

# Chinese Views and Commentary on the “One Belt, One Road” Initiative

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The One Belt, One Road initiative offers considerable potential in several economic, political, cultural, and strategic realms; it also presents many uncertainties and potential concerns. It has clearly become a major foreign and economic policy hallmark of the Xi Jinping government and is consistently supported as such by all manner of Chinese observers. While it is generally not depicted as a means of enhancing Beijing’s influence across Eurasia, there is little doubt that it will be measured in large part in those terms, and in its development impact on the region.

In *CLM* 44, the Silk Road Economic Belt and the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Maritime Silk Road policy initiatives unveiled by Xi Jinping in 2013 were identified as significant elements of Beijing’s current effort to improve ties and stimulate growth and development along its geographic periphery. These initiatives, now termed “One Belt, One Road” (一带一路), were seen as part of an overall Chinese attempt to “leverage China’s growing economic power and influence [along its periphery] in order to strengthen and expand cooperative interactions, create an integrated web of mutually beneficial economic, social and political ties, and ultimately lower distrust and enhance a sense of common security.”<sup>1</sup>

While generally cast in positive terms as an effort to build and deepen positive-sum, mutually beneficial development ties, for some non-authoritative Chinese and many non-Chinese observers, the One Belt, One Road initiative and other economic policies are also seen as a means of strengthening China’s political influence and security situation along its strategically important periphery. As pointed out, such views and Beijing’s increasing capabilities could deepen concerns in some quarters that China might eventually use the initiative to establish unwelcome spheres of influence or generally dominate its neighbors.

Since its announcement, the One Belt, One Road initiative has steadily gained in importance as a major element of Chinese foreign policy. Indeed, it was presented as the key focus of China’s diplomacy in 2014 and 2015, and as an essential element of Beijing’s attempt to deepen economic reform within China and stimulate development in China’s western regions. It is also now described by many Chinese observers as a highly important “strategy” and not just an economic initiative. According to some outside observers, it is “expected to feature prominently in China’s 13th Five Year Plan, which will run from 2016 to 2020 and guide national investment strategy throughout that period.”<sup>2</sup>

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As the apparent significance of the One Belt, One Road initiative has grown, both Chinese and foreign observers have devoted increasing attention to understanding its meaning and relevance not only for Chinese foreign policy and strategy, but also with regard to China's reform process and its relations with a wide variety of nations along its periphery and beyond. This article takes a closer look at the One Belt, One Road initiative, focusing on how it is viewed by Chinese observers and analysts. In particular, it examines how the Chinese define: (1) the content, scope and relevance of the One Belt, One Road concept, especially within Chinese foreign and (if relevant) defense policies and processes; (2) the intentions behind the concept and its desired consequences for China and others; and (3) the possible challenges and problems involved in implementing the concept and its impact on relations with major powers. As in past *CLM* pieces, the analysis of Chinese views in these areas will distinguish between authoritative, quasi-authoritative, and non-authoritative Chinese commentary. The article ends with some comments on the Chinese perspective on the One Belt, One Road initiative and its possible implications for overall Chinese foreign policy. The article also comments on some views drawn from secondary Western sources.

## Content, Scope, and Relevance to Chinese Policies and Processes

As indicated above, the One Belt, One Road initiative consists of the Silk Road Economic Belt and a New Maritime Silk Road. The Silk Road Economic Belt was unveiled by Xi Jinping at Nazarbayev University on September 7, 2013 as part of his state visit to Kazakhstan. The New Maritime Silk Road was announced before the Indonesian Parliament on October 3, 2013, as part of Xi Jinping's state visit to Indonesia.

These two concepts envision the creation of a highly integrated, cooperative, and mutually beneficial set of maritime and land-based economic corridors linking European and Asian markets. Specifically, one authoritative Chinese source (a paper issued by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Commerce in March 2015 and titled "Vision and Actions on Jointly Building Silk Road Economic Belt and 21<sup>st</sup> Century Maritime Silk Road") states that:

The Belt and Road run through the continents of Asia, Europe, and Africa, connecting the vibrant East Asia economic circle at one end and developed European economic circle at the other, and encompassing countries with huge potential for economic development. The Silk Road Economic Belt focuses on bringing together China, Central Asia, Russia and Europe (the Baltic); linking China with the Persian Gulf and the Mediterranean Sea through Central Asia and West Asia; and connecting China with Southeast Asia, South Asia and the Indian Ocean. The 21st-Century Maritime Silk Road is designed to go from China's coast to Europe through the South China Sea and the Indian Ocean in one route, and from China's coast through the South China Sea to the South Pacific in the other.<sup>3</sup>

Quasi- and non-authoritative Chinese sources add that the One Belt, One Road regions include a range of more than 60 emerging market countries and developing countries,

with a total population of over 4 billion and an economic aggregate of about \$21 trillion, “accounting for about 65 percent and 30 percent of the global totals” in land-based and maritime-based economic production values, respectively.<sup>4</sup> Given such statistics and the geographic expanse involved, one quasi-authoritative source, Wu Jianmin—a former president of China’s Foreign Affairs University (attached to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs) and a member of the Foreign Policy Advisory Committee of the Chinese Foreign Ministry—describes the One Belt, One Road as “the most significant and far-reaching initiative that China has ever put forward.”<sup>5</sup>

The importance of the One Belt, One Road initiative is suggested by the fact that Beijing announced in late March 2015 that it had established “a special leading group to oversee the implementation of the Belt and Road initiatives.” The statement said the leading group would be in charge of “guiding and coordinating work related to the initiative. But it did not specify its members.” The office of the group was placed under the National Development and Reform Commission (NDRC), China’s top economic planner.<sup>6</sup>

### *Economic Elements*

According to authoritative, quasi-authoritative, and non-authoritative Chinese sources, the One Belt, One Road initiative consists of several economic and some non-economic elements. Perhaps the most frequently mentioned economic element is a Chinese commitment to invest heavily in a wide variety of infrastructure projects in order to strengthen the economic capacity and “connectivity” among the nations within the One Belt, One Road area and with China’s western regions. For example, in October 2013 remarks delivered at a conference on China’s diplomacy toward the periphery, Xi Jinping stated that China must “make common efforts with relevant countries to accelerate the pace of infrastructure and connectivity construction [and] build well the Silk Road Economic Belt and the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road.”<sup>7</sup>

To reinforce the importance of this key element, one non-authoritative source stresses the “rare” high level of complementarity between the critical demand for infrastructure development among the developing countries of the One Belt, One Road regions and “China’s mature and strong infrastructure construction capabilities and financial strength.” The source adds, a little dramatically, that “it is rare for national development strategies to fit together this well. It is almost as if fate had taken opportunities to simultaneously receive capital and engineering capabilities to those countries, while providing new depth to for China to upgrade its development strategy.”<sup>8</sup> Authoritative and non-authoritative Chinese sources identify several mechanisms designed entirely or in part to support such infrastructure development, including the Silk Road Fund and the Asia Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB), as well as Chinese foreign aid and the private capital of both Chinese and foreign business entities.<sup>9</sup>

More broadly, from the perspective of China’s overall development policies, the One Belt, One Road concept is seen by many Chinese sources as a major (indeed, for some, a key) element of the economic reform process itself. Shortly after being announced, the initiative was explicitly linked to Chinese reforms in a decision of the Third Plenum of

the 18<sup>th</sup> CCP CC in November 2013. The decision states:

We will set up development-oriented financial institutions, accelerate the construction of infrastructure connecting China with neighboring countries and regions, and work hard to build a Silk Road Economic Belt and a Maritime Silk Road, *so as to form a new pattern of all-round opening*.<sup>10</sup>

The quasi-authoritative source Zhong Sheng describes the One Belt, One Road initiative as “a masterstroke of deepening China’s reform and opening up and furthering peripheral diplomacy.”<sup>11</sup>

### *Diplomatic Elements*

Given the scope and significance of the One Belt, One Road initiative, it is not surprising that Foreign Minister Wang Yi stated during the 2015 National People’s Congress that in 2015, “making all-round progress in the Belt and Road initiative” constitutes the “key focus” for Chinese diplomacy.<sup>12</sup> Indeed, as one non-authoritative source states, “The fact that a single initiative is taken as the focus of China’s diplomatic work for the whole year shows the weight given to the One Belt, One Road strategy in China’s diplomacy.”<sup>13</sup>

