

## Session II: Strengthen the Connection of Development Planning

### *Ma Jiali: Out of the Main Road, Do Yourself Well: Creating the Rising “Belt and Road”*

As a think tank under the Central Party School, this Forum has devised concepts such as the theory of China’s rise, and therefore has played a role in the process of China’s reform and opening up. Now the Forum participates in the International Think Tank Alliance of “the Belt and Road” and our views are as follows:

Firstly, the Forum and think tanks in Asia, in Central and Eastern Europe as well as in Western Europe held discussions on the questions of “the Belt and Road” over the past few years. Our main work pattern was to form our own understanding through the study of those questions and through communication with other countries’ think tanks and then to provide advice directly to the Communist Party’s top leadership. Before “the Belt and Road” was introduced, we had already participated in the discussions on and amendments to its strategic concept, to make it more scientific, more reasonable, and more operational.

Secondly, affecting other countries is not our intention. “The Belt and Road” is not proposed specifically for Asia-Pacific, the India Ocean and Central Asia, but mainly for China’s own reform and opening up and development. Our intention is for China’s own development and China’s sound relationship with the surrounding countries and with some Western countries. The concept of “transfer of excess capacity” originally mentioned in the Chinese media is neither scientific nor respectful to the countries involved. We hope to replace it by the concept of “complementary capacity” which not only shows respect for the national dignity of those countries, but also reflects the reality more accurately. The countries along “the Belt and Road” each have their own strengths and characteristics, and China hopes to learn from their strong points to overcome China’s weak points. The Forum once proposed to the leaders that swallowing pride suggested sufficient confidence and such assertive attitude should be used to establish links with neighboring countries.

Thirdly, we need to strengthen our own research and propose suggestions for policies and countermeasures and we can set up institutional or random cooperation with members of the International Think Tank Alliance. We welcome the think tanks from related countries to Beijing

for joint discussions. Our common ideas can be proposed as suggestions directly to the top leaders of the Party and Government. Accordingly, we would like to go out to frankly exchange views with other countries' think tanks. We expect friends from other think tanks to contribute efforts together for the cooperation and development of this area and related areas.

***D. Tsogtbaatar: Inherit the Great History of the Silk Road, Initiate the New Future of the Cooperation among Think Tanks***

For the International Think Tank Cooperation Alliance of “the Belt and Road”, we approve such a creativity to bring together think tanks from all over the world. Think tank is a country's mind of thought, which will have a major impact on the country's decision-making and trend of thought. A global think-tank organization lays a good foundation for sustainable development and the path of future cooperation. Concerning what the cooperative think tanks should do, there are some opinions:

Firstly, constantly seeking opportunities in the process of establishing “the Belt and Road” is a must. The significance of the Silk Road lies in that it is not built in a sudden but conceived in thousands of years of history. “The Belt and Road” also needs to be built on deep foundations. Recalling the origins of the Silk Road's prosperity, we need to actively take concerted actions now, to continue the glory and achievements which were already made hundreds of years ago.

Secondly, trade and investment are the important areas and spaces in today's cooperation. Cultural exchange is also very important. The industry of trade services can not only accumulate wealth, but also promote better understanding among countries. Another industry that can increase profits is sports events. In the framework of the Silk Road, organizing sports events can attract people to support the building of “the Belt and Road”. In addition, tourism, for many developing countries, is an industry that needs a small number of investment, particularly foreign exchange, and is easy to set up. It can not only increase the wealth of the tourist destination country, but also promote direct communication among people from different countries, fostering the concept of spiritual and cultural exchanges among civilizations.

Thirdly, the Mongolia Institute of Strategic Studies has contributions to the building of “the Belt and Road”. Before August this year, Mongolia will hold a symposium on “the Tea Road” which in history connected Mongolia, China, and Russia. Today Mongolia is committed to creating better conditions for trade and investment among three countries. In July

this year Mongolia will hold an Asian Summit, which is to establish a new mechanism to complement the concept of the Silk Road. The Silk Road mainly connects Asia and Europe, but the Asian Summit tries to connect the Silk Road in history with ASEAN, the important cooperation institution in the 21st century. The International Think Tank Cooperation Alliance should actively participate in various activities to elevate “the Belt and Road” initiative to a new height.

***Neil: Not the Marshall Plan—Inclusive Cooperation Forms the Force of Development***

Last year, the concept of “the Belt and Road” has attracted suspects from some critics. They argued that in essence the concept was another version of America’s “Return to Asia” strategy and some others compared it to the Chinese version of the Marshall Plan. Undoubtedly, the concept of “the Belt and Road” must include the relationship between investors and beneficiaries, which was also reflected in the Marshall Plan during the Cold War. However, the fundamental principles of “the Belt and Road” are completely different from the American style of international strategy in several aspects.

