

## Chapter 10 International Exchanges

### Lesson 2 Sino-Foreign Cultural Exchanges in Modern Times

#### The Belt and Road Initiative

"The Belt and Road" (B&R) is the abbreviation of "Silk Road Economic Belt" and "21st Century Maritime Silk Road". It is an initiative to connect China with Africa and Europe via land and maritime networks along six corridors with the aim of improving regional integration, increasing trade and stimulating economic growth.

The B&R was proposed by China's President Xi Jinping, who drew inspiration from the concept of the Silk Road established during the Han Dynasty 2,000 years ago – an ancient network of trade routes that connected China to the Mediterranean via Eurasia for centuries. In September and October 2013, Chinese President Xi Jinping proposed major initiatives to jointly build the "Silk Road Economic Belt" and the "21st Century Maritime Silk Road" while visiting Kazakhstan and Indonesia.

The B&R comprises a Silk Road Economic Belt – a trans-continental passage that links China with south east Asia, south Asia, Central Asia, Russia and Europe by land – and a 21st century Maritime Silk Road, a sea route connecting China's coastal regions with south east and south Asia, the South Pacific, the Middle East and Eastern Africa, all the way to Europe.

Relying on the existing bilateral and multilateral mechanisms between China and the countries concerned, and with the help of existing and effective regional cooperation platforms, the Belt and Road Initiative aims to borrow the historical symbols of the ancient Silk Road, hold high the banner of peaceful development, and actively develop Economic cooperation partnership to jointly build a community of interests, a community of destiny, and a community of mutual responsibility with political mutual trust, economic integration, and cultural tolerance.



Topography map of the Belt and Road Economic Corridor and its distribution in cities

## The Ancient Silk Road

The Silk Road is an ancient land trade route starting in ancient China and connecting Asia, Africa and Europe. Its initial role was to transport silk, porcelain and other commodities produced in ancient China, and later became the main road for economic, political and cultural exchanges between the East and the West.

The Silk Road is mainly divided into Land Silk Road and Maritime Silk Road in terms of transportation mode.

The Land Silk Road refers to the road explored by Zhang Qian , an envoy sent by Emperor Wu of the Han Dynasty during the Western Han Dynasty. It takes the capital Chang'an (present-day Xi'an) as the starting point, passes Liangzhou, Jiuquan, Guazhou, Dunhuang, Central Asian countries, Afghanistan, Iran, Iraq, Syria, etc. to the Mediterranean Sea, and ends with Rome. This road is considered to be the intersection of ancient Eastern and Western civilizations connecting Asia and Europe, and silk is the most representative cargo.

The Maritime Silk Road refers to the maritime passage between ancient China and the rest of the world for economic and cultural exchanges. It was first opened in the Qin and Han Dynasties. This road starts from coastal cities of China such as Guangzhou, Quanzhou, Ningbo, and Yangzhou, passes through the Southeast Asia, Arabian Sea, and even reaches the east coast of Africa.

With the development of the times, the Silk Road became the general term for all channels of political, economic and cultural exchanges between ancient China and the West. In addition to the "Land Silk Road" and "Maritime Silk Road", there is also the "Prairie Silk Road" that goes north to the Mongolian Plateau and then westward into the northern foothills of the Tianshan Mountains to enter Central Asia.



Route map of the Belt and Road

### Principles of Construction

The construction of the "Belt and Road" adheres to the principles of mutual consultation, sharing and joint construction.

The Initiative abide by the purposes and principles of the UN Charter. It observes the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence, that is, mutual respect for territorial integrity and sovereignty, mutual non-aggression, non-interference in each other's internal affairs, peaceful coexistence and equality and mutual benefit

The Initiative is open for cooperation. It covers, but is not limited to, the area of the ancient Silk Road. It is open to all countries, and international and regional organizations for engagement, so that the results of the concerted efforts will benefit wider areas.