Furthermore, both authoritative and quasi-authoritative Chinese sources highlight the importance of the One Belt, One Road initiative by stressing its supposed compatibility with the “purposes and principles of the UN Charter . . . [and] the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence: mutual respect for each other’s sovereignty and territorial integrity, mutual non-aggression, mutual non-interference in each other’s internal affairs, equality and mutual benefit, and peaceful coexistence.”<sup>14</sup>

### *Purpose, Priorities, and Intended Consequences*

The scope and content of the One Belt, One Road initiative is rather breathtaking, and its goals quite ambitious. One authoritative source contends that the initiative should promote five major goals among its constituent nation states: “policy coordination, facilities connectivity, unimpeded trade, financial integration and people-to-people bonds.”<sup>15</sup> This source provides perhaps the most comprehensive overall description of the purpose behind the One Belt, One Road initiative:

The initiative to jointly build the Belt and Road, embracing the trend towards a multipolar world, economic globalization, cultural diversity and greater IT application, is designed to uphold the global free trade regime and the open world economy in the spirit of open regional cooperation. It is aimed at promoting orderly and free flow of economic factors, highly efficient allocation of resources and deep integration of markets; encouraging the countries along the Belt and Road to achieve economic policy coordination and carry out broader and more in-depth regional cooperation of higher standards; and jointly creating an open, inclusive and balanced regional economic cooperation architecture that benefits all. . . .

The Belt and Road Initiative aims to promote the connectivity of Asian, European and African continents and their adjacent seas, establish and strengthen partnerships among the countries along the Belt and Road, set up all-dimensional, multi-tiered and composite connectivity networks, and realize diversified, independent, balanced and sustainable development in these countries. The connectivity projects of the Initiative will help align and coordinate the development strategies of the countries along the Belt and Road, tap market potential in this region, promote investment and consumption, create demands and job opportunities, enhance people-to-people and cultural exchanges, and mutual learning among the peoples of the relevant countries, and enable them to understand, trust and respect each other and live in harmony, peace and prosperity.<sup>16</sup>

One quasi-authoritative source similarly describes the One Belt, One Road initiative as having:

[G]reat practical significance for further developing China's relations with Central Asian nations and for deepening regional cooperation. By strengthening policy communication, road connectivity, trade links, currency circulation, and connections among their peoples, the countries involved can tighten their economic links, deepen cooperation among them, and expand the space for development. The Silk Road, the world's longest economic and trade corridor with the greatest development potential, would be revived, with countries along the road poised to gain new momentum for economic development and new opportunities for sharing the fruits of cooperation.<sup>17</sup>

On a more concrete level, in looking at the impact of the One Belt, One Road concept on both China and the Eurasia region, one quasi-authoritative source involved in the study of the One Belt, One Road concept within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) identifies three major geoeconomic and geopolitical purposes:

The aim for China is to speed up the development of the western region. The one belt and one road will turn the western interior into the frontier in opening up to the world, development opportunities in the central and western regions will increase, and new growth points will emerge . . . this will be beneficial for enduring energy sources and resources, and also for transferring strongpoint industries from the eastern to the central and western regions and to countries on our periphery. . . .

For the region, the aim is to enhance Asia's status in the world industrial chain. The majority of Asian countries are developing countries, and their economic development markedly lags behind East Asia and Europe. Through cooperation in points leading forward areas, such as industrial parks, we can enhance Asia's status as an entity in world economy.

For China's relations with the region, the aim is to form a community of destiny. Forming a community of interests, a community of development and responsibility, and a community of destiny is the three-stage aim of China with the frontier countries.<sup>18</sup>

Although few if any authoritative Chinese sources identify specific priorities among the many goals of the One Belt, One Road initiative, as suggested above, "facilities" (infrastructure) is perhaps the most significant, since it provides the necessary means for attaining many of the other goals mentioned above.<sup>19</sup> Moreover, the emphasis on building connectivity is seen by some Chinese sources as a means of addressing "a lack of balance among various sub-regions in Asia in terms of development" and an absence of "strong [economic] bonds" between these sub-regions."<sup>20</sup>

In addition, regarding geographic priorities, at least one quasi-authoritative source states that "Central Asia, Russia, South Asia, and Southeast Asian countries will be given priority consideration . . . while Middle Eastern and East African countries are in the junction" linking the Asian with European countries. The author adds that over the long term, "Europe, the Commonwealth of Independent States, and some African countries may also participate in cooperation."<sup>21</sup>

As the above suggests, another major feature of the One Belt, One Road initiative is that it is purportedly intended to be as open and inclusive as possible, apparently involving few if any requirements or restrictions, and to exist in cooperation with, and not against, other international development initiatives. Many authoritative sources have made this point. For example, Xi Jinping stated in March 2015, at the Boao Forum:

In promoting this initiative, China will follow the principle of wide consultation, joint contribution and shared benefits. The programs of development will be open and inclusive, not exclusive. They will be a real chorus comprising all countries along the routes, not a solo for China itself. To develop the Belt and Road is not to replace existing mechanisms or initiatives for regional cooperation. Much to the contrary, we will build on the existing basis to help countries align their development strategies and form complementarity.<sup>22</sup>

Earlier in March, during the annual NPC session, Wang Yi stated:

We will carry out equal-footed consultation and respect the independent choice of other countries. We will be sensitive to the comfort level of other parties, ensure transparency and openness, align the initiative with the development strategies of other participants, and create synergy with the existing regional cooperation mechanisms.<sup>23</sup>

Zhong Sheng went somewhat further, stating in 2014:

In the course of jointly building the Silk Road Economic Belt, China will

abide by the spirit of openness and inclusiveness. It will not create any mechanism that is closed, rigid, or anti-foreign, much less intervene in another nation's internal affairs or seek to dominate in regional affairs or create a sphere of influence. Both conceptually and practically, the Silk Road Economic Belt is not a Chinese matter, but a joint undertaking of all the countries concerned. It is not China's exclusive interests belt, but a belt where the nations share interests.<sup>24</sup>

Wu Jianmin states that the process for achieving inclusiveness involves the so-called three "togethers" allegedly proposed by Xi Jinping. As Wu writes, "The first 'together' is discussion among the parties concerned to identify projects of cooperation for mutual benefit. The second is working together to realize the projects on the basis of common interest. And the third is enjoying together the fruits of this common endeavor. The 'Belt and Road Initiatives' are inclusive rather than exclusive."<sup>25</sup>

In stressing the open and cooperative nature of the One Belt, One Road initiative, many Chinese sources of all types use the metaphor of a "symphony," involving the participation of many countries, and not a "solo" effort by China alone.<sup>26</sup>

Unsurprisingly, non-authoritative Chinese sources generally provide further details about the purpose and meaning of the One Belt, One Road initiative, at times including a geostrategic interpretation. For example, one source describes the initiative as a "response" to the new geopolitical situation marked by the U.S. "rebalance to Asia," Japan's accelerated "steps toward normalization," India's rapid economic growth, and increasing wariness toward a stronger China among China's "neighboring Asian countries." In this view, the One Belt, One Road concept stands at the core of an effort by China to move away from:

viewing itself as simply an East Asian country to an identity as part of Central Asia and a main power on the Eurasian continent. This means China is clearly returning to a traditional regional focus: paying attention to all of China's neighbors rather than some of them.<sup>27</sup>

From this geopolitical perspective, many of these non-authoritative Chinese sources refer to the One Belt, One Road initiative as a new kind of "strategy" designed to support the larger effort enunciated by Xi Jinping, to strengthen Beijing's periphery diplomacy and create a "new type of major country relations," both of which are based on intensive cooperation and a zero-sum (i.e., "win-win") approach to international politics and economics.<sup>28</sup>

As suggested above, for many non-authoritative Chinese observers, the One Belt, One Road initiative is thus also a major part of China's overall reform-based economic development strategy. In fact, the supposed importance of the One Belt, One Road initiative to the overall Chinese reform process has led one Chinese observer to state:

From the perspective of policy, advancing the 'One Belt, One Road' has

been elevated to the level of China's national development strategy and has become an integral part of China's new round of reform and opening up . . . We can see that the building of 'One Belt, One Road' has been placed in an unprecedentedly important position in China's national strategy.<sup>29</sup>

Another non-authoritative source similarly stresses the nature of the One Belt, One Road "strategy" as a response to a new economic situation:

where the market, energy resources, and external investment integrate extensively. Through the development of the 'Belt and Road' strategy, the effort of opening wider to the outside world, and internal introduction and external linkage, we will effectively promote the adjustment of the economic structure and further promote China's economic transformation and upgrading.<sup>30</sup>

Given its stated importance, for many Chinese observers, the One Belt, One Road concept "has a very important status in the journey of realizing the Chinese dream of the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation." Indeed, the preceding source concludes, rather breathlessly, that

China's peaceful development depends on this move, China's major power diplomacy depends on this move, the community of destiny with which China and the people of all countries in the world to safeguard peace and promote development depends on this move.<sup>31</sup>

For some non-authoritative Chinese analysts, the emphasis of the One Belt, One Road initiative on infrastructure development signifies the "export [of] China's development blueprint to the world."<sup>32</sup> Hence for some Chinese observers, the One Belt, One Road concept does much more than merely stimulate the growth of China's western regions.

