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## **Understanding the Belt and Road Initiative from the Perspective of Globalization\*\***

Abstract

In 2013, Chinese President Xi Jinping proposed to build an “economic belt along the Silk Road” and “a 21 century Maritime Silk Road”, which are the major components of Belt and Road (B&R) Initiative, aiming to promote joint development, common prosperity and cooperation between China and the rest of the world. This paper holds that besides infrastructure construction, huge investment, production capacity cooperation, connectivity, etc., faced with the uncertainty in 2016, especially under the background of deglobalization, B&R is serving as a new framework and platform for China to continue to promote globalization in the Chinese way, which is strongly influenced by China’s cultural tradition and China’s certainty in terms of its strategy, foreign and domestic policy. What B&R initiates not only matches the main theme of globalization, but also adds new ideas to globalization, such as equality, inclusiveness, openness, and mutual benefit. The success of this process requires the joint efforts of all world actors, and not just China.

**Key words:** Belt and Road Initiative, Chinese Foreign Policy, Chinese IR Theory, China-initiated Globalization

On September 7, 2013, when Chinese President Xi Jinping visited Kazakhstan, in his speech “Promote Friendship Between Our People and Work Together to Build a Bright Future” made at Nazarbayev University, he proposed that “to forge closer economic ties, deepen cooperation and expand development space in the Eurasian region, we should take an innovative approach and jointly build an ‘economic belt along the Silk Road’. This will be a great undertaking benefitting the people of all countries along the route”.<sup>1</sup> Then on the same year, when he visited ASEAN, in his speech “To join hands to build China-ASEAN Community” at the Indonesian Congress on October 3, 2013, he proposed to build a 21 century Maritime Silk Road.<sup>2</sup> These two proposals became the major components of One Belt One Road (OBOR) Initiative, later changed to the Belt and Road (B&R) Initiative. Since then, the B&R, which aims to promote joint development, common prosperity and cooperation between China and the rest of the world, has become the most important initiative for China. Within the past five years, China has been taking concrete and active steps to bring this undertaking to fruition. From the view of the Chinese government, the B&R is a major part of China’s foreign policy as a major country of the world. Most of the

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1 Jinping Xi, “Promote Friendship between Our People and Work Together to Build a Bright Future”, 2013, Available at: [http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa\\_eng/wjdt\\_665385/zjyh\\_665391/t11078088.shtml](http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/wjdt_665385/zjyh_665391/t11078088.shtml), (accessed on 04/04/2017).

2 Jinping Xi, “Hand in Hand to Build China-ASEAN Community”, 2013, Available at: [http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/web/zili-ao\\_674904/zjyh\\_674906/t11084354.shtml](http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/web/zili-ao_674904/zjyh_674906/t11084354.shtml), (accessed on 08/04/2017).

time when mentioning the B&R, people will talk about the huge amount of investment by the Chinese government, the building of ports, railroads, power plants, etc.,<sup>3</sup> and the change of the geostrategic and geo-economic face of the region.<sup>4</sup> It is most of time viewed from the perspective of China's strategy, foreign policy and bilateral relations with other countries. However, the B&R means more than that. This paper holds that besides infrastructure construction, huge investment, production capacity cooperation, connectivity, etc., faced with the uncertainty caused by a series of accidents and events since 2016, especially under the background of slowing down of globalization, and even the challenge of deglobalization and antiglobalization, the B&R is serving as a new framework and platform for China to continue to promote globalization in the Chinese way, which is strongly influenced by China's cultural tradition and China's past diplomatic experience and practice. What the B&R initiates not only matches the main theme of globalization, but also adds new ideas and content to globalization, such as equality, inclusiveness, openness. The B&R promotes not only the development of economy, but also the exchanges between different cultures and ideas. During this process, it needs the joint efforts of all the world actors, not only that of China.

## 1. The Uncertainty of the World since 2016

The world since 2016 has witnessed tremendous and dramatic changes, which mostly point to one word: uncertainty, which makes the world fall into a kind of disorder. The uncertainty is mainly caused by the volatility and turbulence of the world.<sup>5</sup>

The uncertainty of the world is first caused by the series of changes of domestic politics in a number of countries and their spillover effects on world politics since 2016, which made the world very volatile. For instance, 2016 is considered a year of Black Swans. In 2016 Brexit has become a fact beyond the expectation of many, which poses more challenges to the future of EU and regional integration not only in the material sense, but also in the ideational sense. People began to question and worry about the future of EU. Donald Trump won the US presidential election. "American First" and his view and policy on immigration, world trade, climate change, etc. undoubtedly is influencing the scenario of world politics. His following actions such as withdrawing from Paris Agreement, TPP and others give people the feeling that the US is changing its value and world view. Although he has taken office for over twenty months, people still choose the word "unpredictable" to describe him. Also in 2016, Korean President Park Geun-hye was impeached, making the already tense peninsular relations more fragile. With the deployment of THAAD in ROK and the sixth nuclear test of DPRK, the situation on the Korean Peninsula and East Asia has aroused the serious concern of the whole international community. In Philippines, Rodrigo Duterte won the presidential election, who has become the most disputable president in Philippines. Italian