The Initiative is harmonious and inclusive. It advocates tolerance among civilizations, respects the paths and modes of development chosen by different countries, and

supports dialogues among different civilizations on the principles of seeking common ground while shelving differences and drawing on each other's strengths, so that all countries can coexist in peace for common prosperity.

The Initiative follows market operation. It will abide by market rules and international norms, give play to the decisive role of the market in resource allocation and the primary role of enterprises, and let the governments perform their due functions.

The Initiative seeks mutual benefit. It accommodates the interests and concerns of all parties involved, and seeks a conjunction of interests and the "biggest common denominator" for cooperation so as to give full play to the wisdom and creativity, strengths and potentials of all parties.

### **Cooperation priorities**

Countries along the Belt and Road have their own resource advantages and their economies are mutually complementary. Therefore, there is a great potential and space for cooperation. They should promote policy coordination, facilities connectivity, unimpeded trade, financial integration and people- to-people bonds as their five major goals, and strengthen cooperation in the following key areas:

**Policy coordination**      Enhancing policy coordination is an important guarantee for implementing the Initiative. Countries along the Belt and Road should promote intergovernmental cooperation, build a multilevel intergovernmental macro policy exchange and communication mechanism, expand shared interests, enhance mutual

political trust, and reach new cooperation consensus. They may fully coordinate their economic development strategies and policies, work out plans and measures for regional cooperation, negotiate to solve cooperation-related issues, and jointly provide policy support for the implementation of practical cooperation and large-scale projects.

**Facilities connectivity** Facilities connectivity is a priority area for implementing the Initiative. On the basis of respecting each other's sovereignty and security concerns, countries along the Belt and Road should improve the connectivity of their infrastructure construction plans and technical standard systems, jointly push forward the construction of international trunk passageways, and form an infrastructure network connecting all sub regions in Asia, and between Asia, Europe and Africa step by step. At the same time, efforts should be made to promote green and low-carbon infrastructure construction and operation management, taking into full account the impact of climate change on the construction.

**Unimpeded trade** Investment and trade cooperation is a major task in building the Belt and Road. Countries along the Belt and Road should strive to improve investment and trade facilitation, and remove investment and trade barriers for the creation of a sound business environment within the region and in all related countries. China will discuss with countries and regions along the Belt and Road on opening free trade areas so as to unleash the potential for expanded cooperation.

Countries along the Belt and Road should push forward cooperation in emerging industries. In accordance with the principles of mutual complementarity and mutual

benefit, they should promote in-depth cooperation with other countries along the Belt and Road in new-generation information technology, biotechnology, new energy technology, new materials and other emerging industries, and establish entrepreneurial and investment cooperation mechanisms.

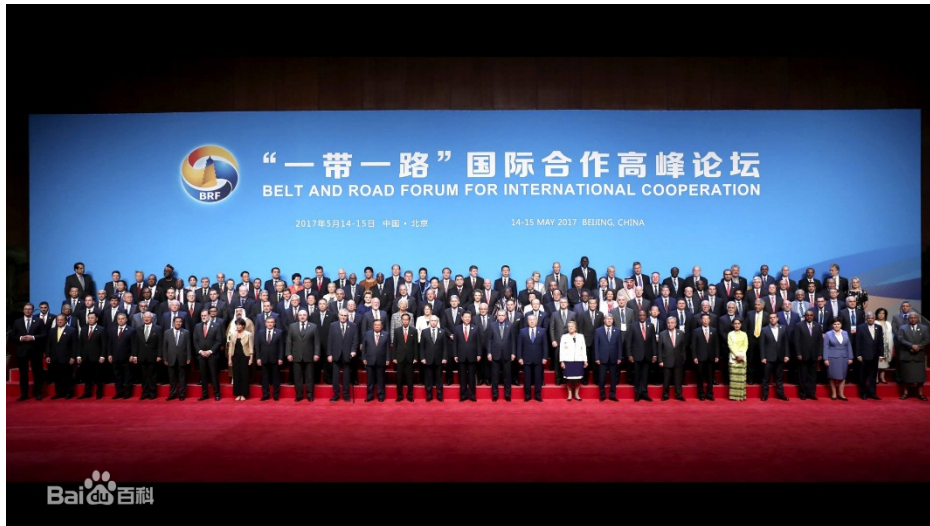
**Financial integration** Financial integration is an important underpinning for implementing the Belt and Road Initiative. Countries along the Belt and Road should deepen financial cooperation, and make more efforts in building a currency stability system, investment and financing system and credit information system in Asia. They should strengthen financial regulation cooperation, encourage the signing of MOUs on cooperation in bilateral financial regulation, and establish an efficient regulation coordination mechanism in the region.

