

中印对话

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BRI: Bringing People and Countries Together

People-to-people Exchange for Stronger Ties



Belt and Road Initiative: A Path to Shared Prosperity

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塞罕坝

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半个多世纪，三代人耕耘。

沙地变林海，荒原成绿洲。

寒来暑往，

塞罕坝机械林场的森林覆盖率

已达80%。

栽种树木按二米株距排开，

可绕地球赤道二圈。

Saihanba is a cold alpine area in northern Hebei Province bordering the Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region. It was once a barren land but is now home to 75,000 hectares of forest, thanks to the efforts made by generations of forestry workers in the past 55 years. Every year the forest purifies 137 million cubic meters of water and absorbs 747,000 tons of carbon dioxide. The forest produces 12 billion yuan (around US\$1.8 billion) of ecological value annually, according to the Chinese Academy of Forestry.

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18th G20 Summit

On September 9 and 10, the 18th G20 Summit took place in New Delhi, capital of India. Chinese Premier Li Qiang attended the event and delivered a speech.

With an eye on the future of humanity, Chinese President Xi Jinping proposed the Global Development Initiative, the Global Security Initiative, and the Global Civilization Initiative, said Li at the first session of the 18th G20 Summit. Noting that humanity shares a common destiny, Li urged all countries to respect one another, seek common ground while shelving differences, and live together peacefully, adding that no one can remain immune in the face of major crises and common challenges. Solidarity and cooperation is the right path for the world.

The G20 members should steadfastly maintain original aspirations for unity and cooperation and shoulder the responsibilities of the times to ensure peace and development, Li said.

He urged the G20 members to act as partners in promoting global economic recovery through effectively strengthening macro-economic policy coordination to convey confidence and provide impetus for world economic growth. The G20 members should resolutely promote economic globalization, jointly maintain the stability and smoothness of industrial and supply chains, and be partners in promoting global open cooperation.

The G20 members should also work together to protect the earth's green spaces, promote green and low-carbon development, safeguard the marine environment, and advance global sustainable development. The G20 needs unity instead of division, cooperation instead of confrontation, and inclusion instead of exclusion, he said.

20th Round of China-India Corps Commander Level Meeting

The 20th round of China-India Corps Commander Level Meeting was held at the Moldo-Chushul border meeting point on the Indian side on October 9 and 10. The two sides held a positive, in-depth, and constructive discussion on resolving the remaining issues along the Line of Actual Control in the western sector of the China-India border in a mutually acceptable manner at the earliest possible date.

Under the guidance of the two countries' top leaderships, the two sides exchanged views in a candid, open, and forward-looking manner. They agreed to maintain the momentum of communication and dialogue through military and diplomatic channels and resolve the remaining issues in an expeditious manner. In the interim, the two sides agreed to maintain the peace and tranquility in the border areas.

Anthology in Honor of Dr. Kotnis Released in India

On September 8, a release ceremony for the new book *Doctor and Internationalist Dwarkanath Kotnis: A Memorial Volume* took place at the renowned Oxford Bookstore in Kolkata, India. The book, translated and published by Sampark Publishing House, is available in three languages: Chinese, English, and Hindi. Chinese Consul General in Kolkata Zha Liyou and former Indian Minister of State for Coal Santosh Bagrodia joined Dr. Mrigendranath Gantait, president of the Acupuncture Association of India and chairman of the Dr. Kotnis Memorial Committee in West Bengal, at the event. Members of the Dr. Kotnis Memorial Committee and media representatives were also present.

India Achieves Historic Breakthrough at Hangzhou Asian Games

From September 23 to October 8, the 19th Asian Games were held in Hangzhou, Zhejiang Province. The event marked China's third hosting of the highest-level international multi-sport competition in Asia, following the 1990 Beijing Asian Games and the 2010 Guangzhou Asian Games. A total of 12,417 athletes from 45 countries and regions in Asia participated. India sent a delegation consisting of 634 athletes and officials. At the end, the Indian contingent secured 107 medals including 28 gold, 38 silver, and 41 bronze, ranking fourth on the overall medal tally. This achievement marked a historic breakthrough for India in the Asian Games.