Firstly, “the Belt and Road” is not the product of geo-politics or the Cold War mentality. As Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi states, the principle of “the Belt and Road” is inclusive cooperation which requires countries, regions, and cities to perform their real abilities, using elements and endowments to stimulate the real economy and organically combining manufacturing, transportation, communications, and services to the economy. Along “the Belt and Road” are a large number of developing countries that lag behind in manufacturing, in particular, electromechanical manufacturing. Production chain is critical to the industrial development and Shenzhen’s miracle is considerably attributed to its complete industrial chain, providing the Asia-Pacific market and the international market with a large number of high quality products. The Think Tank Alliance of “the Belt and Road” shall, respecting the rules of market economy, seek legal and political support provided by governments, reduce risk and corruption, and study how the Eurasia industrial chain can further develop on the basis of “the Belt and Road” strategy.

Secondly, to form force through interconnection. “The Belt and Road” strategy generates more employment. Employment is an effective solution to the 2008 financial crisis. The Think Tank Alliance shall analyze the real stakeholders and seek and share each one’s proposals. Under the common

goal of development, “the Belt and Road” initiative is part of China Dream and part of the spirit of countries’ development objectives. On such basis, mutual understanding is possible.

Thirdly, local initiative is very important. Countries each have their own abilities and energy and are bound by their own national rules and regulations, and thus have advantages in different areas, creating more opportunities for cooperation. The relationship between Shenzhen and Hong Kong is a very good sample. Economic cooperation between the two is very good. The support from Hong Kong makes Shenzhen a miracle, from a small fishing village to an international financial center within several decades. Guangdong can communicate and cooperate with Guangxi as well as with other provinces to promote common development.

Fourthly, the requirement of a role as think tank is to remind people the ignored aspects in “the Belt and Road”. Eventually it needs to consider the scope of the concept of “the Belt and Road” initiative, whether to consider it from Asia to Europe or to consider it with more openness. What “the Belt and Road” means for non-European-and-Asian countries may contain a larger space for discussion. Therefore, “the Belt and Road” initiative should be a more organic concept. It may be the seed of investment which can be sown outside the countries along “the Belt and Road”. I think the above mentioned points are worth discussing.

***Constantine Korolyov: New Opportunities for Sino-Russian Cooperation: “the Belt and Road” in the Eurasian Pattern***

Russia plays a very important role in the Eurasian pattern, including “the Belt and Road”. Specifically, the Sino-Russian cooperation between the Eurasian Economic Union and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization has laid a good foundation for the development of “the Belt and Road” initiative.

Firstly, Russia has put forward the initiative of the Eurasian Economic Union. Its main purpose is to continue to promote economic development of the countries in the region, to strengthen cooperation, and to play inherent advantages, so as to improve the development environment and people’s livelihood of these countries. “The Belt and Road” initiative will contribute to achieving the objectives of the Eurasian Economic Union, promoting the Eurasian region’s development. Russia highly values the role of “the Belt and Road” in advancing the economic cooperation between China and Russia. Further deepening China-Russia partnership and jointly promoting mutual cooperation in “the Belt and Road” and the

Eurasian Economic Union are conducive to the future establishment of new mechanisms and institutions in “the Belt and Road” framework.

Secondly, the implementation of “the Belt and Road” initiative can absorb resources from the economic, historic, and cultural contact with the neighboring countries. Russia, China and other countries should explore to combine part of each country’s development planning and suggestions to the framework of “the Belt and Road” and start more cooperation projects. China and Russia should further strengthen regional development planning, security risk assessment and other aspects and fields in search of more convergent space for economic development, security cooperation and cultural exchanges. In 2016, China has become Russia’s largest trading partner, and Chinese enterprises have a lot of investment and development in Russia’s energy, space, nuclear energy, etc. Since then, 68 Sino-Russian cooperation projects have been approved and further implemented. Cooperation between China and Russia in areas such as trade, services, and industries will further strengthen in the future, concluding more agreements. So I think the Silk Road Economic Belt can make China and Russia to participate even more actively in more international organizations and other regional organizations.

Thirdly, China and Russia work together in close cooperation in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. Russia attaches great importance to strengthening the comprehensive strategic partnership of coordination with China. In the process, Russia hopes to further safeguard the other signed and recognized principles by the two sides in other documents, and to further strengthen mutual understanding in international and social affairs. Russia, during the visit to China last December, reemphasized that constant coordination of the efforts and cooperation between China and the Eurasian Economic Union and its member states, i.e. “the Belt and Road” initiative, was essential. Such cooperation can help to promote the establishment of a new pattern of global economic cooperation. We are convinced that by strengthening the coordination between countries□ Russia and China will achieve a closer alliance and bring into play the strengths of both sides.