For other non-authoritative observers, the natural evolution of such a central strategy— involving a more active Chinese effort to promote both geostrategic relations across Eurasia and China's own economic development program—implies a movement beyond economics alone to cultural cooperation and even military and security affairs. As Li Xiangyang (director of CASS Asia-Pacific and Global Strategic Studies Institute) states:

The one belt and one road with the aims of achieving the "five links" and creating a community of destiny is bound to involve cooperation in a whole series of non-economic fields.

First, ensure the security of transport routes, especially the sea routes. . . . Maintaining sea lane security involves a great deal of nontraditional security cooperation, such as jointly combating piracy, joint sea rescue work, and multinational joint law enforcement. . . .



Second, strengthen antiterrorism cooperation at regional level. Terrorism is the tumor in the political stability and economic development of many countries along the one belt and one road route, and is also the main obstacle to regional cooperation. . . .

Third, establish a mechanism for settling territorial land and sea disputes. . . . We should set up with the countries along the route dispute contingency and settlement mechanisms in order to handle and eventually resolve these disputes.

Fourth, give impetus to common exploitation of marine resources. Under the premise that territorial land and sea disputes cannot be finally settled in a short time, establishing a mechanism for joint exploitation of marine resources is also an essential condition for the normal operation of one belt and one road.<sup>33</sup>

Indeed, for some non-authoritative Chinese military observers, the maritime portion of the One Belt, One Road initiative constitutes “the crucial strategic direction of China’s rise’ . . . indicating a belief that developing the route will be critical to the country’s entire development program.”<sup>34</sup>

As implied above, some non-authoritative Chinese military observers see a clear need for China to strengthen its sea lane security as part of the One Belt, One Road initiative. For some, this could require an enhanced level of PLA access to necessary military support facilities along the maritime route, but not Chinese bases per se.<sup>35</sup> For others, such as the National Defense University professor and strategist Liang Fang, the security of the sea lanes involved in the One Belt, One Road undertaking will ultimately require very significant capabilities, including carrier battle groups on station. In other words, the One Belt, One Road concept is linked, in the views of some Chinese military (and probably mostly naval) analysts, with a robust blue water naval capability dedicated to sea lines of communication (SLOC) defense.<sup>36</sup>

Thus, for at least some non-authoritative Chinese observers, the One Belt, One Road initiative clearly has the potential to affect a wide variety of areas beyond economic growth and development.

## Problems, Challenges, and Implications for Other Powers

Authoritative Chinese sources occasionally reference some challenges and apparent criticisms from outsiders associated with the One Belt, One Road initiative. In fact, many of the above-outlined comments on the inclusiveness and win-win nature of the One Belt, One Road initiative were apparently prompted by such criticisms. For example, in his above-mentioned address to the Boao Forum, Xi Jinping stated that “To develop the Belt and Road is not to replace existing mechanisms or initiatives for regional cooperation.”<sup>37</sup>

Not unexpectedly, quasi- and especially non-authoritative Chinese sources provide the most detailed and extensive discussion of the problems and criticisms involving the One

Belt, One Road concept. Some non-authoritative sources assess the difficulties for the One Belt, One Road initiative resulting from some Western, and in particular American, hesitancy or opposition to the AIIB, a key mechanism for building “infrastructure connectivity,” as noted above.

Lu Feng, a professor of economics at Peking University, asserts that U.S. suspicions and questions regarding the AIIB are “just pretexts to oppose the AIIB and attempts to persuade other developed economies from joining it.” He notes that “the United States is the only major Western power to question the establishment of the AIIB,” and that the fact that many Western countries have now applied to join the bank is indeed “a prelude to the restructuring of the global system.”<sup>38</sup>

For several non-authoritative Chinese observers, this supposed restructuring of the global financial system under the influence of the One Belt, One Road initiative and its funding mechanisms involves a movement away from the “harsh requirements” and interference “with the internal affairs and sovereignty of applicant countries” that allegedly characterize the Western-dominated Asian Development Bank, the World Bank, and the International Monetary Fund, toward a more egalitarian and fair, less ideological and more inclusive financial structure oriented more toward “a community of shared interests,” as noted above.<sup>39</sup> However, several quasi- and non-authoritative sources provide a much less politically charged assessment of the importance of One Belt, One Road and the AIIB mechanism for the evolution of the global order. One quasi-authoritative source, China’s ambassador to the United Kingdom, reiterated that the AIIB is “a supplement to existing multilateral development institutions. It will operate within the global economic and financial framework, and follow established international practices.”<sup>40</sup>

More broadly, Ambassador Liu, in apparent contrast to some non-authoritative Chinese observers cited above, rejects the notion that the One Belt, One Road concept is “a bid by China for greater land and maritime power in response to the US pivot to Asia” or “a bid to offset overcapacity at home or to secure a bigger say in the global financial system.” He opines that “the Chinese mind is never programmed around geopolitical or geoeconomic theory.” Instead, the concept is “an offer of a ride on China’s economic express train. It is a public product for the good of the whole world.”<sup>41</sup>

Among non-authoritative sources, one observer asserts that the AIIB:

will serve as both a complement as well as a competitor to the World Bank and the Asia Development Bank. It is a complement since the market is big enough for more multilateral banks. It is also a competitor because organizers hope the AIIB will eventually become more efficient than the World Bank and ADB are perceived to be, and with a better governance structure that takes into account the experiences and interests of emerging economies like China and India. A bit of competition among these multilateral institutions will be useful in reducing the bureaucracy and improving effectiveness so that these institutions can help countries and regions race to the top.<sup>42</sup>

That said, the contrast between the existing allegedly Western-dominated global and regional financial institutions and the new features of the One Belt, One Road initiative is often cited by both authoritative and non-authoritative Chinese sources when rebutting the notion, put forward by some observers, that the One Belt, One Road concept or strategy resembles, in purpose and structure, the U.S.-led and funded Marshall Plan for the revitalization of Western Europe implemented immediately after World War II.

For example, in his above-cited remarks of March 8 highlighting China's diplomatic goals for 2015, Foreign Minister Wang Yi dismissed comparisons with the Marshall Plan, stating that "it is a product of inclusive cooperation, not a tool of geopolitics, and must not be viewed with the outdated Cold War mentality."<sup>43</sup>

Unsurprisingly, non-authoritative Chinese sources are more blunt and at times polemical in their rejection of the comparison between the One Belt, One Road concept and the Marshall Plan. An editorial in *Global Times* stated:

When the United States proposed the Marshall Recovery Program, it added stringent political conditions, and all European countries that were pro-Soviet were excluded. The United States also developed standards and rules for entering the program even for allied countries, and Western European countries that received assistance could only accept those conditions without conditions. The ultimate result of the plan was the division of Europe. The 'One Belt and One Road' welcomes all countries along the way to join. It does not ask these countries whose allies they are, what religions they believe, what doctrines they follow in their politics, and the nature of their past relationships with China. This plan is both China's comprehensive plan for international cooperation and also a plan for China's own development. . . . This country does not wish to take the old road of traditional geopolitical confrontation, breaking through encirclement, and striving for hegemony. We have resolved to create a precedent for the truly peaceful rise of a great power.<sup>44</sup>

Similarly, a recent Xinhua article states, in greater detail:

While the Marshall Plan excluded communist countries and escalated the confrontation between the Soviet Union and the West, China's 'One Belt, One Road' initiatives are open to all countries that want peace and development, without attaching any additional conditions. . . . 'One Belt, One Road' initiatives will be jointly undertaken by all countries involved and will benefit all parties through cooperation and consultation.