3 Pepe Escobar, "Silk Roads, Night Trains, and the Third Industrial Revolution in China", *New Perspectives Quarterly*, vol. 33, no. 1, 2016, p. 26; Marc Grossman, "China and the US: Two Visions, One Collaboration?", 2016, Available at: <http://yaleglobal.yale.edu/content/china-and-us-two-visions-one-collaboration>, (accessed on 15/06/2017); Ruby Tsao, "One Belt and One Road: A Historical Perspective", *Chinese American Forum*, vol. 31, no. 1, 2015, p. 11.

4 Marc Grossman, *China and the US: Two Visions, One Collaboration?*, op.cit.

5 Yi Wang, *Speech by Foreign Minister Wang Yi at the Opening of the Symposium on International Developments and China's Diplomacy in 2016*, 2016, Available at: [http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa\\_eng/wjdt\\_665385/zyjh\\_665391/t1421722.shtml](http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/wjdt_665385/zyjh_665391/t1421722.shtml), (accessed on 04/04/2017).

President Matteo Renzi announced to resign at the end of 2016, which is considered the failure of the reform in Italy. The fierce competition between Marine Le Pen and Emmanuel Macron is not only the competition of presidency, but also the division between different ideology, Europeanism against nationalism, liberalism against protectionism, and reformist against populist.

The second factor causing uncertainty is the keep rising turbulence all over the world. The risk of terrorism has been rising. For instance, during the first three months of 2016, over 2, 200 people have died due to terrorist attacks all over the world. Besides the traditional Al Qaeda, the Islamic State has remained a major force, although the international community has joined hands to fight against the Islamic State since 2014. The terrorist attack in Brussels on March 3, 2016 has killed more than 30 people. At Nice, France, at least 84 people have been killed, causing panic all over Europe. In Iraq, on the single day of February 8, 2016, over 300 policemen and military personnel have been killed in the attack by ISIS and during the first three months of 2016, there were 34 terrorist attacks in Iraq alone.<sup>6</sup> Not only Middle East and Africa have become the major victims of terrorist attacks, but also Europe, spiritually even the whole world. The terrorist attacks in Manchester, London, Turku (Finland), and Barcelona since May 2017 shows that Europe has become the main target of terrorist attacks and is faced with unprecedented challenge in this respect. With the gradual loss of the control areas of ISIS in Iraq and Syria, more extremists might spillover or go back to Europe, which might exacerbate the security situation of Europe. Besides terrorist attacks, another main factor is the immigration crisis in Europe. From 2016, immigrants became a major security concern for Europe. Since 2015, refugees from the Middle East and Northern Africa, mainly Libya and Syria tortured by wars and attacks began to flush to Europe, which has gradually exceeded the capacity of many European countries. It has become the headache not only for Greece and Italy, but also many other European countries, which has become a heavy burden for them. In quite a few countries, protest against refugees broke out and people in Europe began to emphasize border again, which is also a major challenge to EU integration. Therefore, refugees have brought not only economic pressure, but also social problems, challenged by the division between protectionism and inclusiveness, a threat to the long-lasting mainstream value of Europe. Slovenian philosopher Žižek warned in his *Against the Double Blackmail: refugees, terror and other troubles with the neighbors*: if the situation regarding refugees in Europe continues, in five years, Europe will not be Europe any longer.<sup>7</sup>

Besides, uncertainty is also caused by the ideological change. Since the 2008 world financial crisis, people's attitude towards globalization began to change and some policies especially those regarding trade have become more conservative and the tendency of de-globalization began to rise. Countries began to think about whatever ways to protect their own interest. Global trade began to decline, Doha round Negotiation meeting tremendous difficulties. According to the World Trade Organization, between 1990 and 2007, the average growth rate of global trade has increased by 6.9%, while since 2008, it has de-

6 Yuanxi Jia, "American Media: 2016 Can Be Called A Year of Terror, Only 9 Days Without Serious Attacks", 2016, Available at: <http://www.cankaoxiaoxi.com/world/20160323/1108071.shtml>, (accessed on 04/05/2017).

7 Chunyan Xing, "Refugee Crisis Continue to Deteriorate: Europe Will Not Be Europe Within Five Years", 2016, Available at: <http://cul.qq.com/a/20160501/011244.html>, (accessed on 04/05/2017).

creased by around 3%.<sup>8</sup> People began to use different kinds of trade barriers and protectionism began to rise, making it more difficult to increase trade and investment globally. The world is moving towards a fragmented one and TPP, TTIP, RCEP, etc. are typical examples for the emerging fragmentation of the world today. Deglobalization and antiglobalization are used more frequently in 2017. Besides, since 2016 quite a few countries have experienced the rise of populism. It is generally held that the election of Donald Trump, Brexit, and a few similar cases in Europe has shown the influence of the rise of populism on politics, both domestically and internationally.