***Jin Xihuan: Connection, Communication, Coalition: The Belt and Road’s Integration into the World***

The Eurasia continent has intricate channels of communication. Along the avenues show the Eurasian civilization and history. Every country sees the important role of the Silk Road in exchanging ideas and cultures. Recently, with the gradual disappearance of the demarcation of the Cold

War, the countries along the Silk Road have realized their integration into the international community and globalized markets, for the first time achieving real coalition.

Firstly, factors of production widely circulate across borders. Guided by mutual investment, the transnational flow of capitals and human resources becomes closer and deeper. Technological exchanges also enable the Central and Eastern Eurasia to achieve great development. Enjoying the peace of Eurasia, countries are full of vitality thanks to a series of roads and dynamic activities represented by the Silk Road. Technology, ideas, art, and the modern experience are also mutually spread and penetrated. China's "the Belt and Road" initiative has solved the countries' problem of lack of funds, and has also eliminated the security and political concerns. This Silk Road is a dynamic highway which promotes the integration of Eastern and Western civilizations.

Secondly, the Silk Road promotes the development of human civilization and history. In the context of the 21st century, the Silk Road must make new changes. It must embrace more countries, must connect the Western and Eastern civilizations, must build a highway for exchanging ideas and technology, must realize the inclusion for diversified common development. The United States, China, Russia, Japan and South Korea have all conceived a similar idea. The development strategies of each country must reflect the spirit of the 21st century Silk Road, mutually respecting and communicating to develop the Silk Road.

Thirdly, we must further expand the scope beyond the traditional Silk Road countries by including other countries such as Serbia. The Silk Road has now become a link to connect different regions in the Eurasian continent. No country alone can solve the problems it confronts. The general challenges of interdependence are the common concerns of all countries, for instance, the decline of the international oil prices due to the imbalance between supply and demand, promoting the countries with great potential to realize development, improving competitiveness and productivity, and reducing economic inequality.

Fourthly, there are two suggestions to the realization of positive cooperation and communication between the European and Asian countries: first, to further upgrade the existing connections among countries; second, data connection must be adapted to our connection. Also, different cultures need to have exchanges. We know that the world is facing the eve of a fourth industrial revolution. Our technological development must give industrialization a new concept.

***Rui Dexing: Poland's Views on "the Belt and Road"—to Business and Communication***

Although "the Belt and Road" is a new thing, the majority of European and Asian countries are familiar with this new concept. Having a good connectivity, Poland and other countries have some foundation for interconnection. Poland is located between Russia and Germany and one-third of its trade volume is with EU countries, thus Poland is a potential bond to achieve "the Belt and Road". The Chinese President Xi Jinping and Poland's leaders have exchanged visits, paving the way for the two countries' business and communication. For "the Belt and Road" initiative, Poland has the following views:

Firstly, infrastructure is important for interconnection. Poland has a good foundation of infrastructure and has a great connectivity with neighboring countries such as Belarus, as well as with cities such as Suzhou and Chengdu. The interconnection between China and Poland is now facing some difficulties because Poland exports a large number of agricultural products to China mainly by sea transport. The focus of developing "the Belt and Road" is to open up a channel to China by road, which is a future challenge we will face.

Secondly, we have a strong will for "the Belt and Road" initiative but we lack funds and political influence to support. This is a challenge for the future, which is also the potential for future development. I think we should make full use of the existing perfect infrastructure to strengthen cooperation. Given the historical experience over the past decades, some people in Poland do not believe that "the Belt and Road" can achieve the planning targets and some even have fear. I think the first thing we need to do is to remove barriers of cooperation between both sides.

Thirdly, we should enhance publicity and the dissemination of information. We should educate and inform the public "the Belt and Road" initiative and reveal its prospects for success. We can develop programs according to audiences, for example, setting up a campaign specifically for the younger generation. In this way, in turn, people in ideas can further inspire the politicians. The President of Poland warmly welcomes such ideas, while Hungary's Prime Minister has already conducted such campaign in Central and Eastern Europe by creating a foundation. In this field, think tank is a bridge between the public on the one side and the governments and media on the other side, working to promote and seek more cooperation opportunities. Think tanks from different countries can communicate and exchange new information, building the bridge of communication for "the Belt and Road" countries.