While the Marshall Plan was crucial to Western European countries' rise from the ashes of WWII, it also helped the United States to establish the U.S. dollar-centered Bretton Woods System, which practically ensured the absolute dominance of the U.S. currency. But China does not want

that. As always, China calls for multi-polarization and equal conversations on all international matters.

. . . while the Marshall Plan was, in a sense, a contingency plan which lasted about four years, China's 'One Belt, One Road' initiatives are long-term projects aimed at promoting a more integrated and better-communicated international community prospering economically and culturally.<sup>45</sup>

Other non-authoritative sources take an even more polemical view toward the Marshall Plan when rejecting any comparison with the cooperative, open, "win-win" oriented One Belt, One Road concept. They describe it as "an ideological plan" to ensure U.S. dominance over its European allies, an effort to serve mainly "rich countries" not developing ones, a plan whose benefits were "extended on the basis of political requirements and military cooperation," and thus focused on far more than economic development, and "a U.S.-giving, Western Europe-reviving unequal arrangement at a time when the recipients had no alternative."<sup>46</sup>

Aside from dealing with such criticisms and comparisons, other non-authoritative Chinese sources address various other potential problems and concerns involving the One Belt, One Road concept. As indicated above, many Chinese sources of all types reject the notion that the concept will conflict with or undermine existing cooperation mechanisms and economic structures that fund developing states. One quasi-authoritative source (Zhong Sheng) insists that the One Belt, One Road initiative will instead "infuse new contents and vitality into these mechanisms."<sup>47</sup>

Some non-authoritative sources raise the possible difficulties involved in applying the Chinese approach to aspects of economic development to other nations and localities. For example, one author (Gao Bai, director of Southwest Communications University's High-speed Rail Development Strategic Studies Center) states:

Many practical and effective methods in China may produce the opposite of the desired result outside China. For example, swarming to launch projects when promoting one belt and one road may leave behind hidden perils, and vicious competition has already appeared between various localities in the process of goods train transport between China and Europe. As another example, when operating in China enterprises often place particular emphasis on 'the chief leader.' However, so far the various cases of Chinese enterprises' overseas investment failures show the huge risk of this operational method abroad. Lack of basic understanding of the external environment and acting by taking things for granted will cause major setbacks.<sup>48</sup>

While one non-authoritative Chinese source asserts that, as a core element of China's "go global" strategy, the One Belt, One Road initiative "can help China export its excess capacity to many developing countries on the principle of mutual benefit," in this effort,

Chinese enterprises must effectively “respond to the changes of targeted countries’ political and economic policies, and . . . adapt to local social and natural environments.” To deal with such challenges, the author states that:

China’s leadership . . . should coordinate the going-out strategies of Chinese enterprises to ensure they don’t end up competing with each other and losing money in the process. The enterprises, for their part, should conduct professional risk assessments, devise mature risk management systems and look at the bigger picture. Entry into the world market does not necessarily mean instant profits. The learning curve could be demanding.<sup>49</sup>

In a similar vein, several observers cite possible problems resulting from religious and ethnic issues among the participants in the One Belt, One Road initiative.<sup>50</sup> Other non-authoritative sources address the concern that the One Belt, One Road initiative will “compromise ASEAN’s centrality in the [Asian] region.” One author states “that will not happen given that ASEAN has successfully built a regional economic community and is leading it toward broader East Asian integration.”<sup>51</sup>

## Concluding Observations

The One Belt, One Road initiative is clearly regarded by Chinese officials and observers as a major—indeed in many ways critical—foreign policy undertaking, no doubt in large part because it was announced by Xi Jinping. As indicated above, Xi and other authoritative Chinese sources present it in the most beneficial and non-threatening ways possible, as a historic effort designed to build a network of mutually beneficial economic activities and a larger community of interests (in Xi’s words, a “sense of common destiny”) among China’s neighbors and across the Eurasian continent and the maritime routes between China and Europe.<sup>52</sup> Given its emphasis on “win-win” cooperation, the concept is clearly viewed as a major part of Xi’s overall “China Dream” notion of national revitalization through domestic and foreign cooperation, as well as his effort to develop new types of inter-state relations.

On a more concrete level, the One Belt, One Road concept offers specific benefits to China beyond its contribution to the development of Beijing’s broader vision for Eurasia. Few authoritative Chinese sources stress the domestic Chinese development objectives and the external strategic implications and goals of the One Belt, One Road concept, but they are undeniable.

In the economic realm, despite its near-altruistic goals as stated by many Chinese sources, the One Belt, One Road initiative is, as one non-Chinese observer states, “a tool for promoting national economic development by boosting exports, enhancing access to natural resources, and providing support to important domestic industries.”<sup>53</sup> In this regard, there is little doubt that some, perhaps many, Chinese see the One Belt, One Road initiative as a way of relieving overcapacity in certain Chinese capital goods and construction-oriented industrial sectors.<sup>54</sup> This could become an increasingly important component of China’s adjustment to lower economic growth rates over the long term. It

is also no doubt intended to reduce political and ethnic tensions both within China's ethnic regions and among Central Asian and Middle Eastern states, and to strengthen political ties with energy-rich Central Asian autocracies.

In terms of economic strategy, some outside observers have stated that such enhanced ties could lessen China's reliance on maritime SLOCs for the transport of energy.<sup>55</sup> That said, some non-Chinese analysts argue that the energy-related aspects of the One Belt, One Road concept for China are less important than the need to address overcapacity.<sup>56</sup>

More broadly, as a strategic undertaking, the One Belt, One Road initiative certainly has the potential to enhance Beijing's political influence while hopefully (from China's perspective) reducing concerns that Beijing will employ such greater influence in threatening ways. This is especially relevant to China's relations with those neighbors concerned over its more assertive posture toward maritime territorial disputes in the South China Sea.

Some non-Chinese sources have raised the notion that the One Belt, One Road strategy is intended to position China as the dominant power across Eurasia and in the process marginalize or undermine U.S. influence there and elsewhere. For example, one observer states,

Chinese authorities hope that [the One Belt, One Road strategy] will lead eventually to a situation in which Europe becomes a mere peninsula at the end of the Asian continent, economically integrated with and dependent on the Chinese locomotive, while the United States is relegated to the position of a distant island, floating between the Atlantic and the Pacific. The birth of a transcontinental economic corridor, as envisioned by the Chinese authorities, could change the global landscape, shifting the focus of strategy and commerce to the Eurasian landmass from the waters surrounding it and reducing the significance of U.S. naval supremacy. This corridor could further intensify intra-European divergences over Asia policy, cause deep differences between the United States and its European allies, and sharpen commercial rivalries.<sup>57</sup>

As indicated above, Chinese sources routinely deny and reject the criticism that China will use the strengthened economic and political ties that could result from the One Belt, One Road initiative to dominate, intimidate, or generally leverage or manipulate other states involved in the undertaking. Many Chinese no doubt strongly believe this. As seen above, some non-authoritative sources cast the One Belt, One Road initiative as an alternative to the alleged domineering, politically oriented actions of Western-led development mechanisms such as the World Bank, and contrast it to the U.S.-led Marshall Plan.

However, as noted in *CLM* 44 and above, the One Belt, One Road initiative, as an element in China's periphery diplomacy (and its larger foreign policy), is certainly viewed by some non-authoritative Chinese commentators as a means of shaping the

perceptions of other powers so that they “do not make trouble for China.” As stated in *CLM* 44,

For some such observers, this changed environment could and should eventually result in new security arrangements that favor China, as well as in clearer, more determined efforts to punish wrong-doing as defined by Beijing.<sup>58</sup>

And some military and civilian observers clearly raise military-related strategic implications of the One Belt, One Road initiative for China, including the need to strengthen the security of maritime and land transport routes, to reduce territorial disputes, enhance anti-terrorism efforts, and deepen the joint exploitation of strategic resources. It would be naïve to think that China’s leaders do not contemplate such strategic issues in assessing the possible benefits and challenges of the One Belt, One Road concept, despite the general absence of such thinking in authoritative sources. But whether such thinking results in a commitment to use the growing economic and political influence and capabilities that China might amass through the One Belt, One Road undertaking to “dominate,” “control,” or “manipulate” others, or to develop very large and ambitious power projection capabilities such as expeditionary carrier battle groups (as some non-Chinese commentators allege) is a different matter.