Round-table Conference for Presidents from Universities of China and India Held in Kunming

On November 9, the Round-table Conference for Presidents from Universities of China and India was held at Yunnan Minzu University. Leaders from Indian universities including K.R. Mangalam University, Indian Institute of Technology Madras, Sri Krishnadevaraya University, Sanskrit University, Central University of Gujarat, and Vellore Institute of Technology as well as Chinese universities including Yunnan Minzu University, Yunnan Agricultural University, Yunnan Arts University, Yunnan Normal University, Kunming University of Science and Technology, and Dali University gathered to engage in in-depth discussions and exchange on China-India higher education cooperation.

28th Meeting of the Working Mechanism for Consultation and Coordination on China-India Border Affairs

On November 30, Director-General of the Department of Boundary and Ocean Affairs of China's Foreign Ministry Hong Liang and Joint Secretary of the East Asia Division of India's Ministry of External Affairs Gourangalal Das co-chaired the 28th Meeting of the Working Mechanism for Consultation and Coordination on China-India Border Affairs. Representatives of government agencies for foreign affairs, national defense, and immigration affairs of the two countries attended the meeting.

The two sides affirmed the positive progress made in negotiations on the China-India border situation and engaged in comprehensive, in-depth and constructive discussions on the current China-India border-related issues. The two sides agreed to earnestly implement the guiding principles of the important common understandings reached by the leaders of the two countries, maintain the momentum of diplomatic and military negotiations, hold the 21st round of Corps Commander Level Meeting soon, promote settlement of issues related to the border areas, and turn the page on the situation in the border areas as soon as possible. Both sides agreed to improve the mechanism for negotiation and consultation, consolidate existing outcomes of negotiation, strictly abide by the agreements signed and confidence-building measures reached between the two sides, and jointly safeguard peace and tranquility in the border areas.

Reaping BRI Rewards

By Bai Ming



Over the past decade, the Belt and Road Initiative has gradually radiated from a few in the know to the broader international community, and now participating countries are working together to transform the beautiful vision into practical results.



Students pose for a group photo with an aid team from the China Foundation for Peace and Development (CFPD) at the groundbreaking ceremony for China-Pakistan Faqeer Primary School in Pakistan's southwestern port city of Gwadar, November 11, 2015. (Photo courtesy of CFPD)

A decade ago, during his visits to Kazakhstan and Indonesia, Chinese President Xi Jinping proposed building the Silk Road Economic Belt and the 21st-Century Maritime Silk Road, which have become known as the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI).

Over the past decade, the initiative has gradually radiated from a few in the know to the broader international community, and now participating

countries are working together to transform the beautiful vision into practical results.

China had not only sowed the seeds of the BRI but has also worked hard to foster its growth and expansion, which has brought great benefits to participating countries.

Although the initiative was originally proposed by China, BRI partner countries have been singing the chorus in harmony ever since. So far, China has signed more than 200 cooperation documents on Belt and Road construction with more than 150 countries and 30 international organizations, covering 83 percent of countries with diplomatic relations with China.

Clearly, building the BRI is a huge systematic project. Its five important “subsystems,” namely policy coordination, connectivity of infrastructure, unimpeded trade, financial integration, and closer people-to-people ties, have been continuously enhanced by the joint efforts of China and many other participating countries.

In the first eight months of 2023, China’s foreign trade volume dropped by 0.1 percent owing to a weak international market. However, the trade volume between China and 152 BRI partner countries surged 3.6 percent. Trade has been accelerated by the BRI.

Of course, even without the BRI, China would still be engaging in economic



A fully loaded China-Europe freight train departs from the Tuanjiecun railway station in Shapingba District, Chongqing. With the expansion of the China-Europe freight train service, China and its partner countries under the Belt and Road Initiative are tightly connected. (Photo courtesy of the Publicity Department of the CPC Chongqing Municipal Committee)

and trade relations with those countries. However, mutually beneficial cooperation under the framework of the initiative has promoted stronger and smoother trade at a high standard.

