the principle

⁸ Xi Jinping, “Promote Friendship Between Our People and Work Together to Build a Bright Future—Speech at Nazarbayev University”, *People’s Daily*, September 8, 2013, p. 3.

⁹ Xi Jinping, “Promoting the Silk Road Spirit and Deepening Sino-Arab Cooperation—Speech at the opening ceremony of the Sixth Ministerial Conference of the China-Arab States Cooperation Forum”, *People’s Daily*, June 6, 2014, p. 2.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

of mutual consultation, construction, and shared benefits. Mutual consultation is to draw on the collective wisdom of the two sides, so that the construction of the BRI can take into account the interests and concerns of both sides and reflect the wisdom and creativity of both sides. Mutual construction means to take persistent advantage and potential of both sides to give full play to gather sand into a tower and accumulate water into an abyss. Share benefits requires the achievements of cooperation to benefit the Chinese and Arab peoples, to create a community of interests and destiny of China and Afghanistan.¹¹ The principle of “sharing and building” advocates the pooling of ideas, the use of the strengths and capabilities of each other, and the sharing of results, fully reflecting the openness and inclusiveness of the BRI international cooperation, in line with the development trend of democratization of international relations. Adhering to this principle is to give full play to the enthusiasm and dynamism of all countries in the world, especially the vast number of developing countries, reflecting the concerns and aspirations of all parties, to better safeguard the legitimate rights and interests of all parties, so that all participants in the BRI have a greater sense of access.

Finally, the awareness of a community of shared future for mankind represents the rightful meaning and ultimate goal of the BRI international cooperation. The sense of a community of shared future for mankind cares for the common interests of all human beings based on the fact that “there is only one earth, all peoples live in one world” and the common sense of safety and security, prosperity and loss, win-win cooperation, rights, and responsibilities. In today’s world, some developed countries have a weak sense of community of human destiny and are obsessed with the pursuit of narrow national interests, resulting in a growing peace deficit, development deficit, governance deficit, and trust deficit, which has become a serious challenge for all mankind. BRI has profoundly grasped the contemporary connotation of the sense of a community of shared future for mankind and provided an important basis for the very concept to take root, so that all mankind can work together under the framework of the BRI international cooperation. We are committed to building a world of lasting peace, universal security, common prosperity, openness, inclusiveness, cleanliness, and beauty. The global significance of the concept, content, and realization of the BRI goes far beyond the scope

¹¹ Ibid.

of regional cooperation, and has become an important tool for shaping new dynamics of economic globalization and building a community of shared future for mankind.

2.2 *Cooperation Mechanisms*

The BRI attaches great importance to mechanism building, making full use of existing bilateral and multilateral cooperation mechanisms and creating new mechanisms to make up for the shortcomings of global governance mechanisms.

In terms of consolidating and revitalizing existing cooperation mechanisms, the BRI has strengthened the links and interactions among mechanisms and promoted the construction of a network of mechanisms covering various areas of global governance. First, the BRI is committed to promoting the construction of bilateral dialogue and coordination mechanisms in various forms. Through multi-level and multi-channel communication and consultation, the BRI promotes the comprehensive development of bilateral relations, coordinates each other's positions on global governance, and negotiates solutions to global issues. Secondly, the BRI is committed to promoting cooperation with the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), China-ASEAN 10 + 1, Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC), Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM), Asian Cooperation Dialogue (ACD), and Conference on Interaction and Confidence-Building Measures in Asia (CICA), China-Arab Cooperation Forum, China-GCC Strategic Dialogue, Greater Mekong Subregion (GMS) Economic Cooperation, Central Asian Regional Economic Cooperation (CAREC), and other existing multilateral cooperation mechanisms to promote regional cooperation and provide a useful complement to global governance. Finally, the BRI is committed to strengthening the Boao Forum for Asia, the China-ASEAN Expo, the China-Asia-Europe Expo, the Eurasian Economic Forum, the China International Fair for Investment and Trade, and the China-South Asia Expo, the China-Arab Expo, West China International Expo, China-Russia Expo, Qianhai Cooperation Forum and other related international forums, exhibitions and platforms, and contribute to global governance.