Due to the above increasing turbulence, volatility, and ideological changes, people began to question more about the international order and global governance. Deglobalization, antiglobalization, fragmentation, renationalization, disorder, the collapse of the world order, governance failure, etc. have become the frequently used language to describe the world since 2016, which strengthens the sense of uncertainty for the world today.

## **2. The Certainty of China's Foreign Policy and the Emphasis on the B&R**

Compared with the uncertainty caused by the turbulence, volatility and instability of the world since 2016, China has remained quite certain in its foreign strategy, domestic and foreign policy. Externally, it can all be reflected through China's distinctive diplomatic approach befitting China's role as a major country (Zhong Guo Te Se Da Guo Wai Jiao) in terms of both theory and practice.

China's certainty first comes from China's change per se and the change of its relations with the world, more from a dependent variable into an independent variable. Objectively, China has become a major actor and a major force on the international arena, becoming the second largest world economy in 2010 and the largest trading partner for over 130 countries with the largest foreign reserve. During the past five years, China's contribution to the world economic growth reached around 30%. Meanwhile, the gap between China and the US has become smaller: in 2012, China's total GDP is 52.5% of that of the US, while in 2017, this figure rises to 63.1%. In 2017, about 130 million people traveled abroad, each person spending almost 900 US dollars. China objectively has become a major country of the world, which means on the one hand, China's change is influencing the world, economically, politically and even socially; on the other hand, with the increasing power and influence, China's sensitivity and vulnerability to the change of the world has become lower, which makes China comparatively have more space and condition to implement its own ideas and policies, maintaining the certainty in its own way.

China's certainty also comes from China's subjective change of attitude towards itself, its position and its sense of responsibility towards the world. Viewing China's relationship with the world during the past over seven decades, we can see that before the 1970s, China has been very resistant to the international system, and for a long time isolated itself from the international community, completely an outsider. After China's reform and opening up

<sup>8</sup> Monan. Zhang, "Structural Problems Behind the Stagnation of World Trade", *Caixin*, 2016, Available at: <http://opinion.caixin.com/2016-08-01/100972925.html>, (accessed on 04/05/2017).

since 1978, great efforts have been made by China to integrate itself into the world system, and after rounds of negotiations China finally entered into WTO in 2001. However, during that period, China had to follow the others and learn to become a member of the international community, being a passive learner and follower most of the time. Ten years after China's entry into WTO has initiated a phase of China's unbelievable growth exceeding the expectation from both itself and the rest of the world. China also benefited hugely from being part of the international economy and globalization. During that period, the well-known "Keeping a Low Profile"(Tao Guang Yang Hui) has been the guiding principle for China's foreign policy.<sup>9</sup> China didn't think much about reforming or changing the current international system, generally resisting attempts by the United States or other countries to encourage it to play a more positive role in international affairs.<sup>10</sup> However, since the world financial crisis in 2008, China began to play a more important role caused by the expectation from the other countries and its increasing influence on the global economic stage, being pushed to the center of the world at a much faster pace that it had expected. In particular, with the creation of G20, with China's more contribution to the world economy, China began to hold more active attitudes towards its role in the world and realized the need to use Chinese ideas and Chinese measures in world affairs. After the 2008 G20 summit, China spent 4 trillion RMB trying to stimulate and bail out the economy. In the 2009 G20 summit, the quota of the developing countries and new emerging economies in IMF was increased 5%, improving the influence of the developing countries institutionally. Since 2012 after the 18th National Congress of the Communist Party of China (CPC), China became more active on the world stage, and began to regard itself as a major country of the world. Besides "keeping a low profile", "being more active" (Fen Fa You Wei) was also added to its foreign policy. China has become more certain about and confident in itself, and on the 95th Anniversary of the Founding of CPC, Xi Jinping proposed Four Confidence, namely development path confidence, theory confidence, institution confidence and culture confidence. China has formed its own distinctive diplomatic approach befitting China's role as a major country and has put forward its own diplomatic ideas, policies and measures.

Besides, China also made it clear that it would shoulder more responsibility for the world and humankind, with more active stance and stronger sense of responsibility, trying to make more contribution to the world with Chinese wisdom, Chinese ideas and Chinese solution. For instance, attaching great importance to global governance, in 2016 and 2015, the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee has had two group study sessions on global governance, during which China has expressed clearly that it will actively participate in global governance and promote the reform of the global governance system into one of more justice and equity. During the 2016 G20 Summit, China has made great efforts to change G20 from a crisis managing mechanism to a long-term governance one, which is an important part for China to promote the reform of the global governance system.