**People-to-people bonds** People-to-people bond provides the public support for implementing the Initiative. Countries along the Belt and Road should carry forward the spirit of friendly cooperation of the Silk Road by promoting extensive cultural and academic exchanges, personnel exchanges and cooperation, media cooperation, youth and women exchanges and volunteer services, so as to win public support for deepening bilateral and multilateral cooperation.

## **Achievements**

Since the launch of the “Belt and Road” initiative in 2013, it has achieved fruitful results. Especially after the first "Belt and Road" Forum for International Cooperation was held in Beijing from May 14 to 15, 2017, a series of achievement lists have been further

promoted, mainly reflected in the following five aspects.



The first Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation

First, the connection between policy and planning has been continuously strengthened. China has signed 103 cooperation documents with 88 countries and international organizations to jointly build the Belt and Road Initiative. In 2017, the first "Belt and Road" Forum for International Cooperation formed a total of 279 achievements. In 2018, 255 of them have been turned into normal work, and 24 of them are being carried out in an orderly manner.

Second, a batch of major projects have achieved early harvest. Among them, a number of major projects such as the Jakarta-Bandung High Speed Railway, Gwadar Port, and the resumption of the Sino-Russian crude oil pipeline have already achieved early harvests, and the construction of the Digital Silk Road in the 21st century is advancing in an orderly manner. The total number of China-Europe trains has exceeded 8,000, reaching 14 countries and 42 cities in Europe.

Third, cooperation in trade and capacity investment has been continuously deepened.



Chinese cumulative trade in goods with countries along the Belt and Road exceeded US \$ 5 trillion, and its foreign direct investment exceeded US \$ 70 billion. China has built 75 overseas economic and trade cooperation zones in the countries along the Belt and Road, with a total investment of more than 27 billion US dollars, creating more than 200,000 local jobs.

Fourth, cooperation in financial services has been strengthened. The Silk Road Fund has signed 19 projects, pledged to invest US \$ 7 billion, and the total amount involved in supporting projects reached US \$ 80 billion. Development Bank, Export-Import Bank, and various commercial banks are constantly increasing their support for the construction of the “Belt and Road” initiative.

Fifth, cultural exchanges have gradually expanded. China initiated the establishment of the “Belt and Road” International Alliance for Green Development and signed cultural cooperation agreements with more than 60 countries. Under the framework of the “Belt and Road”, the scale of two-way tourism exchanges exceeded 25 million.

### **Other cultural exchanges of Arts**

Civilizations are colorful because of exchanges, and civilizations are rich because of mutual learning. Over the past 40 years of reform and opening up, China's foreign cultural exchange and communication work has achieved fruitful results.

According to statistics, in recent years, the average annual total number of Chinese foreign cultural exchange projects and the number of audiences have exceeded the sum

of the 30 years before the reform and opening up. By the end of 2017, China had signed cultural cooperation agreements with 157 countries, and a total of nearly 800 cultural exchange implementation plans had been signed, initially forming an intergovernmental cultural exchange and cooperation network covering major countries and regions in the world. Since 2012, China has held more than 30 large-scale Chinese cultural year (festival) series of activities on five continents, and the cultural exchange and cooperation mechanism between China and Russia, the United States, Europe, Arabia, Africa and other countries has developed to a higher level.