In terms of institutional innovation, the BRI presents many new highlights. First, the Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation provides a platform for dialogue and cooperation to promote global common development. In order to allow countries along the route to

share China's development achievements and the opportunities of the BRI construction, and to promote global development governance, China has been holding the Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation since 2017, and has continuously promoted practical cooperation with remarkable results. The 279 concrete outcomes reached at the first BRI Summit have been completed or turned into regular work, achieving mutual benefits and win-win results for all parties involved, including governments, enterprises, and other entities. The forum has achieved even more fruitful and practical results. As the host, China took the lead in summarizing the concrete outcomes reached by all parties, resulting in a list of 283 outcomes. China signed a series of inter-governmental agreements on practical cooperation with relevant countries, such as the China-Myanmar Economic Corridor and the China-Thailand Railway, and the parties jointly initiated and established the BRI national standards information platform and the BRI South-South cooperation program to address climate change. China and Italy have jointly set up new cooperation funds and launched third-party market investment and financing projects.¹² Secondly, the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) and the Silk Road Fund have filled the gap in the global investment and financing system. 21 countries signed the Memorandum of Understanding on the Establishment of the AIIB in Beijing on October 24, 2014, and jointly decided to establish the AIIB.¹³ On December 25, 2015, 17 prospective founding members with a combined share of 50.1% ratified the AIIB Charter and the AIIB was formally established. As of March 2020, the total number of AIIB members reached 102. On December 29, 2014, the State Administration of Foreign Exchange, China Investment Corporation, Export-Import Bank of China, and China Development Bank jointly contributed RMB 61.525 billion (US\$10 billion) to establish the Silk Road Fund Limited Liability Company in Beijing, marking the official establishment of the Silk Road Fund. The AIIB and the Silk Road Fund make up for the lack of investment of the World Bank and ADB in the Asian region, and

¹² Wang Yi: "New Beginning, New Vision, New Journey—The Second BRI International Cooperation Summit Forum Reaches Broad Consensus and Achieves Fruitful Results", *People's Daily*, April 29, 2019, p. 5.

¹³ The 21 countries include China, Bangladesh, Brunei, Cambodia, India, Kazakhstan, Kuwait, Laos, Malaysia, Mongolia, Myanmar, Nepal, Oman, Pakistan, Philippines, Qatar, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Uzbekistan, and Vietnam.

reduce investment and financing costs, providing strong financial support for economic and social development in Asia. Finally, the China International Import Expo promotes the building of an open and balanced global economy. On May 14, 2017, the Ministry of Commerce, together with relevant departments of more than 60 countries and international organizations, released the BRI Trade Facilitation Cooperation Initiative, which aims to promote trade growth, revitalize mutual investment, and promote inclusive and sustainable development. China has pledged to hold the China International Import Expo from 2018 onwards, and in the next 5 years, China will import US\$2 trillion of goods from the participating countries and regions of the Belt and Road and invest US\$150 billion in them.¹⁴ On November 5, 2018, China successfully hosted the first International Import Expo, with 172 countries, regions, and international organizations participating and more than 3600 enterprises exhibiting. The China International Import Expo has built a new platform for global economic and trade cooperation and injected new impetus to tackle international cooperation along the BRI.

2.3 *Major Areas*

At present, the key content of the Initiative includes “policy connectivity, facilities connectivity, trade connectivity, financial connectivity and people-to-people connectivity”. In terms of function design, policy connectivity is an important guarantee for implementing the Initiative; facilities connectivity is a priority area; trade connectivity is the key field; financial connectivity is an important support; and people-to-people connectivity provides the public support for it. The five factors are closely linked with, mutually complementary to, and reinforcing each other. They are not only key parts of the BRI construction, but also important measures to promote global governance. Over the past 7 years, BRI countries have deepened policy connectivity, enhanced facilities connectivity, improved trade connectivity, expanded financial connectivity, and promoted people-to-people connectivity.