Theoretically, China has formed the basic framework of its own diplomatic theory. Over the past years, in terms of theory, it has to be acknowledged that IR theory is mainly dominated

9 The well-known guiding principle for China's foreign policy by Deng Xiaoping is "coldly observe, secure our position, cope calmly, conceal our capabilities and bide our time, keep a low profile, never take the lead and make a contribution".

10 Peter Ferdinand, "Westward ho—the China Dream and 'One Belt, One Road': Chinese Foreign Policy Under Xi Jinping", *International Affairs*, vol.92, no.4, 2016, p. 941.

by American and European theories. In some sense, we can say that non-western theory is rather weak and even “there is no non-western IR theory”.<sup>11</sup> Western IR theories are based on western experiences and ideas; however, internationally they are often used to explain China’s diplomatic behavior and even to predict China’s future. For instance, John Mearsheimer’s theory regarding structural conflict between a hegemon and a rising power is often used to predict that the war between China and the US is inevitable. However, from the side of China, besides the structural conflict, intention, past experiences and diplomatic tradition also influence the choice of foreign policy. In recent years, China began to pay more attention to develop its own IR theory<sup>12</sup> based on China’s experience and cultural tradition, which can be a supplement to the western one. Xi has proposed a series of new concepts regarding foreign policy so as to establish new type international relations. In 2016, according to the Chinese Foreign Ministry, China has formed the basic framework of China’s diplomatic theories,<sup>13</sup> according to which the aim of China’s foreign policy is to realize the rejuvenation of the Chinese nation and the building a community of a shared future for humankind. The basic approach is peaceful development and the core principle is win-win cooperation. The main method is to develop partnership, and the main value is to stick to a right approach upholding justice and pursuing one’s own interest with emphasis on the former.<sup>14</sup> The development of this theory is based on China’s tradition and culture, China’s diplomatic experiences and practice since the founding of the People’s Republic of China, and China’s current position in the world.

Besides the establishment of diplomatic theory, in terms of practice, China also put forward a series of new ideas, initiatives and measures such as “new type major country relations” for big powers; “establishment of partnerships” for developing countries, etc. However, the most eye-catching one with the long-term influence is the B&R initiative, which potentially involves over 4 billion people. Its markets account for about one-third of the global GDP, and about 60% of oil resources and 80% of the gas are reserved in the region. During the past over five years, B&R has become the most important initiative for China’s external action. Forty billion USD Silk Road fund and the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank are both expected to provide the fund. In 2017, China’s investment towards the B&R countries has reached 14.3 billion USD, accounting for 12% of the total.

From the leadership of the country, local government to the academia and media, great importance has been attached to the B&R. All these efforts have strengthened China’s certainty regarding the B&R.

First, Chinese President Xi Jinping has repeatedly emphasized the importance of B&R and B&R has become one of the most important discourses in his speeches and remarks. The national leader’s determination is the deciding factor and the most important pushing force for

11 Amitav Acharya, Barry Buzan, “Why There Is No Non-Western IR Theory? An Introduction”, *International Relations of the Asia-Pacific*, vol. 7, no.3, 2007, pp. 287-312.

12 Yaqing Qin, “Development of International Relations Theory in China”, *International Studies*, vol. 46, no.1-2, 2010, pp. 185-201.

13 Party Committee of Ministry of Foreign Affairs of China, *Diplomatic Theory and Practice Befitting China’s Role as a Major Country since the 18th Congress of CPC*, 2016, Available at: <http://theory.people.com.cn/n1/2016/0317/c40531-28207116.html>, (accessed on 04/05/2017).

14 Party Committee of Ministry of Foreign Affairs of China, *Diplomatic Theory and Practice Befitting China’s Role as a Major Country since the 18th Congress of CPC*, op.cit.

the implementation of the B&R. During the state visits to other countries and important events such as the 2016 G20 Hangzhou Summit, the 2014 APEC Summit in Beijing, he repeatedly emphasized the B&R, which reflected his strong will to implement the B&R well. Every time when he paid state visit to other countries, he would publish an article in the local newspaper focusing on China's relations with the countries and China's effort both domestically and international, welcoming the other countries to participate in the B&R construction, representing it as a global opportunity and one of global benefit for all. The B&R is also the unique public goods that China offers to the world. As Xi Jinping said,

"China's development has benefited from the international community, and we are ready to provide more public goods to the international community. I have proposed the initiative of building the Silk Road Economic Belt and the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road to share China's development opportunities with countries along the Belt and Road and achieve common prosperity."<sup>15</sup>

Regarding the influence and result of the B&R, he emphasized that more than 40 countries and international organizations have signed cooperation agreements with China, forming a growing circle of friends, and although this initiative originated in China, it actually has delivered benefit to the whole world, spurring economic development and creating new jobs.<sup>16</sup>

Second, the B&R has become the important work related with China's development for the central government. Since the it was proposed, the B&R has been given more and more weight in the annual government work report. In the 2014 Report, the B&R construction was listed as one of the major tasks for 2014, particularly the building of the Bangladesh-China-India-Myanmar Economic Corridor and the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor. These projects are expected to speed up infrastructure connectivity with neighbors and enhance international economic and technologic cooperation accordingly.<sup>17</sup>