For example, with China’s help, the China-Laos Railway, the Jakarta-Bandung High-speed Railway in Indonesia, and many other projects have advanced smoothly, bringing more convenience and development opportunities to local people.

Economic globalization has brought remarkable dividends to countries around the world in recent decades. However, problems

that cannot be ignored have also emerged during the process. Therefore, countries should make good use of the BRI as an international public product to overcome obstacles hindering cooperation and achieve greater benefits and win-win results. ■

The author is a researcher with the Chinese Academy of International Trade and Economic Cooperation under the Ministry of Commerce.

BRI: Bringing People and Countries Together

By Sudheendra Kulkarni



India joining the BRI as an equal partner would create enormous new potential for development and prosperity across South Asia, Asia, and beyond.

The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) is the most important and ambitious connectivity and cooperation initiative in the entire history of humankind. No initiative of this kind or scale had been attempted by any other country before. As

it progresses, the BRI will clearly change the destinies of many participating countries as well as the destiny of all humanity.

Since the dawn of history, whenever roads were built, they fostered prosperity and development. Thanks to roads, people travel,

trade happens, economies prosper, and people learn about each other. The most important thing is people-to-people contact. Cultures intermingle. Civilizations interact and integrate with each other. This is what the BRI is doing in modern times. It is not just a project

for economic cooperation and prosperity, which of course it has achieved. Far more importantly, it is tugging civilizations and cultures together and thereby contributing to the evolution of a new form of global culture and civilization.

In medieval times, unfortunately, connectivity became an instrument and facilitator of conflict. This is because some countries in Europe used emerging technologies related to transportation and connectivity to colonize large parts of the world in Asia, Africa, and the Americas. They looted the wealth of nations and enslaved people to steal their labor. This is how India became a colony of Britain and China was semi-colonized by several Western countries. Africa



Tricolored glazed pottery of a camel and a dance troupe. The artistic sculpture is a witness to the advanced development of culture, art and craftsmanship in the Tang Dynasty (618-907) and the exchange and integration on the Silk Road. (Photo by Qin Bin)

Since the dawn of history, whenever roads were built, they fostered prosperity and development. Thanks to roads, people travel, trade happens, economies prosper, and people learn about each other.

became a continent of darkness, a darkness of slavery in Europe. There were large-scale genocides of native people in North America and even parts of South America. Sadly, in these situations, connectivity became a curse.

The end of colonialism and

imperialism marked a new beginning for the destiny of humankind. Countries in Asia, Africa, and Latin America began to explore

new paths for development and cooperation. With the expansion of this phenomenon, a major contribution emerged when China adopted a policy of reform and opening up more than four decades ago. This brought miraculous prosperity and development

to China. A decade ago, China enhanced its opening up to a new dimension with the launch of the BRI. The initiative seeks to connect China with all its neighboring countries in South Asia, Southeast Asia, Central Asia, West Asia, and onwards to connect to Europe, Africa, and the Americas. For this reason, I believe the BRI is the most ambitious connectivity project in the history of humankind. Fearing greater connectivity and shared prosperity across the Global South, some in Western countries have spread the lie that the BRI seeks to colonize partner countries, lock them under heavy debt obligation, and force them to be dependent on China. In reality, the BRI is a method to achieve shared and



A dragon dance is performed to celebrate the Chinese Lunar New Year in Sao Paulo, Brazil, February 4, 2023. (Photo from VCG)

common prosperity.

This year marks the 10th anniversary of the BRI. I have always been a strong champion of India joining the BRI. I believe that India joining the BRI as an equal partner would create enormous new potential for development and prosperity in South Asia, Asia, and beyond. After all, India and China are neighbors. If India and China cooperate on connectivity and other fields, it would foster prosperity for the entire population of South Asia, which is the most populous region in the world with a combined population of nearly 1.8 billion. All these people can be lifted out of poverty and

underdevelopment. This is why it is important that China, India, Pakistan, and other countries in South Asia come together.