¹⁴ Permanent Mission of China to the United Nations Industrial Development Organization, “Promoting the BRI Trade Facilitation Cooperation Initiative”, May 14, 2017, Ministry of Commerce of China website (<http://www.mofcom.gov.cn/article/i/jyjl/m/201705/20170502580373.shtml>).

In terms of policy connectivity, relevant countries have continuously promoted in-depth synergy of development strategies around joint work on the construction. At the time when the 1st Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation was held in May 2017, leaders, governmental officials, and representatives of international organizations reached a series of consensus through dialogue and exchange. And the follow-up measures to implement the outcomes have consolidated the foundation for policy coordination at a higher level. By the end of 2024, China had signed more than 200 cooperation agreements on the BRI construction with more than 150 countries and 30 international organizations.

Regarding facilities connectivity, a batch of significant achievements have been made, in the cooperation in railways, highways, waterways, air routes, pipelines, and information highways. This has laid an important foundation for the local economic and social development as well as the high-quality construction of the BRI. By the end of 2024, a total number of over 100,000 trips of China–Europe Railway Express have reached 327 cities in 36 countries.

In terms of trade connectivity, The Initiative on Promoting Unimpeded Trade Cooperation along the BRI has been implemented step by step. From 2018 to 2023, China's total trade in goods with the countries that signed the BRI cooperation documents increased from 1.9 trillion U.S. dollars to 2.8 trillion U.S. dollars, with an average annual growth rate of 8.1%, and its share of the total increased from 40.6% to 46.6%. In terms of investment, from 2018 to 2023, China's direct investment in the countries along the Belt and Road accumulated more than 180 billion U.S. dollars, with an average annual growth rate of 5.9%.¹⁵ The aforementioned China International Import Expo serves as a new platform for BRI countries to expand their exports to China.

As for financial connectivity, China's financial cooperation with relevant countries has deepened. The impact of the AIIB and the Silk Road Fund is increasingly heightened. To promote a long-term, stable, sustainable, diversified, and risk-controllable financing system, as of September 2020, 29 countries have approved The Guiding Principles on Financing the Development of the Belt and Road. By the end of 2024, the AIIB has grown from 57 member countries to 110. As of October 2024, the AIIB has approved 286 projects, with a total investment of near US\$ 55

¹⁵ China's Trade in Goods with the Belt and Road Countries Grows 8.1% Annually, *People's Daily Overseas Edition*, August 7, 2024.

billion in energy, transport, finance, water, urban construction, and other sectors. By the end of September 2024, the Silk Road Fund has signed over 80 projects with committed investment of over 25.3 billion USD.

In the field of people-to-people connectivity, China has actively carried out cooperation with relevant countries in education, culture, tourism, and other areas, formulating a number of special cooperation plans in specific fields. As of the end of June 2023, China has signed bilateral documents on cultural and tourism cooperation with 144 BRI countries; the Silk Road NGO Cooperation Network, an international civil society network in China, has expanded its members to over 350 members. Through the Silk Road Scholarship Program and the establishment of overseas educational cooperation arrangements, China has cultivated a large number of talents for these countries.

3 THE BRI OFFERS A NEW DRIVING FORCE FOR GLOBAL GOVERNANCE IN THE FUTURE

In order to offset the negative impact of economic globalization and bring the benefits of economic globalization to every country and people, Chinese leaders have proposed to unswervingly lead the process of economic globalization, and make it more inclusive and widely beneficial. China proposes the concepts of innovation-driven development, coordination, and collaboration, advancing with the times, fairness, and inclusiveness. It is committed to building a dynamic growth model, an open and win-win cooperation model, a just and reasonable governance model, and a balanced development model that benefits all.¹⁶ The synergy of development strategies provides solutions to the root causes of the problems of economic globalization under the new situation. As a major country in the world, China is assuming its responsibility to lead the process of economic globalization by identifying the key to global governance and contributing its wisdom. At present, there is still much room for development and cooperation among BRI countries in promoting the reform and improvement of the global governance system. Regarding the BRI and the status quo and problems of BRI countries, the following measures should be adopted to further shape new impetus of global

¹⁶ Xi Jinping, New Starting Point for China's Development, New Blueprint for Global Growth—Keynote Speech at the Opening Ceremony of the World Economic Forum 2017, *People's Daily*, January 18, 2017, p. 3.

governance, and continuously enhance the status and role of China and other BRI countries in global governance.