There is perhaps a fine line between exerting influence and shaping the preferences of others through the One Belt, One Road initiative (as China will almost certainly attempt to do) and exercising more coercive and controlling functions. Nonetheless the distinction exists and many Chinese commentators seem to recognize that fact, even if some outside observers do not. That said, it is certainly possible that the One Belt, One Road concept, if successful, could prompt China’s leaders to move toward the acquisition of naval and other capabilities that extend beyond a limited, largely commercial-oriented access to something approaching military bases, most likely in East Africa.<sup>59</sup> However, such a development would almost certainly require a sea change in the longstanding Chinese opposition to the development of permanent, forward deployment oriented overseas bases.

Regarding the challenges and problems confronting the One Belt, One Road initiative, as suggested above, relatively few Chinese sources address this issue. While some non-authoritative sources stress the apparent complementarity between the needs of the other developing states that comprise the One Belt, One Road region and China’s huge financial resources and extensive experience in undertaking infrastructure projects, none seriously examine what would be required to complete such an endeavor in a profitable and genuinely beneficial manner. Many of the nations in the One Belt, One Road region are exceedingly poor, with limited experience in undertaking huge infrastructure projects, and considerable levels of corruption. Moreover, as some non-authoritative Chinese observers suggest, a major increase in the activities of Chinese enterprises across the One Belt, One Road area could generate damaging political and cultural “blowback” that could harm China’s image or increase instability and heighten geopolitical tensions. And

of course, economic failures in One Belt, One Road areas could adversely affect China's own development efforts.<sup>60</sup>

Overall, while the One Belt, One Road initiative offers considerable potential in several economic, political, cultural, and strategic realms, it also presents many uncertainties and potential concerns. It has clearly become a major foreign and economic policy hallmark of the Xi Jinping government and is consistently supported as such by all manner of Chinese observers. While it is generally not depicted as a means of enhancing Beijing's influence across Eurasia, there is little doubt that it will be measured in large part in those terms, and in its development impact on the region.

Ultimately, the success or failure of the One Belt, One Road concept will depend in no small measure on the resources that Beijing is willing and able to devote to it, the adroitness of China's leaders and entrepreneurs in applying those resources to local conditions, and the benefits that it produces not only for China but perhaps more importantly for the recipient nations. For this to happen, the Chinese leadership and the One Belt, One Road supporters within China must get beyond the rhetoric and slogans and develop an action plan based on sound economic principles and an acute understanding of the needs of the One Belt, One Road participants, as well as considerable sensitivity to the fears of outside or peripheral major powers such as India, Russia, Europe, and the United States. Perhaps the foremost danger is that, in developing and implementing such an action plan, this enormously ambitious undertaking will run afoul of the strong tendency of the Chinese political system to overlook deficiencies and outside sensitivities for the sake of pleasing the top leaders.

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## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Although composed of two separate policies, the Silk Road Economic Belt and the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road, we will refer to "One Belt, One Road" as a single initiative throughout the article. Michael Swaine, "Chinese Views and Commentary on Periphery Diplomacy," *China Leadership Monitor*, no. 44 (Summer 2014), <http://www.hoover.org/research/chinese-views-and-commentary-periphery-diplomacy>.

<sup>2</sup> See Scott Kennedy and David A. Parker, "Building China's 'One Belt, One Road,'" Center for Strategic and International Studies, April 3, 2015, <http://csis.org/publication/building-chinas-one-belt-one-road>; and Jacob Zenn, "Future Scenarios on the New Silk Road: Security, Strategy and the SCO," *China Brief* 15, no. 6 (March 19, 2015), <http://bit.ly/1BKwFub>.

<sup>3</sup> "Vision and Actions on Jointly Building Silk Road Economic Belt and 21<sup>st</sup> Century Maritime Silk Road" issued by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Commerce of the People's Republic of China, March 2015, [http://en.ndrc.gov.cn/newsrelease/201503/t20150330\\_669367.html](http://en.ndrc.gov.cn/newsrelease/201503/t20150330_669367.html). Also see Nadège Rolland, "China's New Silk Road," National Bureau of Asian Research, February 12, 2015, <http://nbr.org/research/activity.aspx?id=531#.VOD-XP7mN10.twitter>.

<sup>4</sup> Zhong Sheng, "Open Up Bright Prospects Through Active Action," *People's Daily*, February 17, 2015. For roughly similar numbers, also see Guo Jiping, "Chinese



Solutions' Will Give the World More Choices," *Economic Daily*, March 9, 2015. Guo Jiping is probably a pseudonym for the International Department of the *People's Daily*. The author is indebted to Alice Miller for this information; "Make Concerted Efforts to Promote the Strategy of 'One Belt, One Road' and Create Our New Pattern of All-dimensional Opening up," *Qiushi*, March 1, 2015. "The popular claim is that this modern-day Silk Road will bind together 65 countries and 4.4bn people from Xi'an in western China (the old imperial capital and the start of the original road), across central Asia to the Middle East, Russia and Europe." See George Magnus, "China Must Prove Silk Road Plan is Serious," *Financial Times*, May 4, 2015, <http://www.ft.com/intl/cms/s/0/6e8e7f74-f26d-11e4-b914-00144feab7de.html>.

<sup>5</sup> Wu Jianmin, "'One Belt and One Road,' Far-reaching Initiative," *China-US Focus*, March 26, 2015. Also see Wu Jianmin, "China to Play a Bigger Role as a World Contributor," *China Daily*, April 20, 2015, [http://usa.chinadaily.com.cn/opinion/2015-04/20/content\\_20481447.htm](http://usa.chinadaily.com.cn/opinion/2015-04/20/content_20481447.htm).

<sup>6</sup> "China sets up leading team on Belt and Road initiative," *Xinhua*, March 29, 2015, [http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2015-03/29/c\\_134107435.htm](http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2015-03/29/c_134107435.htm).

<sup>7</sup> Swaine, "Chinese Views and Commentary on Periphery Diplomacy." The concept of "infrastructure connectivity" is often employed to express this feature. See "Full Text: Report on the Work of the Government," *Xinhua*, March 14, 2014, [http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/special/2014-03/14/c\\_133187027.htm](http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/special/2014-03/14/c_133187027.htm). "Vision and Actions on Jointly Building Silk Road Economic Belt." Also see Morgan Clemens, "The Maritime Silk Road and the PLA: Part One," *China Brief* 15, no. 6 (March 19, 2015), <http://bit.ly/1IcFemb>; Nathan Beauchamp-Mustafaga, "NPC Meeting Touts New Silk Road as New Driver for Economic Growth," *China Brief*, no. 6 (March 19, 2015), <http://bit.ly/1ePxFlu>; Kennedy and Parker, "Building China's 'One Belt, One Road.'" "

<sup>8</sup> See "Editorial: The 'One Belt and One Road' is Very Different from the Marshall Plan," *Global Times*, March 3, 2015. An associate research fellow cites the Asian Development Bank estimate that "Asian economies need \$8 trillion between 2010 and 2020 to improve their infrastructure in order to ensure sustained economic development." See Jiang Zhida, "ASEAN will gain from Maritime Silk Road," *China Daily*, March 31, 2015, [http://usa.chinadaily.com.cn/opinion/2015-03/31/content\\_19957721.htm](http://usa.chinadaily.com.cn/opinion/2015-03/31/content_19957721.htm).