The BRI seeks to bring countries together for cooperation and end the human history of conflict. We've seen too many conflicts throughout the world as of late. Conflict produces bloodshed and tears communities and countries apart. Nobody benefits from conflict. If we learn to live together and build new pathways for cooperation, new opportunities will arise. That's what the BRI is doing. Recently, China announced new tools of global development to accompany

the BRI. Chinese President Xi Jinping announced three other initiatives: the Global Development Initiative, the Global Security Initiative, and the Global Civilization Initiative. All these initiatives intend to kindle a new chapter of human progress and build a new world order based on peace, cooperation, and common prosperity. Making it happen is a big responsibility for all people, especially the young. Youth, cultural organizations, think tanks, and media outlets should work together to create a new understanding and a sense of awareness that all of us belong to one human family regardless of nationality, culture, language, or ethnicity. As we celebrate the 10th anniversary of the BRI, let's pledge to work together. We can indeed create a better tomorrow for everyone in the world. No one person or nation should be left behind. 🌏

The author is the founder and chairman of the Forum for a New South Asia.



龙象共舞 相互成就

China and India Work Together
for Common Development



BRI for the World

By Wang Haifeng

Since the Belt and Road Initiative was announced 10 years ago, all participating countries and regions have gained tangible benefits through mutually beneficial cooperation efforts.

The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) was proposed by Chinese President Xi Jinping in 2013. After 10 years of exploration through joint efforts, the BRI has become a path to peace, prosperity, openness, green development, innovation, and social progress shared by all participants, emerging as an impressive practice in building a global community of shared future.

The BRI is a path to social progress and peace through inheriting the historical and cultural treasures of the ancient Silk Road dating back more than 2,000 years and leveraging the Chinese wisdom embodied in the Global Civilization Initiative and the Global Security Initiative. Love for peace is rooted in Chinese civilization. When the

four great inventions of ancient China—papermaking, the compass, gunpowder, and printing—were spread along the ancient land and maritime Silk Roads to countries and regions around the globe, China neither violently set up colonies overseas nor imposed its own language and writing system on people of other countries, not to mention treated them as slaves. Meanwhile, Buddhist culture, which originated in ancient India, was introduced to China through the ancient routes and harmoniously integrated with China's indigenous Confucian and Taoist cultures, becoming a crucial cultural gene of Chinese civilization. Many Western scholars find it difficult to understand how there has been no civilizational conflict between Confucian, Taoist, and Buddhist cultures throughout the development of

Chinese civilization. The Chinese nation cherishes the idea “Whoever comes is a guest” in international exchange and does not carry the gene for hegemony in the blood. Over the past 10 years, the peoples of the countries participating in Belt and Road construction have peacefully coexisted with mutual respect and shared development opportunities and fruits under existing international rules and systems. All parties have gained tangible benefits through mutually beneficial cooperation efforts.

The BRI is a path to openness and innovation that complements and innovates the existing international cooperation system, fostering a new type of globalization, creating new cooperation platforms, and providing public goods for developing countries. The BRI is open and inclusive, and therefore non-exclusive and non-discriminatory. China stands ready to carry out mutual learning on state governance and development experience with other countries, encourages local governments, social organizations and companies to engage in Belt and Road construction, and welcomes the participation of international organizations and developed countries in BRI cooperation. As of June 2023, China had signed more than 200 BRI cooperation agreements with more than 150 countries and 30 international organizations. Furthermore, third-party market cooperation documents signed between China and many developed countries have provided easy access to BRI projects for enterprises from these countries. The Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation, the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, the China International Import Expo, and the China-Europe Railway Express have all become flagship innovations in international cooperation widely recognized by the international community, especially by developing countries.