Besides, it was also regarded as one important part of China's further opening up and development. As Premier Li Keqiang emphasized in his work report of 2015 that China would carry out a new round of high-quality opening up, and through the B&R Initiative, China could strengthen infrastructure connectivity with China's neighbors, simplify customs clearance procedures, and build international logistics gateways. China's interior and border areas would be more open to the outside world, promoting the innovation-driven development of economic and technological development zones, and upgrade both border and cross-border economic cooperation areas.<sup>18</sup>

In the 2016 Report, the B&R construction was elevated to an even more international height

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15 Jinping Xi, "A New Starting Point for China's Development A New Blueprint for Global Growth", 2016, Available at: [http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa\\_eng/wjdt\\_665385/zjh\\_665391/t1396112.shtml](http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/wjdt_665385/zjh_665391/t1396112.shtml), (accessed on 12/04/2017).

16 Jinping Xi, "Jointly Shoulder Responsibility of Our Times, Promote Global Growth", 2017, Available at: [http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/web/ziliao\\_674904/zjh\\_674906/t1431319.shtml](http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/web/ziliao_674904/zjh_674906/t1431319.shtml), (accessed on 12/04/2017).

17 Keqiang Li, *Report on the Work of the Government Delivered at the Second Session of the Twelfth National People's Congress on March 5, 2014, 2014*, Available at: <http://www.24en.com/e/DoPrint?classid=641&id=165409>, (accessed on 12/04/2017).

18 Keqiang Li, *Report on the Work of the Government of 2015, 2015*, Available at: <http://yjby.com/gong zuobaogao/759335.html>, (accessed on 12/04/2017).

and the areas of cooperation are expected to be wider. Concrete measures have also been listed, such as promoting domestic regional development, and opening up and international economic cooperation in a coordinated way, working with other countries and regions to build overland economic corridors and maritime cooperation hubs, and promoting connectivity, economic and trade cooperation, and cultural exchange. Other measures also include developing cooperative mechanisms for achieving compatibility in customs clearance procedure, building international logistics networks, and promoting the development of border economic cooperation zones, cross-border economic cooperation zones, and overseas economic and trade cooperation zones.<sup>19</sup>

As the guideline for China's major plan and work for the next five years from 2016 to 2020, China's 13th Five-year Plan also listed the B&R as one of the Chapters (Chapter 51) among 80 chapters. This chapter includes three sections, which are about the better improvement of the B&R cooperation mechanism, the connectivity of the economic corridors and the establishment of the new chapter for open and inclusive people to people exchanges.

Besides the discursive emphasis, at the administration level, on February 2015, a special leading group on the implementation of the B&R was established by the central government with Vice Premier Zhang Gaoli as the chair, Wang Huning, Wang Yang, Yang Jing and Yang Jiechi as deputy chairs. They all hold important positions in the government and are respectively in charge of infrastructure construction, investment, foreign assistance, people to people exchanges, foreign affairs, and coordination among different ministries, which is considered to be able to better lead and coordinate the implementation of the B&R initiative. Then on March 28, the National Development and Reform Commission, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and Ministry of Commerce jointly issued "Vision and Actions on Jointly Building Silk Road Economic Belt and 21st-Century Maritime Silk Road",<sup>20</sup> which means that the government has moved from the B&R designing and planning period to the real implementation period and the B&R initiative has switched to the operation phase. In March 2016, President Xi Jinping attended the meeting on the promotion of the implementation of the B&R hosted by Zhang Gaoli, calling on the steady realization of the B&R. In May 2017, the B&R Summit was held in Beijing, which with the BRICS Summit held in Xiamen are regarded as the two most important diplomatic events hosted by China in 2017. Twenty-nine national leaders and representatives from over 130 countries and organizations attended the forum. The theme of the B&R, openness and inclusiveness, and win-win cooperation was reemphasized, which injected new vitality for the world economy and increased people's confidence in economic globalization. The forum was viewed as "a global dialogical structure for co-development and co-security, indicative of and facilitates the formation of a new global culture—a world community of a shared future".<sup>21</sup> Following the central government, many provinces also attach great importance to the B&R and put the B&R high

19 Keqiang Li, *Report on the Work of the Government Delivered at the Fourth Session of the 12th National People's Congress of the People's Republic of China*, 2016, Available at: <http://www.24en.com/e/DoPrint/?classid=641&id=165409>, (accessed on 12/04/2017).

20 NDRC, FMPRC and MOFCOM, *Vision and Actions on Jointly Building Silk Road Economic Belt and 21st-Century Maritime Silk Road*, 2015, Available at: <http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/ce/cevn/chn/sghkt/11251121.html>, (accessed on 12/04/2017).