<sup>9</sup> Xi Jinping proposed the establishment of the AIIB in his above-mentioned October 2013 speech to the Indonesian Parliament announcing the New Maritime Silk Road. Xi also stressed the importance of the One Belt, One Road initiative as a means of promoting the connectedness of infrastructure and the building of a community of common interests at a December 2013 Central Economic Work Conference. Over 20 countries signed a memorandum of understanding as founding members of the AIIB in October 2014. In November 2014, Xi "announced that China will contribute 40 billion U.S. dollars to set up the Silk Road Fund . . . to provide investment and financing support for infrastructure, resources, industrial cooperation, financial cooperation and other projects in countries along the Belt and Road." See "Speech by Chinese President Xi Jinping to Indonesian Parliament," ASEAN—China Centre, October 2, 2013, [http://www.asean-china-center.org/english/2013-10/03/c\\_133062675.htm](http://www.asean-china-center.org/english/2013-10/03/c_133062675.htm); "Chronology of China's Belt and Road Initiative," *Xinhua*, March 28, 2015, [http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2015-03/28/c\\_134105435.htm](http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2015-03/28/c_134105435.htm); "Decision of the

Central Committee of the Communist Party of China on Some Major Issues Concerning Comprehensively Deepening the Reform,” China.org.cn, January 16, 2014, [http://www.china.org.cn/china/third\\_plenary\\_session/2014-01/16/content\\_31212602.htm](http://www.china.org.cn/china/third_plenary_session/2014-01/16/content_31212602.htm); “The Central Economic Work Conference Held in Beijing Xi Jinping and Li Keqiang Make Important Remarks Zhang Dejiang, Yu Zhengsheng, Liu Yunshan, Wang Qishan and Zhang Gaoli Attend the Conference,” Ministry of Environmental Protection, The People’s Republic of China, December 16, 2013, [http://english.mep.gov.cn/News\\_service/infocus/201312/t20131226\\_265699.htm](http://english.mep.gov.cn/News_service/infocus/201312/t20131226_265699.htm); “China to speed up construction of new Silk Road: Xi,” Xinhua, November 6, 2014, [http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2014-11/06/content\\_18880708.htm](http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2014-11/06/content_18880708.htm); “China pledges 40 bln USD for Silk Road Fund,” Xinhua, November 8, 2014, [http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/china/2014-11/08/c\\_133774993.htm](http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/china/2014-11/08/c_133774993.htm); “Report on the Work of the Government,” delivered at the Third Session of the 12<sup>th</sup> National People’s Congress on March 5, 2015, [http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/china/2015-03/16/c\\_134071473.htm](http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/china/2015-03/16/c_134071473.htm); Xi Jinping, “Towards a Community of Common Destiny and A New Future for Asia,” (speech, Boao Forum for Asia Annual Conference, March 28, 2015), [http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2015-03/29/c\\_134106145.htm](http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2015-03/29/c_134106145.htm); “Vision and Actions on Jointly Building Silk Road Economic Belt”; Zhong Sheng, “Open Up Bright Prospects Through Active Action,” *People’s Daily*, February 17, 2015; “Make Concerted Efforts to Promote the Strategy of ‘One Belt, One Road’”; and Gao Cheng, “Correcting misconceptions about the Silk Road initiatives,” *China Daily*, March 10, 2015, [http://usa.chinadaily.com.cn/opinion/2015-03/10/content\\_19772353.htm](http://usa.chinadaily.com.cn/opinion/2015-03/10/content_19772353.htm). Also see Rolland, “China’s New Silk Road.” The author refers to the One Belt, One Road initiative as part of China’s “infrastructure diplomacy.”

<sup>10</sup> “Decision of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China on Some Major Issues Concerning Comprehensively Deepening the Reform,” China.org.cn, January 16, 2014, [http://www.china.org.cn/china/third\\_plenary\\_session/2014-01/16/content\\_31212602.htm](http://www.china.org.cn/china/third_plenary_session/2014-01/16/content_31212602.htm) (emphasis added).

<sup>11</sup> Zhong Sheng, “Epoch-Making Significance of ‘Silk Road Economic Belt and 21<sup>st</sup> Century Maritime Silk Road’ Proposal,” *People’s Daily*, (1) February 25, 2014. Beyond the notion that the One Belt, One Road initiative can stimulate the further opening of the Chinese economy to intercourse with a range of developing states, Chinese sources provide few if any details on how it can advance specific needed economic reforms within China.

<sup>12</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People’s Republic of China, “Foreign Minister Wang Yi Meets the Press,” March 8, 2015, [http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa\\_eng/zxxx\\_662805/t1243662.shtml](http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/zxxx_662805/t1243662.shtml); also see Zhong Sheng, “Much Expected of ‘One Focus and Two Main Themes,’” *People’s Daily*, March 10, 2015.

<sup>13</sup> Hua Yiwen, “The Time is Just Right for Comprehensively Advancing ‘One Belt, One Road,’” *People’s Daily* (Overseas Edition), March 11, 2015. Also see “An Outlook on China’s Diplomacy,” *Beijing Review*, March 19, 2015, [http://www.bjreview.com.cn/quotes/txt/2015-03/14/content\\_678299.htm](http://www.bjreview.com.cn/quotes/txt/2015-03/14/content_678299.htm).

<sup>14</sup> For an authoritative source, see, for example, “Vision and Actions on Jointly Building Silk Road Economic Belt.” Also see Zhong Sheng, “Always Uphold Consultation, Joint

Development and Sharing—On Objectively and Accurately Understanding ‘One Belt, One Road,’” *People’s Daily*, February 16, 2015.

<sup>15</sup> “Vision and Actions on Jointly Building Silk Road Economic Belt.” The above five major goals of the One Belt, One Road initiative are also sometimes referred to by non-authoritative sources as “the five links”: unhampered trade, road links, currency circulation, linked-up policy, and links between people’s hearts. For example, see the remarks of Li Xiangyang (director of CASS Asia-Pacific and Global Strategic Studies Institute) in Huangfu Pingli and Wang Jianjun, “How to Play Well the One Belt and One Road Symphony,” *Liaowang*, March 26, 2015.

<sup>16</sup> “Vision and Actions on Jointly Building Silk Road Economic Belt.” Senior Chinese officials provide more general descriptions of the purpose of the One Belt, One Road initiative. For example, in announcing the Silk Road Economic Belt, Xi Jinping stated that is designed to “forge closer economic ties, deepen cooperation, and expand development space in the Eurasian region.” See Xi Jinping, “Promote Friendship Between Our People and Work Together to Build a Bright Future,” (speech, Nazarbayev University, Astana, Kazakhstan, September 7, 2013), [http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa\\_eng/wjdt\\_665385/zyjh\\_665391/t1078088.shtml](http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/wjdt_665385/zyjh_665391/t1078088.shtml). (This same speech is included in Xi Jinping’s *The Governance of China* entitled “Work Together to Build the Silk Road Economic Belt.”) Similarly, the New Maritime Silk Road was described by Xi as an effort to “enable ASEAN countries to benefit more from China’s development.” See “Speech by Chinese President Xi Jinping to Indonesian Parliament.” (This same speech is included in Xi Jinping’s *The Governance of China* entitled “Work Together to Build a 21<sup>st</sup>-century Maritime Silk Road.” It was delivered at the People’s Representative Council of Indonesia.)

<sup>17</sup> Zhong Sheng, “New Vitality and New Heights,” *People’s Daily*, September 8, 2013.

Also see “Make Concerted Efforts to Promote the Strategy of ‘One Belt, One Road.’”

<sup>18</sup> See the comments of Li Ziguo, deputy director of One Belt and One Road Studies Center of Ministry of Foreign Affairs Institute for International Studies, in Huangfu Pingli and Wang Jianjun, “How to Play Well the One Belt and One Road Symphony.”

<sup>19</sup> Xi Jinping, “Towards a Community of Common Destiny and A New Future for Asia”; “China sketches out priorities of ‘Belt and Road’ initiatives,” The State Council, The People’s Republic of China, February 2, 2015, <http://bit.ly/1Q6Idnc>; “Foreign Minister Wang Yi Meets the Press,” March 8, 2015; Zhong Sheng, “Beijing, Where the Dreams Begin,” *People’s Daily*, November 10, 2014. Also see “An Outlook on China’s Diplomacy,” *Beijing Review*, March 19, 2015, [http://www.bjreview.com.cn/quotes/txt/2015-03/14/content\\_678299.htm](http://www.bjreview.com.cn/quotes/txt/2015-03/14/content_678299.htm).

<sup>20</sup> Zhong Sheng, “Epoch-Making Significance of ‘Silk Road Economic Belt and 21<sup>st</sup> Century Maritime Silk Road’ Proposal,” *People’s Daily*, February 25, 2014.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid. Also, Zhong Sheng, “China’s Wisdom is Focused on Global Growth,” *People’s Daily*, November 16, 2014.

<sup>22</sup> Xi Jinping, “Towards a Community of Common Destiny and A New Future for Asia.”

<sup>23</sup> “Foreign Minister Wang Yi Meets the Press,” March 8, 2015.