3.1 Constantly Create Favorable Conditions and Environment for BRI Countries to Play a Part in Global Governance

Most of these countries are developing ones with backward economic and social levels. Many of them are even faced with domestic political and economic difficulties. This will not only distract their involvement in the BRI construction, but also leave a gap for external forces to interfere in the international cooperation under the BRI. Consequently, it will restrict the status and role of these countries in global governance. In this regard, efforts should be made to address domestic political and economic problems in relevant countries, maintain their political and social stability, and stimulate economic growth. On the one hand, the international cooperation under the BRI should focus on improving people's livelihood, so that ordinary people will have a sense of gain. If so, there will be stronger support from the public for their governments and the Initiative. On the other hand, these countries should work in concert to discuss solutions, share development experience and countermeasures to meet challenges, and promote common development and prosperity as the main goal of the international cooperation.

In the long run, if international cooperation is to play a leading role in global governance, it must promote positive interaction between member countries and the outside world as well as among the member countries themselves. Also, the voice and influence of BRI countries must be enhanced in this process. One of the reasons why the global economy is facing the increasing challenge of anti-globalization is the closed and conservative policies of various countries. As an important platform for developing countries, the Initiative is a major measure to address the challenge of de-globalization. The open cooperation advocated by the Initiative is based on, but not limited to, the scope of the ancient Silk Road. All countries and regional organizations can participate in this process, so that the benefits of joint contribution can be shared by more regions. The Initiative is not targeted at any country. No exclusive economic group will be formed in the process. Any country can incorporate its economic development strategy into the framework that supports and participates in the BRI construction as long as they have the will. Practical synergy can be realized via the interaction and complementarity of functions.

3.2 Consolidate the Advantages of BRI Countries in Global Development Governance

At present, due to the obstruction of countries with vested interests in global governance, it is difficult for these countries, especially developing countries, to have a voice in line with their strength in global governance. This is also an important constraint for the BRI to play a leading role in global governance. Nonetheless, the BRI has increasingly prominent advantages in playing a leading role in global development governance. On the one hand, the BRI countries boast huge markets. Despite the gap between them and developed countries in terms of per capita index, the constant expansion of economic scale and markets has laid the foundation of a new system of international economic rules for BRI countries to play a leading role. In the fields of market access, market competition, market transactions, commodity pricing, trade settlement, and technical standards, developing BRI countries can jointly propose rules that are in line with the interests of developing countries, and bring the international rule system to a situation in favor of emerging markets and developing countries.

On the other hand, BRI countries can be the leaders in building a new pattern of global development governance by virtue of their advantages in governance experience. Many of them, including China, have accumulated rich experience in development governance. Over the past four decades, China's economy has grown at a pace and on a scale unprecedented in the world. At present, China is transforming its economic development mode from the traditional mode driven by manufacturing, export, and investment to one driven by innovation, service industry, and high-tech manufacturing. China's path will provide new development ideas for countries that are in the process of economic transformation yet lack development momentum. Under the existing global governance system, these countries can enhance their institutional discursive power in the process of global development governance.