21 Wenshan Jia, "China Defines New Globalization with Its Characteristics", *China Daily*, 2017, Available at: [http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/opinion/2017-06/08/content\\_29667183.html](http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/opinion/2017-06/08/content_29667183.html), (accessed on 16/06/2017).



on their working agenda and try to make use of their own geographical advantages and local resources, taking the B&R as a great development opportunity. According to “Vision and Actions”, different provinces are endowed with different functions for the B&R initiative. For instance, Fu Jian province is regarded as the core area of the “21st Century Maritime Silk Road”, and Guang Xi province is defined as the important door for the connection of the Maritime Silk Road and Silk Road Economic Belt.

In addition to the determination and action of the government, the B&R has become the most popular words in China and has aroused tremendous research interest and report interest from scholars, think tanks and media. On April 8, 2015, the B&R Think Tanks Cooperation Association was established, with the International Department, Central Committee of CPC taking the lead, the State Department Research Center, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, and Fu Dan University as the main participants. Over 60 think tanks working on the B&R join the Association. If searched at Baidu, the most frequently used searching engine in China, under One Belt and One Road, 54,400,000 came out (as of April 4, 2017). If searched under One Belt and One Road conference, there were 20,800,000 results. Academically, if we search the B&R under the paper or article title category in CNKI, the largest academic database in China, as of April 5, 19,982 results came out. If searched by key words, 2,875 results came out. Many books have been published. If searched One Belt and One Road at Amazon, 591 books are listed, whose content covers almost all the aspects about the B&R ranging from basic information, economic cooperation to risk assessment, from finance to language, culture and civilization. People have shown different perception, understanding and suggestions in their papers, articles, reports, and books.

From the above, it can be seen that China has been quite certain in terms of its foreign policy and diplomatic practice. It is also quite predictable that in the years to come, the B&R will continue to be an important platform for China’s to implement its ideas, policies and measures regarding foreign policy and international cooperation. From what the B&R has initiated, we can see that it is not simply about the cooperation between China and the other countries and organizations; but also serves as a mechanism for China to promote globalization.

### **3. The B&R and the Chinese Way to Push Globalization**

Although the B&R is an initiative proposed by China, faced with the changing landscape of globalization, the B&R can push the new round of globalization with China’s ideas and experience. On the one hand, China has repeatedly emphasized its determination to support globalization; on the other hand, what the B&R initiates not only matches the traditional main theme of globalization, but also adds new content for the new round of globalization in terms of equality, openness, inclusiveness and development.

Globalization now does come across problems, which can be reflected from the changes over the past years. The current round of globalization is mainly led by western developed countries and the international order formed after the World War Two mainly follows the ideology of economic liberalism. However, in recent years, the problems have become

increasingly prominent. For instance, inside the developed countries such as the United States, globalization hasn't produced benefit for everyone equally, making some classes marginalized, and the gap between elite class and grassroots has become much wider. Such division also led to the rise of populism in quite a few countries. Internationally, globalization has not benefited all the countries, making some countries marginalized as well. Therefore, it is considered by many that globalization is only partially globalized. With the emergence of the developing countries led by China, India, etc., the advantages of developed countries have become relatively smaller. Globalization is not the synonym of Americanization any longer. Developed countries such as the United States, UK and some other European countries have met more domestic problems, such as the further division between elites and grassroots. These countries are witnessing the change of political tradition, which is the main reason for the occurrence of Black Swans in 2016. The current round of globalization also came across many economic problems, with sluggish economy, financial risk and social turmoil. These domestic problems also influence people's attitudes towards globalization. The world began to be challenged by fragmentation, the loss of the international order and social division, which also makes globalization enter into a critical turning period. Although these difficulties don't necessarily mean that globalization will disappear or go backward, new ideas and measures have to be added so as to inject new vitality and vigor to renew globalization.

China has been quite assured about and repeatedly emphasized its determination to promote globalization, repeatedly saying that it has benefited a lot from the current international system and globalization. China has made and is willing to continue to make its own contribution to the international community. Faced with the trend of deglobalization, China is quite determined and committed to promoting globalization in its own way. President Xi Jinping, in his keynote speech "Jointly Shoulder Responsibility of Our Times, Promote Global Growth" at the 2017 World Economic Forum in Davos, describes globalization as a natural outcome of scientific and technological progress, not something created by any individuals or any countries. It has not only stimulated global growth, but also facilitated movement of goods and capital, and advances in science, technology and civilization, and interactions among peoples.<sup>22</sup>

Actually, globalization has played a very positive role for the progress of the world within the past decades. According to a study by the McKinsey Global Institute, countries with more connections to global flows of trade, finance, people, and data grow up to 40 percent more than less connected countries.<sup>23</sup> President Xi also emphasized the influence of globalization for the world. In his speech at the UN Headquarter in Geneva on January 17, 2017, he emphasized that economic globalization is the great historical trend and the facts in the past have proved that the grand direction of economic globalization is correct.<sup>24</sup> Besides, it has also played an important role for poverty alleviation and will also exert

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22 Jinping Xi, "Jointly Shoulder Responsibility of Our Times, Promote Global Growth", 2017, Available at: [http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/web/ziliao\\_674904/zyjh\\_674906/t1431319.shtml](http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/web/ziliao_674904/zyjh_674906/t1431319.shtml), (accessed on 12/04/2017).