<sup>24</sup> Zhong Sheng, “Writing a New Chapter on the Silk Road,” *People’s Daily*, June 28, 2014. Also see Zhong Sheng, “A Staunch Force for Pushing Forward Global Economic Governance,” *People’s Daily*, November 19, 2014; Zhong Sheng, “Always Uphold

Consultation, Joint Development and Sharing.” According to Jin Zhongxia, head of the Research Institute of the People’s Bank of China, the “‘open’ nature of the Silk Road Fund gives it more flexibility in its future operation, and [could] constitute a fine alternative to the AIIB in financing Asian infrastructure constructions.” See “China pledges 40 bln USD for Silk Road Fund.”

<sup>25</sup> See Wu Jianmin, “China to Play a Bigger Role as a World Contributor,” *China Daily*, April 20, 2015, [http://usa.chinadaily.com.cn/opinion/2015-04/20/content\\_20481447.htm](http://usa.chinadaily.com.cn/opinion/2015-04/20/content_20481447.htm). Wu adds that “The United States, European countries, Japan and the rest of the world are welcome to join this huge undertaking.” Xi Jinping has mentioned aspects of this concept, but it is apparently Wu’s creation. See, for example, Xi’s two speeches announcing the One Belt, One Road initiative, “Promote Friendship Between Our People” (see endnote 16); and “Speech by Chinese President Xi Jinping to Indonesian Parliament” (endnote 9).

<sup>26</sup> See, in particular, “Foreign Minister Wang Yi Meets the Press,” March 8, 2015. Zhong Sheng, in “Always Uphold Consultation, Joint Development and Sharing” (see endnote 14), states:

All countries along the route, big or small, strong or weak, rich or poor, are equal participants of “One Belt One Road.” They can all actively make suggestions but cannot criticize the development of other countries. “One Belt One Road” is not China’s “solo” performance but is a “symphony” with the participation of many countries. . . . The construction of the “One Belt One Road” *will follow international practices, give scope to the decisive role of the market in the allocation of resources, and encourage the active participation of all countries and all types of enterprises.* [My italics]

Also see Guo Jiping, “‘Chinese Solutions’ Will Give the World More Choices,” *Economic Daily*, March 9, 2015; Huangfu Pingli and Wang Jianjun, “How to Play Well the One Belt and One Road Symphony”; and Jiang Zhida, “ASEAN will gain from Maritime Silk Road” (see endnote 8).

<sup>27</sup> Xue Li and Xu Yanzhao, “China Needs Great Power Diplomacy in Asia,” *Financial Times* (Chinese-language version), February 9, 2015, <http://www.ftchinese.com/story/001060539>.

<sup>28</sup> Xue Li and Xu Yanzhao stress the importance in developing the One Belt, One Road strategy of relations with four major powers within the Eurasian area: Kazakhstan (“undoubtedly the strongest country in Central Asia”), Indonesia (“the world’s largest Muslim country”), Japan (“as a global economic heavyweight”), and India (“with unrivaled cultural confidence and high political ambitions”). They argue that Beijing should consider working with these powers to found a “‘G5-Asia’ to strengthen economic ties among this group, thereby promoting overall Asian economic cooperation.” See Xue and Xu, “China Needs Great Power Diplomacy in Asia.” Also see “Make Concerted Efforts to Promote the Strategy of ‘One Belt, One Road’.”

<sup>29</sup> Hua Yiwen, “The Time is Just Right for Comprehensively Advancing ‘One Belt, One Road,’” *People’s Daily* (Overseas Edition), March 11, 2015. Also see Beauchamp-Mustafaga, “NPC Meeting Touts New Silk Road as New Driver for Economic Growth” (endnote 7). This source cites several local Chinese officials touting the One Belt, One

Road concept as a benefit to their local economies and a solution to some of their problems. For example, the Party secretary of Sansha city, which administers China's territorial claims in the South China Sea, said Sansha can play a role in the initiative as a "platform for cooperation" and as a "service base." The mayor of Xi'an, the starting point for the Silk Road Economic Belt, called it a "new window" for opening up toward the West, while the party secretary of Tibet cited the region's role as a "main international thoroughfare" and called it a "historic opportunity" for the region's development. The head of Shaanxi's Development and Reform Commission said the New Silk Road gives the interior provinces access to new growth opportunities and will help China avoid the "middle income trap."

<sup>30</sup> "Make Concerted Efforts to Promote the Strategy of 'One Belt, One Road'." Also see "In Conversation With Xiao Geng: On the 'One Road, One Belt' Initiative," Fung Global Institute, April 21, 2015, <http://bit.ly/1FTtJPO>.

<sup>31</sup> "Make Concerted Efforts to Promote the Strategy of 'One Belt, One Road'."

<sup>32</sup> See "In Conversation With Xiao Geng: On the 'One Road, One Belt' Initiative." Xiao states: "Roads, rails, ports, and airports were critical to China's economic success. China is now looking to share this tested growth strategy with its neighboring countries along the 'One Belt, One Road' route."

<sup>33</sup> Huangfu Pingli and Wang Jianjun, "How to Play Well the One Belt and One Road Symphony." Also see Xue and Xu, "China Needs Great Power Diplomacy in Asia." In assessing the current situation facing the One Belt, One Road initiative, Xue and Xu state: "When it comes to military and security affairs, mechanisms for cooperation among these five countries still aren't mature enough."

<sup>34</sup> Morgan Clemens, "The Maritime Silk Road and the PLA: Part One" (see endnote 7); and Morgan Clemens, "The Maritime Silk Road and the PLA: Part Two," *China Brief* 15, no. 7 (April 8, 2015), <http://bit.ly/1G5NVzn>.

<sup>35</sup> Clemens cites "a lengthy essay published in July 2014 by Liu Cigui, director of the State Oceanic Administration." In the essay, Liu states, "Sea lane security is critical to sustaining the stable development of the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road, while port facilities are the foundation of sea lane security," and that China must therefore help to establish "sea posts" that can support and resupply the ships traveling (and securing) the sea lanes. Liu goes on to state that such "sea posts" could be newly built, either by individual countries or with the help of China, or that China could lease existing facilities. See Liu Cigui, "Reflections on Maritime Partnership: Building the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Maritime Silk Road," China Institute of International Studies, September 15, 2014, [http://www.ciis.org.cn/english/2014-09/15/content\\_7231376.htm](http://www.ciis.org.cn/english/2014-09/15/content_7231376.htm).

<sup>36</sup> Also cited in Clemens, "The Maritime Silk Road and the PLA: Part One." See Liang Fang, "How risky is the maritime silk road? National Defense Reference, February 11, 2015, [http://www.81.cn/jwgd/2015-02/11/content\\_6351319.htm](http://www.81.cn/jwgd/2015-02/11/content_6351319.htm).

<sup>37</sup> Xi Jinping, "Towards a Community of Common Destiny and A New Future for Asia."

<sup>38</sup> Lu Feng, "Harbingers of a Fairer Global Financial System," *China Daily*, April 18, 2015, [http://usa.chinadaily.com.cn/opinion/2015-04/18/content\\_20466038.htm](http://usa.chinadaily.com.cn/opinion/2015-04/18/content_20466038.htm).

<sup>39</sup> See, for example, Zhao Lei, "Projects Promote Fairness as Supreme Value," *China Daily*, April 24, 2015, [http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/opinion/2015-04/25/content\\_20538070.htm](http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/opinion/2015-04/25/content_20538070.htm). Zhao Lei is a researcher in international strategies at the Party School of the

Central Committee of the Communist Party of China in Beijing. Zhao adds that the shift in U.S. attitude toward support for the AIIB “can be attributed to the domestic pressure Washington is facing to accept the fact that the rise of emerging economies is reshaping the world order and the global economy. Perhaps the US has realized that it can maintain its influence in Asia only by working with China.” Also see Xiao Lian, “AIIB Not Aimed At Challenging US,” *China Daily*, March 31, 2015, [http://usa.chinadaily.com.cn/opinion/2015-03/31/content\\_19959719.htm](http://usa.chinadaily.com.cn/opinion/2015-03/31/content_19959719.htm).