Fourthly, the success of all plan depends on action. Comparing the

Chinese way and the European way, it is without doubt that the Chinese government is more influential while the Eastern European governments could do nothing. Despite positive responses, if there exists insufficient communication among different agencies, it would be difficult to conduct joint actions to achieve anything. Government may establish mechanisms to promote all sides, such as SMEs, to better utilize the existing infrastructure. It is relatively simple to realize in China and Asia but in Europe, it needs everyone's wisdom and efforts.

***Richard Turcsányi: Central and Eastern Europe in “the Belt and Road”: Developed Countries afterwards***

The key topic for our conference is how think tanks could help governments. Answers from another point of view provide some intelligence and information. I am from Slovakia and I have some participation in the think tank of the Czech Republic, thus I know some ideas of my Czech colleagues. I would like to offer some ideas about promoting “the Belt and Road”.

Firstly, the Czech Republic and Slovakia have a close relationship. The Central and Eastern European countries and other countries have their own views towards “the Belt and Road” concerning their own different national conditions. Many people have not realized that “the Belt and Road” includes not only many developing countries for South-South cooperation, but also some OECD countries. Every country needs development, such as constructing and updating infrastructure. Infrastructure is a focus of “the Belt and Road” initiative, but for developed countries such as the Czech Republic, they have a wide selection of infrastructure-building programs and China's initiative may not be the most competitive one. Compared with China's financial support, cooperation between the Czech Republic and Slovakia and the European Union is more efficient because there is less difficulty in loaning in the European financial market. Some Chinese enterprises do not have positive working experience in Central and Eastern Europe. In countries such as Poland and Hungary, projects undertaken by Chinese enterprises lack transparency and they are more used as tools for publicity and business cards. Therefore, Chinese enterprises must become more transparent so that the stakeholders can monitor and the public can be better informed.

Secondly, cooperation with China in some industries has broad prospects. For instance, the Czech Republic and Slovakia have advantages in the automobile industry, having skilled production system. The two countries may be able to provide support and assistance for Chinese enterprises



to enter the European market. Chinese enterprises, if conduct research and enter service industry, can open branches in the two countries. Joint venture is a good way to enter the European market, therefore the Chinese enterprises can cooperate with the local European companies. The local European companies have more knowledge while the Chinese enterprises can finance. In addition, the Chinese enterprises can consult the local experts, public relations in particular. Thus the two business models of China and Europe can mingle in an international market.

Thirdly, the Slovakia government lacks understanding of the conditions provided by China and awareness of the effect of “the Belt and Road” initiative. Every new government had sought to promote cooperation with China in the beginning but become less active due to a lack of follow-up from China. The Chinese counterpart has similar feelings. Governments should enhance exchanges, learn from each other, and offer greater transparency so as to achieve cooperation on infrastructure construction and other topics.

***Kakha Shengelia: Georgia in Participation, the Silk Road on the Caucasus Peaks***

As a principal and Georgia’s Congressman, I participate in the dialogues among think tanks on “the Belt and Road” on behalf of Georgia. In March 2015, Georgia and China have signed a cooperation framework agreement on “the Belt and Road”, agreeing that bilateral cooperation in areas such as infrastructure has a lot of potential and space. Georgia recognizes the importance of cooperating with China and is eager to participate in “the Belt and Road” initiative.

Firstly, Georgia hopes to combine “the Belt and Road” initiative with the “2020 initiative”. Georgia wishes to strengthen its infrastructure under the framework of China, maximizing Georgia’s advantages in agricultural products. In order to better combine the national development planning with “the Belt and Road”, the Georgia government is committed to further strengthening the domestic transportation infrastructure, including the development of transport facilities, roads, railways, highways and airports, etc. Georgia’s ultimate goal is to play its important role as the main transportation channel in Europe. Georgia, located in the essential node of the Eurasian continent and the junction of South-North and East-West of the European continent, is the gate for China to enter the Central and Western Europe.

Secondly, Georgia and China have signed the agreement to establish a free trade area in 2015. Georgia offers many facilities to China and more

than 2000 Chinese enterprises have already invested in Georgia. Georgia welcomes investment and entrepreneurs from China. Chinese enterprises are very active in Georgia and on the Eurasian stage. Georgia plays an important role of connecting various regions. “The Belt and Road” can further help Georgia to better integrate into the EU market. Georgia is gradually connecting with the EU, enabling goods and commodities to enter the European market and countries along “the Belt and Road” more conveniently. This will increase not only Georgia’s exports but also employment opportunities, capitals and funds.