3.3 Strengthen Institutional Building of the BRI International Cooperation

Institutional deficit is an example of, as well as the main reason, for global governance deficit. To strengthen the institutional building in the

international cooperation under the Initiative can both guarantee the in-depth promotion of the BRI construction and supplement the existing global governance mechanisms. Regarding the status quo and characteristics of the BRI construction, the institutional building in the BRI international cooperation needs to be advanced in an orderly manner, following the principle of “step-by-step development with emphasis on practical results”. In this regard, it is important to combine functional mechanisms with mechanisms affecting the big picture, combine formal mechanisms with informal ones, and combine the maintenance of existing mechanisms with the creation of new mechanisms.¹⁷ To be specific, the main directions of institutional building are as follows:

With regard to informal mechanisms, we should actively promote practical cooperation under the framework of the Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation, with more attention paid to global issues. In October 2023, the third Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation was held in Beijing, which means that the mechanism has become a regular event. Although the Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation has no secretariat or other entities, it can still play an important role in advancing global governance. This is because informal forums are more flexible, which helps to increase room for policy adjustment. Moreover, without the support of substantial cooperation, rushing into an institutionalized track may become a constraint or obstacle to the development of BRI. Therefore, before the Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation becomes a formal mechanism, its priority is to find areas where practical cooperation can be carried out, and then constantly promote such cooperation and make new progress.

Regarding formal mechanisms, while maintaining existing mechanisms, we should actively explore new rules, standards, and institutions in some functional areas. At present, under the BRI framework, the efforts of relevant countries to reshape the global governance system are mainly reflected in the monetary and financial fields, especially in the construction of multilateral development-oriented financial systems. As a matter of fact, these international monetary and financial mechanisms advocated by BRI countries have not only made significant progress in a short

¹⁷ Xiujun Xu, *The BRI construction: Transition towards High-quality Development*, cited from Yuyan Zhang (ed.), *Yellow Book of World Economy: Analysis and Prediction of World Economy in 2019*, Social Sciences Academic Press (China), 2018.

period of time, but also brought innovative ideas to the existing mechanisms. However, with the deepening of the BRI construction, problems in policy coordination, rule and standard synergy, dispute settlement, and other aspects in specific fields have become increasingly prominent. In this regard, while drawing lessons from the framework of existing international mechanisms, countries should explore, according to the practical needs of some functional areas, the establishment of some new mechanisms for practical cooperation, which are small but efficient. In this process, rights and responsibilities should be clearly defined. Incentive and penal measures should be implemented.

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Concluding Remarks: Developing an Interculturalism System

Kostas Gouliamos

There is a widespread sense in all chapters of this publication that China plays a more important role in the world today than it did a few decades ago. As President Xi Jinping has noted “this is the right time to innovate and make dreams come true”.¹ China’s global rise and multilateral cooperation with other countries is undeniable. In fact, China has an enduring civilization with a historical and cultural confidence (*wenhua zixin*, 文化自信) that seems to be thriving on voluminous ways and multiple levels worldwide, particular in European areas where ancient cultures have been succeeded socially, esthetically, communicatively, or lingually.

For instance, the name Europe, -merging the Greek origins eur-(wide) and -op (seeing)—signifies a “wide-gazing” conception. On the other side, China has been a great cultural generator since the beginning of history. With a history of more than 5000 years, China has made indelible contributions to the progress of human civilization.

In any case, China and Europe turn out to be the essential actors in building a community with a shared future for humankind by consolidating the wisdom of their ancient Eastern and Western civilizations.

¹ Xi Jinping (2014): *The Governance of China*, Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, p. 58.

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Furthermore, the two civilizations have much in common and stand by each other not only in issues pertinent to endeavors of cooperation but also in deepening their dialogue via mutual knowledge initiatives, which are indispensable to the social and cultural progress.