<sup>40</sup> Liu Xiaoming, “New Silk Road is an opportunity not a threat,” *Financial Times*, May 24, 2015, <http://www.ft.com/intl/cms/s/0/c8f58a7c-ffd6-11e4-bc30-00144feabdc0.html#axzz3bH6GePCA>.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> “In Conversation With Xiao Geng: On the ‘One Road, One Belt’ Initiative.” Also see Pang Zhongying, “What Does Europe’s AIIB Entry Mean for China and U.S.?” *China-US Focus*, April 1, 2015, <http://www.chinausfocus.com/foreign-policy/what-does-europes-aiib-entry-mean-for-china-and-u-s/>. Pang states that “the AIIB is no different from the World Bank in its nature as an international institution, which solicits member states’ public funds for its capital. It is a public establishment rather than a market-based, speculative and profit-seeking venture; it is an international financial organization in its true sense, rather than a privately owned investment bank.” Pang also endorses Wang Yi’s March 8, 2015, statement (see endnote 12) that “China does not intend to challenge the existing international rules and order by initiating the AIIB, the ‘One Belt, One Road’ program, or other economic programs.” And he adds that: “politically, [the West’s] joining the bank will eliminate the possibility of China dominating it. So it is wise to choose participation rather than confrontation.” Also see Xiao Lian, “AIIB Not Aimed At Challenging US.” Xiao states that “rather than disrupting or sabotaging the existing global financial order, the AIIB is expected to work closely with existing multilateral development banks by providing sufficient financial support for Asia’s infrastructure projects. Unlike the World Bank and the ADB, which are aimed at reducing poverty yet not financially sound to support large-scale infrastructure projects, the AIIB will focus on the latter and play a complementary role in the world economy.”

<sup>43</sup> “Foreign Minister Wang Yi Meets the Press,” March 8, 2015.

<sup>44</sup> “Editorial: The ‘One Belt and One Road’ is Very Different from the Marshall Plan.”

<sup>45</sup> Wang Shang, “Chinese Marshall Plan Analogy Reveals Ignorance, Ulterior Intentions,” *Xinhua*, March 11, 2015.

<sup>46</sup> See Gao Cheng, “Correcting misconceptions about the Silk Road initiatives,” *China Daily*, March 10, 2015, [http://usa.chinadaily.com.cn/opinion/2015-03/10/content\\_19772353.htm](http://usa.chinadaily.com.cn/opinion/2015-03/10/content_19772353.htm); Shen Dingli, “China’s ‘One Belt, One Road’ Strategy is Not Another Marshall Plan,” *China-US Focus*, March 16, 2015, <http://bit.ly/1IQOTQD>; Zhao Lei, “Projects Promote Fairness as Supreme Value,” *China Daily*, April 24, 2015, [http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/opinion/2015-04/25/content\\_20538070.htm](http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/opinion/2015-04/25/content_20538070.htm).

<sup>47</sup> Zhong Sheng, “Epoch-Making Significance of ‘Silk Road Economic Belt and 21st Century Maritime Silk Road’ Proposal (2),” *People’s Daily*, February 26, 2014. Also see Zhong Sheng, “Asia Will Thrive Through Cooperation, Joint Progress,” *People’s Daily*, April 25, 2014. Among non-authoritative sources, see Huangfu Pingli and Wang Jianjun, “How to Play Well the One Belt and One Road Symphony.” This source cites Zhang

Jianping (director of International Cooperation Division of NRDC's External Economic Studies Institute) as stating that the One Belt, One Road concept "does not deliberately pursue the establishment of an economic regional integrated organization or compulsory system arrangements, and will not engage in overlapping or competing with the existing cooperation organizations such as the SCO, the Eurasian Economic Union, and China-ASEAN (10+1); it will inject new content and vitality into them." Also see Li Xin, "Silk Road can find common ground with the Eurasian Economic Union," *Global Times*, April 26, 2015, <http://www.globaltimes.cn/content/918736.shtml>. Li rejects the concern that the infrastructure and transportation projects of the One Belt, One Road initiative will compete with the Trans-Siberian Railway, stating that "the countries involved can negotiate with each other and come up with new policies that could reduce the conflict of interests."

<sup>48</sup> Huangfu Pingli and Wang Jianjun, "How to Play Well the One Belt and One Road Symphony."

<sup>49</sup> See Lu Feng, "Harbingers of a Fairer Global Financial System," *China Daily*, April 18, 2015, [http://usa.chinadaily.com.cn/opinion/2015-04/18/content\\_20466038.htm](http://usa.chinadaily.com.cn/opinion/2015-04/18/content_20466038.htm). Justin Lin, a former senior World Bank official, has similarly stated that "the investment in infrastructure for the 'One Belt, One Road' will create big market demand for cement, steel and aluminum—three of the biggest industries facing overcapacity issues right now in China." See Beauchamp-Mustafaga, "NPC Meeting Touts New Silk Road as New Driver for Economic Growth" (see endnote 7).

<sup>50</sup> Huangfu Pingli and Wang Jianjun, "How to Play Well the One Belt and One Road Symphony." See the remarks by Gao Bai (cited above) and Liu Weiping, a researcher at the China Development Bank Research Institute. Liu states, "At present Chinese enterprises going global find it 'easy to stand up but difficult to stand steady.' When going global and dealing with countries and regions such as Central, South, and Southeast Asia, Africa, Central and Eastern Europe, and the EU, we need to strengthen understanding and studies at the economic, social, legal, political, cultural and religious levels with these countries and regions." He also refers to potential problems over different approaches between Chinese enterprises and participating states over environmental issues, social responsibility issues and human rights. He calls for the Chinese government to "set up a systemic and sustainable research platform to monitor the state of Chinese investments (including problems, needs, scale, and types), step up investigation and study of overseas conditions, and establish a joint mechanism. At the same time, organize and mobilize researchers to go to investment target countries to launch overseas investigation and study work for at least one year on the one belt and one road, and set up a contingent of young researchers who understand the situation in the major countries." For similar concerns, also see Zhao Kejin, "People factor key to 'Belt and Road,'" *China Daily*, May 23, 2015, [http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/opinion/2015-05/23/content\\_20797420.htm](http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/opinion/2015-05/23/content_20797420.htm).

<sup>51</sup> Jiang Zhida, "ASEAN will gain from Maritime Silk Road" (see endnote 8). Zhida is an associate research fellow at the Center for the Belt and Road Initiatives, China Institute of International Studies.

<sup>52</sup> Rolland, "China's New Silk Road" (see endnote 3).

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*

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<sup>54</sup> In addition to the above Chinese sources, see Erica Downs, “Mission Mostly Accomplished: China’s Energy Trade and Investment Along the Silk Road Economic Belt,” *China Brief* 15, no. 6 (March 19, 2015), <http://bit.ly/1Q6L2oo>.

<sup>55</sup> Rolland, “China’s New Silk Road”; Downs, “Mission Mostly Accomplished.”

<sup>56</sup> See Downs, “Mission Mostly Accomplished,” who states:

facilitating the import of oil and natural gas is not as high a priority for the SREB as driving the export of aluminum, cement, rolling stock, steel and the products of other industries in which there is excess capacity in China (*Securities Daily*, January 14). . . . Today, the drivers of economic growth are shifting toward consumption and efficiency gains. Moreover, China’s economic growth is decelerating. . . . Consequently, there is less anxiety in Beijing about securing energy supplies to fuel rapid economic growth and more concern about finding new markets abroad for companies in industries hard hit by China’s economic slowdown.

Also see Kennedy and Parker, “Building China’s ‘One Belt, One Road.’”

<sup>57</sup> See, for example, Rolland, “China’s New Silk Road.” The sources supporting the author’s claimed knowledge of Chinese “hopes” are unclear, however.

<sup>58</sup> Swaine, “Chinese Views and Commentary on Periphery Diplomacy.”

<sup>59</sup> For a discussion of this long-term possibility, see Clemens, “The Maritime Silk Road and the PLA: Part Two.” The author states: “there is very little inevitability concerning the expansion of China’s military presence along the Maritime Silk Road. For any nation, obtaining actual military bases overseas is an expensive, time-consuming, politically and diplomatically fraught process involving real costs and risks.”

<sup>60</sup> For a discussion of the risks confronting the One Belt, One Road initiative, see Kennedy and Parker, “Building China’s ‘One Belt, One Road.’” Also see George Magnus, “China Must Prove Silk Road Plan is Serious,” *Financial Times*, May 4, 2015, <http://www.ft.com/intl/cms/s/0/6e8e7f74-f26d-11e4-b914-00144feab7de.html>.