Thirdly, we participate in the opportunities for partnership cooperation of “the Belt and Road”, especially for enhancing relations with various countries’ business circles to seek bilateral cooperation. By “the Belt and Road” initiative, the Georgia government hopes to further deepen the already smooth cooperation with China to create corridors between Europe and China as well as among the European countries. One of the very important projects in the development of “the Belt and Road” initiative is the establishment of the Asian Railway. Georgia, China’s Xinjiang and countries such as Turkmenistan have established a railway system, which is 1.5 times faster than maritime transportation and will further reduce the cost of transport. Such land transport is a more convenient and less costly way.

***Ernst Suter: From West to East: Conceptions on “the Belt and Road” by the European Think Tank***

The European Progress Research Organization and Foundation has long been studying how to better promote Europe’s economic and political progress and how to advance global coordination to realize continuous dialogue with various strategic partners of the European Union. For how to advance “the Belt and Road” initiative, the European Progress Research Organization holds the view that “the Belt and Road” initiative proposed by President Xi Jinping provides a great number of opportunities, especially under the context that the European continent is confronting unprecedented challenges and difficulties after the 2008 global crisis. Reactivating the Silk Road can further strengthen cooperation between Europe and China. At the EU-China Summit held last year, the two sides have reached a consensus. The flow of trade, finance and investment between China and Europe is also playing an increasingly important role in international community. To achieve a very satisfactory success of this initiative, there still exists many challenges.

Firstly, China, Europe and other participating countries, be it on the Belt

or on the Road, have proposed their own development planning. Every side's development planning entails different concepts of development, thus programs need to be communicated to strengthen the connection of development plans. The successful implementation of "the Belt and Road" initiative requires mutual respect and mutual benefit, taking into account each other's concerns in balance. Only in this way can good cooperation be achieved and opportunities be shared. To make it, it must be recognized that ensuring equal access to markets and market-opening require many measures. Operationable models need to be established to achieve equality among various countries, respecting national particularities and human rights, concerning aspects such as workers' rights, intellectual property rights as well as environmental protection.

Secondly, in the process of implementation, interference by the central government should be avoided, which is not restricted to infrastructure construction. In fact, the white paper of "the Belt and Road" also emphasizes this point by mentioning "five connections". To achieve the concept of "five connections", we need to encourage local talents and local innovation, and in a real sense encourage knowledge-sharing and capacity-building. In the process of implementing creation, we should adopt a step by step form and rhythm. We need to pay attention to the opportunities in these countries according to the realities, and the most important thing is to realize what the obstacles are at present. So we need to adopt a compromising and pragmatic way to avoid political infighting and power struggles which utilize "the Belt and Road".

Thirdly, the EU contains a great deal of profits for "the Belt and Road". Now "the Belt and Road" initiative is newly proposed, and Europe will put its interest into the framework. But the EU's participation and response must be consistent because the EU as a whole should not be scattered in the framework of bilateral relations. The EU's participation in "the Belt and Road" should be unified and coherent for Europe's own strategic considerations and strategic behavior. Although there are many difficult challenges, this new initiative should be a masterpiece jointly formed by our diplomacy, commerce and endurance rather than unilateral affairs. We must achieve mutual respect on the basis of all sides' active participation. Only in this way can the Silk Road, including "the Belt and Road" initiative, realize full potential.

***Xiong Meng: Industry, Progress and Civilization: The Destiny Community of "the Belt and Road"***

The Industrial Association of China, a representative of China's

industrial and commercial sectors, believes that the impacts of world multipolarization, economic globalization and the process of social informationization have triggered profound changes in China's economic structure, bringing many new and increasingly complex problems across the globe. The authority, effectiveness, and governance efficiency of the existing mechanisms of global governance need to be enhanced because there is a trend of fragmentation and an ever-widening gap between governance capacity and the real needs. Economic globalization needs to be rebalanced, and the healthy and sustainable development of the world economy needs a new engine, new power, and new patterns. International cooperation needs new models. Therefore, "the Belt and Road" is very urgent and in need.

Firstly, a new ideal of "moving towards a destiny community" emerges in the process of constructing "the Belt and Road" initiative. "The Belt and Road" is a new mechanism for sharing. In the process of discussing "the Belt and Road", be it political sector or business sector, system construction is laid in an important position. It is promoted from two important areas to explore road interconnection, policy communication and idea exchange. This is the higher-level things that international cooperation needs.

Secondly, "the Belt and Road" is a huge project which requires joint efforts of all countries and needs to be promoted as a whole, to be implemented step by step, and to make breakthroughs at key points. First of all, all countries need to strengthen connections of development planning, having operational programs. This is an important topic for discussion in this Forum. The Industrial Association of China, an organization contacting at the macro-level and micro-level, includes 178 organizations of the Industrial Association, members from 25 provinces and SMEs. Therefore, the Association undertakes the exploration of the responsibility for pragmatic cooperation in aspects of "the Belt and Road", which came up early in China. A five-in-one joint coordinate mechanism, which includes think tanks, unions, exhibitions, funds, and communities, establishes a connectivity platform and network of all factors from implementation's angle to achieve the concept of "the Belt and Road". The grand blueprint of "the Belt and Road" needs to be implemented and advanced.