Both China and Europe are in a new historical period of a polymorphous development, and their relations generate new contemporary prospects. Within this framework, European nation-states developmental planning to enhance comprehensive strategic partnership is gaining more concerted efforts with the “Belt and Road” Initiative by expanding trade and ventures (ports, finance, energy etc.), and by extending cultural exchanges and education cooperation. It would be difficult to achieve adequate results in all major developmental planning for European regions without China’s active connection. Meanwhile, it is of paramount importance for China to further cultivate and strengthen the multidimensional advantages of the “Belt and Road” Initiative that apparently uphold deeper the exquisiteness of civilizations. The “Belt and Road” Initiative—an indispensable pillar of the “soft power” apparatus—makes available for the first time in the twenty-first century’s the mutual understanding and peace to each nation-state and all humanity. The contributors of this book departed from this framework. However, unlike many other studies their text is not simply a historic description and/or descriptive dissemination. On the contrary, they enlarge the initiative’s dimensions and scopes to cover a wider historical, political, cultural, and social perspective. Overall, the book shows how each of these essays treats this great initiative of a decisive meaning by placing a historical outlook. Moreover, the arguments and discourses in all chapters have focused on cultural, societal, and/or economic projects, which trace the process of international alterations, rather than the international alterations itself.

Upholding such a great connectedness consciousness, the acquainted theoretical and applied approach to the “Belt and Road” delivers solid critical and interdisciplinary outcomes for a global community of shared future, including outcomes pertinent to sustained peace, people’s well-being, widespread alleviation of poverty and an embedded respect for harmony between humanity and nature. There is no doubt that the book increases people’s empathy, compassion, and a virtuous understanding of the world in which we live since China’s the “Belt and Road” Initiative has both regional and global multiplication.

As a range of empirical studies² have provided evidence for the militarization of the worldlife by NATO and the USA's "military-industrial complex", China's the "Belt and Road" Initiative is a global peaceful interconnectivity project. This paradigm initiative affects all spheres of human activity due to the multiplicity of harmonious and peaceful activities. Although the initiative initially embraced the production spheres (trade, finance etc.) then it became widespread in socio-cultural and educational communication. Its active application in the cultural and knowledge environments have taken place between China and European nation-states. As the world economy is profoundly substantiated by the character of the (post)modern intercultural paradigm, the vast majority of nation-states are more conscientiously functioned based on openness and connectivity. Principally, the "Belt & Road" and "Digital Silk Road" have become the most respectable international initiatives and the largest cooperation incentive. Besides, the chapters reflect the features of implementation and functioning of an interculturalism system, which is a basic component for connectedness, from our enlightening cultural heritage to the formation of a new digitalized world. Such an intercultural system eliminates the gap and/or disparities between and/or among countries as it unfolds both states of affairs for mutual progress and environments for coordinated quality development across regions.

The intercultural connectivity via digitization in all social and public spheres has gained not only an augmented stride of the comprehension of connectivity deals but also greater prospects for their enactment. In the course of the book, the editors and contributors consider and/or imply 'interculturalism' as an indispensable notion with transformative capacities, which have caused the alteration of any conventional paradigm's operability. With respect to the transformative capacities, it is worth specifying how technology and connectivity patterns are conceived in philosophical and socio-political terms by the authors. Apart from the debate on the rise of a "network society",³ it has to be acknowledged that interculturalism-based on the foundation that societies in the era of digital space quicken their innovation emergence-is in a continuous transformation process as it confiscates the so-called "elusive sociality"

² Gouliamos Kostas and Christos Kassimeris (2011): *The Marketing of War in the Age of Neo-Militarism*. Routledge.

³ Castells Manuel (1997): *The Power of Identity, The Information Age: Economy, Society and Culture Vol. II*. Cambridge, MA: Blackwell.

and at the same time engenders interrelations among components of social connectedness. Above and beyond Foucault's acknowledged phrase the "movement problem of modernity",⁴ the organic deployment of the "network society" is embedded in our (post)modern epoch.

Nevertheless, Marx's theory of value⁵ is particularly central for critically studying the (inter)cultural, transnational relations and communication patterns in the era of a "network society".

Bearing in mind that the modern cultural and knowledge communities are interconnected, the chapters included in this special book focus on a critical analysis to comprehend on where Chinese and Europeans have been and the tasks that lie ahead and dive deeper with insights of strategic partnerships.

⁴ Foucault, Michel (2007 [2004]): *Security, territory, population: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1977-78*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, p. 93.

⁵ Marx Karl (1993): *Grundrisse: Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy*. Penguin Classics; Revised ed. edition (November 7, 1993).

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