With the help of cultural activities, overseas Chinese cultural centers, Confucius Institutes and other platforms, traditional cultures such as Chinese acrobatics, martial arts, calligraphy, Beijing opera, and Tai Chi have all entered the international stage. "Cultural Year", "National Year", "Exchange Year" and other large-scale international cultural activities allow foreign cultural exchanges to form a brand and synergy.



Young students of the Shaolin Wushu Association practice Shaolin boxing at the 3rd Lithuanian Open Martial Arts Championship

International cultural festivals, events and exhibition brands such as "Happy Chinese New Year", "East Asian Cultural City", "Chinese/African Cultures in Focus ", "Latin American Art Season" and "Meet Beijing" have emerged continuously, becoming important carriers for the widespread dissemination of Chinese culture. The 2017 "Happy Chinese New Year" event held more than 2,000 events in more than 500 cities in 140 countries and regions around the world, and the overseas audience exceeded 280 million. Thousands of international mainstream media in nearly 20 languages have conducted intensive reports, covering nearly 3 billion audiences, affecting the whole world, and becoming an important platform for showing the charm of Chinese culture to countries around the world. In many parts of the world, the Spring Festival has become a localized festival. The Mayor of Helsinki, Finland once said: "The Spring Festival has become a festival for all citizens of Helsinki."

The Confucius Institute uses language as a medium to build bridges between people from all over the world. In 2004, the world's first Confucius Institute was unveiled in Seoul, South Korea. As of December 31, 2017, 146 Confucius Institutes and 1,113 Confucius Classrooms had been established in 146 countries (regions), which played a unique role in enhancing the understanding and friendship between Chinese and foreign people, and promoting the exchange and mutual learning of human civilization.



Confucius Institute at Cleveland state University

The construction of the “Belt and Road” has injected vitality into the intersection of diverse cultures. Over the past 5 years, through the "Silk Road International Art Festival", "Maritime Silk Road International Art Festival", "Silk Road (Dunhuang) International Cultural Expo" and other platforms, as well as the exchange and cooperation mechanisms such as "Silk Road International Theatre Alliance" “Road International Museum Alliance” and “Silk Road International Art Festival Alliance” have consolidated the public opinion and social foundation of the “Belt and Road” construction.

However, China’s implementation of foreign cultural exchange activities has not only stayed at the top level of the national and government level. All kinds of enterprises, social organizations and individuals have also fully exerted their respective strengths, established reasonable linkage mechanisms and cooperative relations. A new pattern has been formed in which multiple subjects such as government, social organizations, and enterprises participate together.

First of all, the international cultural exchange activities led by social organizations related to culture are generally weak in ideology and government behavior, but their activities are usually more flexible, and can resonate with both parties through professional exchanges, thus producing good communication effects. Non-governmental organizations such as the China International Culture Association and the China International Cultural Exchange Center have been committed to enhancing mutual understanding and friendly cooperation between the Chinese people

and the people of the world since their establishment, and have made positive efforts in spreading Chinese culture and enhancing cultural attraction.

Secondly, foreign cultural exchange activities led by cultural enterprises are generally market-based foreign cultural services and export of cultural goods. In recent years, the communication activities led by cultural enterprises have become more frequent and have far-reaching influence.

Finally, non-governmental organizations' cultural exchange activities with foreign countries are often carried out by ethnic Chinese, overseas Chinese, and overseas students who live abroad and care for the motherland. They promoted the official culture through non-governmental friendly work, such as international photography contests and mutual visits by folk art exchange groups. It can be said that the current non-governmental cultural exchange with foreign countries has become an important form of global promotion of Chinese culture outside of government-led and corporate market behavior.

### **Exercises:**

Part I Based on the text, answer the following questions.

1. What do “the Belt” and “the Road” mean in the term “the Belt and Road”?
2. What are the cooperation priorities of the Belt and Road?
3. Can all countries in the world participate in the Belt and Road Initiative? Why?

Part II Group discussion

1. Is your country along the Belt and Road? What impact has it brought to your country?
2. Do you know any other traditional Chinese culture and art, which one do you like best?