Thirdly, the primary objective for the Association to propose the five-in-one model is to solve the problem of information asymmetry in international cooperation for capacity, as too many such cases are found in practice. Information asymmetry exists generally among countries, industries, and finances. The five-in-one interactive platform is expected

to solve the real problem. We should set up a think tank for international cooperation for capacity to address the problems of “the Belt and Road”. We can set up bilateral and multilateral think tanks. The Association and Lithuania will establish such a practical think tank to conduct assessment, consultation, technical services, and training around specific projects, with tasks being the bond. Now it has been preparing for several months and plans to set up a union of associations of industry and commerce in the Belt area. Seventeen countries’ associations of industry and commerce have officially confirmed to join the union, including Germany, Lithuania, and Egypt, to formally establish the union of associations of industry and commerce of “the Belt and Road”. More than ten organizations of industry and commerce from other countries are in the process of negotiating. We should hold a variety of meetings and conferences on the theme of “the Belt and Road”. Exhibitions, summits for international cooperation for capacity, seminars, project matchmaking meetings, negotiating meetings and fairs on various industries and fields are good solutions to information asymmetry. In addition, funds can promote the financial cooperation platform for international cooperation for capacity. Communities help to bring our discussions into reality. There will be a community for space distribution and cluster development. Next week we will build an industrial community for international cooperation with a number of countries.

Fourthly, in order to better address information asymmetry and realize the implementation of “the Belt and Road”, information technology should be widely used. Based on Internet Plus, we propose a five-in-one Internet Plus. Cloud network of big data has been gradually built up and the cloud network plan for international cooperation for capacity of “the Belt and Road” will be put into operation in June this year. Technical team is in place and may pilot run now to make sure that it will open officially in June. While we build the Association, we feel that all countries are eager to see the actual advance of “the Belt and Road”. More than 200 projects of international cooperation have already come to our cloud platform. With the advance of the next step, possibly more cooperation projects will appear on the platform.

***Mohamed Latif: The Pearl of the India Ocean: The Maldives and “the Belt and Road”***

No matter how small a country is, it will always be very active to start a business. The Maldives has joined the “the Belt and Road” initiative. China’s President Xi Jinping visited the Maldives in 2014, deepening bilateral relations. A number of memorandums and agreements were

signed by both sides, bringing a lot of investment and projects to the Maldives. The Maldives appreciates the establishment of the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, as well as “the Belt and Road” initiative. The initiative is named after the Silk Road, echoing the history of the Silk Road, but is actually a new, ambitious idea. Sri Lanka, for the following reasons, is very optimistic about the idea.

Firstly, the Silk Road has a long history, being the channel of trade between Asia and Europe for the past centuries. It could be dated back to the 11th or 12th century and its prosperity lasted until the 15th century. The objective of “the Belt and Road” initiative is the pursuit of a new strategy or idea for global development, not merely for a particular country or region. The themes of such an idea are peace and development. On the basis of establishing partnerships, countries should mutually benefit each other and form a destiny community. Therefore, this initiative and its idea are very popular.

Secondly, the Chinese leaders have a full understanding of history, and China is now the world’s second-largest economy. Chinese culture provides the basic concept for China’s development, laying the foundations. The 21st Century Maritime Silk Road is not merely a trade route, but a platform that all participants can be involved. It is an inclusive, rather than exclusive, initiative because everyone can join in. Its objectives are to achieve the development goals of all countries and to create a destiny community, for instance, the sustainable development goals set by the United Nations. Once joined, all sides can work together to realize the same goal.

Thirdly, “the Belt and Road” initiative needs to be carried out effectively. The existing various mechanisms in different countries must be coordinated. Thus a reasonable system needs to be formed in aspects such as coordination and connection among countries, which requires joint research. A joint research network should be set up as a global enterprise to promote and accelerate the implementation of “the Belt and Road” initiative. More research projects and research initiatives could be further proposed so that some research projects could be set up in areas of common interest. The Maldives’s areas of interest include fisheries, environment and renewable ability. In academic circles, not only the history of the Silk Road needs to be reviewed, but also the connotation of “the Belt and Road” needs to be understood in the new era of the Internet.