23 Brian Wang, "China's \$4 trillion One Belt, One Road Will Span 65 Countries with 70% of the World's Population", *Chinese American Forum*, vol.32, no.3, 2017, p. 24.

24 Jinping Xi, *Speech by President Xi Jinping at the UN Headquarter in Geneva*, 2017, Available at: [http://www.fm prc.gov.cn/web/ziliao\\_674904/zyjh\\_674906/t1431760.shtml](http://www.fm prc.gov.cn/web/ziliao_674904/zyjh_674906/t1431760.shtml) (accessed on 08/04/2017).

long term influence in this regard. According to Xi,

“With the help of globalization and initiated by the United Nations, the international community has set and implemented the Millennium Goal and 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda and helped to lift 1.1 billion people out of poverty, 1.9 billion people had got the access to safe drinking water, 3.5 billion people can access to the Internet. The world will eliminate poverty completely in 2030.”<sup>25</sup>

His words reflected China’s clear attitudes towards globalization and China’s determination to promote globalization.

The B&R as a special practice will help to promote the new round of globalization in the Chinese way. China, with a history of several thousand years, is a country who has its own accumulated culture and tradition, which as a kind of background influences people’s way of thinking and behavior and shapes the values as well. They also influence a country’s foreign policy in terms of its goal, its style and approach. For instance, for the US foreign policy, democracy and freedom are the core value, which are influenced by its “sense of mission” and “God’s chosen people”. China, influenced by its traditional value of harmony, benevolence and peace, always stresses seeking common ground while reserving differences, and emphasizing harmony without uniformity and inclusiveness. Accordingly, China always attaches great importance to an independent foreign policy of peace and doesn’t seek to impose its will upon other countries. With all these Chinese characteristics, initiatives put forward by China very naturally will reflect Chinese style and Chinese idea. Chiglobalization was coined to describe the China-initiated globalization, which “refers to a process of China-led global search for and a global enlightenment by an alternative mode of life for humanity on the basis of, but above and beyond, the Eurocentric model, or the Anglo/American-centric model, for that matter.”<sup>26</sup> The B&R as the most important initiative put forward by China with China’s determination to support globalization, will promote the new round of globalization in terms of equality, openness, inclusiveness and development promotion.

Regarding equality, the very basic element of globalization is to promote the flow of goods, information and capital around the globe and the whole world is viewed as one entity. However, one of the major problems of the current round of globalization is its partiality: not every country can join equally, and the benefit is also not shared equally, which led to the division within the country and among different countries. According to the B&R initiative, the first step is to increase “connectivity” in the five major areas, namely policy, infrastructure, trade, finance and people. All countries, although with different needs, are equal no matter whether rich or poor, strong or weak. As described in the 2015 “Vision and Action”, “Silk Road Spirit” is described as “historic and cultural heritage shared by all countries around the world”.<sup>27</sup> All countries can make contribution and get benefits from the platform equally. The first focus is the creation of shared transport links, which is expected to

25 Jinping Xi, *Speech by President Xi Jinping at the UN Headquarter in Geneva*, op.cit.

26 Wenshan Jia, “China Defines New Globalization with Its Characteristics”, *China Daily*, 2017, Available at: [http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/opinion/2017-06/08/content\\_29667183.html](http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/opinion/2017-06/08/content_29667183.html), (accessed on 16/06/2017).

27 NDRC, FMPRC and MOFCOM, *Vision and Actions on Jointly Building Silk Road Economic Belt and 21st-Century Maritime Silk Road*, 2015, Available at: <http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/ce/cevn/chn/sght/t1251121.html>, (accessed on 12/04/2017).

strengthen connectivity and partially solve the problem of fragmentation. Connectivity not only promotes more Chinese exports to Europe, but also allows greater European exports to China. B&R serves more as a kind of important public goods and platform for countries to cooperate with the principle of extensive consultation, joint contribution and shared benefits. It encourages partner countries and others to combine comparative advantages, narrow development gaps, accelerate regional integration and achieve common development and prosperity.

The second feature is its openness. Originally, when the B&R was first proposed, it is often heard that “countries along the B&R...” Although according to “Vision and Action”, five general routes are suggested, this doesn’t mean that there are fixed notions about routes and participating partners. The suggested pathways are more as broad organizing notions, around which a series of bilateral and multilateral cooperative activity with a variety of partners may be oriented. Any country who would like to join in is welcome. The B&R is an open mechanism, which offers more diplomatic space for China to consolidate established cooperative relations and open opportunities for forming new ones. For other countries who would like to join, it is also a good opportunity to launch new cooperation under the B&R framework. In this sense, it would lead to integration of Chinese-style or even Asian style, which puts more emphasis on connectivity and strategic synergy (Zhan Lue Dui Jie) between countries. Although most of the time when talking about the B&R, people will first think of the connectivity of the Eurasian continent, the B&R means more of Asia and Europe. During president Xi Jinping’s meeting with president Trump in 2017, Xi said that China also welcomes the United States to participate the cooperation under the framework of the B&R.

The third one is inclusiveness. Being inclusive and tolerant is a typical feature of the Chinese culture. Chinese culture always emphasizes harmony without uniformity, taking the existence of differences as a natural state. Different things put together can also form a harmonious whole. The current round of globalization is mainly led by western ideas and thoughts. The globalization of trade and finance also led to the globalization of western ideas and the direct result is the spread of western value and standards, producing an exclusive order and even “the clash of civilizations”. The rise of terrorism and ISIS are very typical examples. The B&R can be a good supplement in this aspect. Chinese culture always emphasizes peaceful coexistence, seeking common ground while shelving differences, which means countries with different social and political systems, different religions and different civilization can all join; different regional and international organizations can join as well. Regarding the way of cooperation under the framework of the B&R, there is also no fixed standard or rules. The way to cooperate can be very diverse, flexible and inclusive, taking the interests of all parties into consideration.

The fourth one is its development promotion. “Silk Road Spirit” is described as new way to promote world peace and development. No country has ever paid so much attention to development over the past four decades as China has done. Development has been the subject that China has been committed to in the past four decades. China with its efforts since reform and opening up has successfully lifted 700 million of people out of poverty and regarding development China can be a good example for other low-income countries

to learn from. The B&R can serve as a mechanism, by which other countries and regions may benefit from the gains of China's development through win-win cooperation. During the 2016 G20 Hang Zhou Summit, development has been for the first time put into the agenda of global governance, which is a unique way for China to improve global governance. According to the World Bank, about 19 countries along the B&R are middle-and-low income countries, whose total population is 2.4 billion, accounting for 82% of the total such population and the average percentage of its manufacturing industry is only 14.8%. If the B&R can help to promote the development of these countries and change them to middle income countries, the total development landscape of the world will change. This will be the achievement that the current round of globalization couldn't attain.

#### **4. Conclusion**

Faced with the uncertainty caused by volatility, turbulence, and ideological changes all over the world since 2016, China has been quite certain in terms of its strategy, approach and policy. Due to the change of its national power and international influence, China has changed more from a dependent variable into an independent viable, defining itself as a major country of the world. Theoretically, it has formed its own diplomatic theory and approach befitting China as a major country on the world stage based on its own tradition and culture, and diplomatic experiences since the founding of People's Republic of China. Regarding diplomatic practice, China also proposed its own ideas, initiatives and measures. The B&R has become the most important initiative during the over five years for the Chinese government. Under the backdrop of deglobalization of the world, especially since 2016 after the occurrence of a series of black swans, the B&R can serve as an effective platform and mechanism to promote the new round of globalization in the Chinese way, with its emphasis on mutual consultation, joint effort and mutual benefit, an aim of engineering better global governance as well. Its call on equality, openness, inclusiveness and special emphasis on development will add more benign, equal and equitable, more open and pluralistic, more peaceful and harmonious elements than the current round of globalization. It will tackle some of the problems that the current round of globalization has led to. Meanwhile, it has to be kept in mind that although the B&R is of great vision and potential, it is not the solo of the Chinese. It also needs the joint response and effort of the countries involved to make it true. The whole process not only needs the vision but also the great wisdom and determination of all.

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Сун Ђишенг

## **Разумевање Иницијативе појас и пут из перспективе глобализације**

Апстракт

Кинески председник Си Ђинпинг је 2013. године предложио изградњу „економског појаса“ дуж „Пула свиле“ и „Поморског пута свиле за 21. век“, као главних компоненти Иницијативе Појас и пут, са циљем промовисања заједничког развоја, просперитета и сарадње између Кине и остатка света. Овај рад истиче да поред изградње инфраструктуре, огромних инвестиција, сарадње у области производње, повезивања и сл., затим неизвесности током 2016. године, посебно у погледу деглобализације, Иницијатива Појас и пут служи као нови оквир и платформа Кине да настави са промоцијом глобализације на Кинески начин, који је под јаким утицајем кинске културе и традиције и сигурности Кине у погледу своје стратегије, спољне и унутрашње политике. Све оно што Иницијатива појас и пут доноси не само да одговара суштини глобализације, већ јој додаје и нове идеје, као што су једнакост, инклузивност, отвореност и узајамна корист. Успех овог процеса захтева заједничке напоре свих светских учесника, а не само Кине.

**Кључне речи:** Иницијатива појас и пут, кинеска спољна политика, кинеска теорија међународних односа, глобализација на „кинески начин“