***Gant Hejduk: Connecting the Cities in Europe and Asia, Creating Global Values***

A basic model of the Silk Road that connects cities is provided here. There are long distances between the cities and how to find the criteria for deciding which ones are able to bring the most valuable interactions? In the global value chain and between two cities, which ones generate interactions with the largest value? Starting from the gravity theories, assumptions can be made that some cities are complementary. We need to verify which theories are valid through a variety of methods.

Firstly, factors, which determine some criteria, needed by a city can be judged from the angle of the economics. Through intuition and research, a method to describe the extent of interaction between two cities can be found. Moving from one city to the other takes time costs. In the late phase of development, a problem will develop in the opposite trend. A very important point is that interaction means the relationship between the two cities and the process of moving from one city to the other. Two cities must have comparative advantages. Some cities comparatively have some new advantages. In Europe, you can see trains coming from Chongqing, bringing with them a lot of resources and different elements. If it continues to run, some directions can be found. People want to dig more potential, but these two ways in fact do not dig the potential of the city. We need to increase the level of interaction between cities.

Secondly, there are other cities. The questions are how to include these cities into a new network and how to expand the activities between two cities to a network. We can create some new achievements which not only affect the starting point and the ending point but also influence costs determined by space distance along the line. The costs cannot be reflected in simple models. Cities along the network should participate in a more comprehensive system. In fact, this is a new and international concept. For example, it includes a global system of production and the production plans of specific countries. Although sometimes the connection is not a straight line, with the operation of some regional powerful countries, such distance, even several thousand kilometers, can bring a lot of benefits and results.

Thirdly, sometimes what we are discussing is not a straight line distance. This also means that the bonus effect of those faraway countries is relatively weak. The impact of gravity also involves other interested parties which can bring greater gravity influence. Think tanks contribute in several ways. First, think tanks should provide a model for analyzing the contemporary Silk Road. Second, think tanks need some testing theories to test whether these cities fully dig their advantages. Third, calculations can be reversed. If the cities along the road are not advantageous or have exhausted all methods, then we can see what other aspects they have from

the perspective of sustainable development and environment.

***Vasily Yuchischein: Independent, Independent, Independent: “the Belt and Road” and Independent Think Tank***

From the think tank’s perspective, think tanks, in “the Belt and Road” initiative, have a unique opportunity to lead the future development as well as to demonstrate and explore how to cooperate and how to form forces. Think tanks should think about how all parties can work together to provide our governments with good recommendations. The Think Tank Alliance is responsible for studying these questions and has produced some results.

Firstly, first of all, we should seek more opportunities for cooperation, give more influence to non-political forces, and open wider space. These efforts must be realized by joint cooperation projects, for example, assessing the possible impacts and reassessing the project at the end. There are two ways to improve the present situation of think tanks of “the Belt and Road”. The first way is to come into contact with the governments, that is, to communicate and connect with its home country’s government. At present, Ukraine’s independent think tank for example, provides research results that are favored by the government but the government is reluctant to offer financial reward. Therefore, it is important for think tanks to achieve economic independence so that think tanks from different countries can work together to connect cooperation and economic development among countries and governments. There is also a very important “independence” which is to have unique views on development and opportunity. Thus, we should find more forces which are willing to support the activities of think tanks. Ukraine has an editorial board that focuses on the public opinions and views of countries involved in “the Belt and Road” initiative. Though it is not a long-term track, experience of this aspect comes into various periodicals, helping us understand the research progress of “the Belt and Road” and related think tanks.

Secondly, platforms and mechanisms are of vital importance, such as communication and interaction in online communities. Via the Internet, not only public education and publicity can be enhanced, but also the role and impact of think tanks can be strengthened. The impact of “the Belt and Road” initiative should be extended to a variety of services and services projects through various channels, for example, providing ancillary services for other countries along “the Belt and Road”. If it touches deeper levels and wider areas, for example in aspects such as ecology, employment, social and food, it will undoubtedly encounter



sensitive problems. Only by addressing these sensitive issues can “the Belt and Road” become successful.

Thirdly, financing channels and funding sources are very important for the independent implementation of “the Belt and Road” initiative. Funding sources can come from the Silk Road funds, from the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, and from other financial institutions. After achieving economic independence, partners of think tanks have the ability to avoid political interference. Today’s meeting may talk about the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank and the Silk Road funds, which are for long-term financing mechanisms rather than for a single project, and it will serve all the involved countries along “the Belt and Road” initiative.

***Noni Zolainna Ismi: Finding ASEAN’s Ambition from “the Belt and Road”***

“The Belt and Road” has close relations with ASEAN. The original Guangxi road corridor is financially supported by the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank and the Silk Road funds. “The Belt and Road” initiative connects with other multilateral cooperation mechanism, for instance, the connectivity plans of ASEAN, which share many similarities with “the Belt and Road” initiative, aiming at improving transport connectivity and making countries within its region closer to each other. This will promote the development of cultural exchanges and tourism.

Firstly, ASEAN put forward many ambitious plans which require a great deal of funds and support from the Asian Development Bank. The countries of the region have a lot of demands for capital and infrastructure development. Now we need to better implement the relevant industrial policies and better integrate capitals. ASEAN has been participating in a number of projects, including ODB, and we are pleased to welcome China to join us. We hope to further strengthen our cooperation with China through the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank and to further strengthen our coordination with China through platforms such as ODA. In terms of infrastructure, China has a good reputation, for instance, terminals, high-speed railways, etc. ASEAN understands that demands in this respect is very clear.

Secondly, “the Belt and Road” initiative will enhance the interconnectivity of land. For example, Kunming’s railways are closely related to the Chinese investment in the maritime Silk Road. Interconnecting with coastal countries in Southeast Asia is now facing many challenges. For example, if we have thousands of isolated islands, whether this region or some domestic markets will also face great challenges. One of the

initiatives is put forward by the interested parties that Indonesia wants to build a high-speed railway to reduce costs. However, this railway is too far for many Chinese. This can be an opportunity for China to better participate in coastal countries in Southeast Asia, managing the interactions with Malaysia, Brunei, the Philippines, etc. from a sub-region perspective. I believe that the railway is also a good opportunity for investment and I welcome Chinese enterprises to invest and set up factories. Coastal countries in Southeast Asia can further discuss how to promote cooperation with China in areas such as activities on land, road transportation of agriculture and some sub-regional areas which are also of great potential. These are also untapped frontier. All infrastructural development can promote further investment. Of course, there are pirates, smuggles and crimes at sea, particularly on unadmitted maritime roads.

Thirdly, economic and social cooperation in the North is a good opportunity, focusing on logistics and port. If fully achieved, it will bring more investment and will promote the interconnection between China and ASEAN, thus advancing the economic integration of Southeast Asia. Also, it will bring more economic opportunities and development opportunities. This force for development will not only promote the development of the existing mechanisms for bilateral cooperation, but also better implementate more existing projects. This will be a win-win economic cooperation.

***Shehab Khan: Side Wings of “the Belt and Road”: Cooperation and Future of South Asia***

In South Asia, the primary understanding of “the Belt and Road” is security. It is not simply about security because the main problem is distrust among countries. We lack confidence in each other. Trade ties among the South Asian countries are not close for in fact the trade volume is very small, less than that of Africa. This is the status quo of South Asia and we have some views.

Firstly, there is a lack of institutional cooperation among countries despite the existence of a meeting mechanism named “Think Tanks in South Asia”. Why does this region have no good interaction economically and politically? In terms of economy and trade, Pakistan has certain industrial capacity and in recent years it built many new industries. Another example is the customs. If its goal is to enhance the level of communication and trade, then it needs related policies. The South Asian region lacks such communication, hence the need to strengthen various institutions for interconnection. At present, there are some policy mistakes and think

tanks have to study these aspects. Some of the existing related institutions are platforms which can serve as the foundation for further construction.

Secondly, inspired by the successful experiences of cooperation in other regions, we can set up a regional University, for example, the University of South Asia, which includes representatives from different countries and from different sectors such as industry and commerce. We can establish a branch of social science in India and other disciplines in the other countries. Such framework of institutions can promote the cooperation among all countries, really exchanging our thoughts and ideas as well as research results. If countries carry out joint research, then it means that related research is not set up for a single country but for the region. If the dream of mutually understanding the latest research progress of colleagues from all countries comes true, it will be a great platform which can also help to have a better understanding of the ideas of Bangladesh and India.

Thirdly, the issues related to security and stability need to find solutions and require the attention from international community. Not many representatives in the Think Tank Alliance are from South Asia. We can invite more representatives from South Asia to discuss related suggestions together. A very important objective of the alliance is to build up more mutual trust, so that there will be good forces to ensure that the South Asian countries would not misunderstand Chinese friends, and vice versa. These platforms can have a public-private ownership which balances efficiency and risk. Could the Chinese government drive “the Belt and Road” alone because the present age is different from the past? Certainly not. It needs the method of PPT.

Fourthly, there is another problem from the opposite side, i.e., what things could not be discussed by the think tank of “the Belt and Road”? These may include the legal systems as well as multi-facet lifestyles of all countries. Every country has its own characteristics. If today you sit together with representatives from India or Pakistan, you may exchange views and point out that Pakistanis nowadays could not pursue their goals directly but through reasonable means. Therefore, we must study the methods for solving these issues.

*Translator / Fang Weiqian*