The BRI is a path to prosperity and



A freight train from central China's Wuhan City arrives at the Venissieux station in Lyon, France, April 21, 2016. This marked the first trip of the China-Europe Railway Express bound for France. As of September 2023, China-Europe freight trains had made 77,000 trips, transporting 7.31 million TEUs of goods with a total value exceeding US\$340 billion. (Photo by Zheng Bin/Xinhua)

Over the past decade, the BRI has facilitated infrastructure connectivity in participating countries and regions, helped them better integrate into the global industrial, supply and value chains, and constantly injected momentum into economic growth and green development.


green development, which creates new development opportunities for the world and blazes new trails for China's opening up, reflecting China's vision represented by the Global Development Initiative. Over the past decade, the BRI has facilitated infrastructure connectivity in participating countries and regions, helped them better integrate into the



Professor Igors Tipans (first left), deputy rector of Riga Technical University in Latvia, walks on a campus square featuring ancient China's four great inventions during his visit to Xi'an Jiaotong University in northwestern China, March 28, 2017. Exchanges among universities, colleges and other academic institutions play a crucial part in strengthening people-to-people bonds under the Belt and Road Initiative. (Photo by Li Yibo/Xinhua)

global industrial, supply and value chains, and constantly injected momentum into economic growth and green development. More than 3,000 cooperation projects have been launched under the BRI framework, involving nearly one trillion US dollars of investment. The projects have trained many technical and managerial professionals and created abundant job opportunities for participating countries and regions. For instance, the Mombasa-Nairobi Railway in Kenya has added two percent to the country's economic growth and played an exemplary role in ecological protection. The Shymkent Oil Refinery in Kazakhstan has reduced pollutant emissions by 90 percent through renovation in collaboration with China. On the Indo-China Peninsula, the China-Laos

Railway has enabled Laos, a landlocked country, to effectively integrate into the Asian production network and supply chains, boosting economic development along the route and making life more convenient for local people.

The spillover effect of the BRI projects depends largely on the concerted efforts of local governments, companies, and people related to the projects. By reflecting on its progress in the past decade, we will better promote the high-quality development of the BRI and therefore move closer toward a global community of shared future. 

The author is a researcher with the Academy of Macroeconomic Research of China's National Development and Reform Commission.



A Transformation of International Cooperation



By Rajagopal Dhar Chakraborti

In just a decade, the BRI has successfully integrated more countries than any other effort in international cooperation.

The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), a far-reaching Chinese proposal aimed at bolstering infrastructure connectivity for global trade, was first introduced by Chinese President Xi Jinping during his visits to Kazakhstan and Indonesia in 2013. The initiative seeks to revitalize ancient overland trading routes, known as the Silk Road, connecting Europe and Asia. This vision is built on China's comprehensive strengths in industry, capital, technology, talent, and management, and seeks to foster collaboration among participating countries. The initiative also covers new sea trade infrastructure along the historic Maritime Silk Road, linking China, Southeast Asia, and other nations. Envisioning a modern Silk Road, the BRI includes plans for pipelines, ports, bridges, roads, and railways, heralding a

new era of globalization.

The ancient Silk Road, established during the Han Dynasty (202 B.C.-220 A.D.), was characterized by significant efforts to establish trade connections with Central Asian nations. Trade routes were established for trading with Afghanistan, India, and Pakistan in South Asia, spanning over 4,000 miles to reach Europe. This network facilitated the westward movement of valuable Chinese commodities such as silk, spices, and jade, while China received resources like gold, ivory, and glass products. The heyday of these routes occurred during the first millennium, flourishing under the Roman and then Byzantine Empires in Europe and the Tang Dynasty (618-907) in China. The success of transporting high-value goods across vast and challenging terrains was attributed to the prevailing peace in the

region. However, the eventual emergence of war-mongering groups caused trade disruptions, ultimately leading to the cessation of trade along the Silk Road.

MOTIVATIONS AND EXPANSION OF THE BRI

Economic theory posits that trade serves as an engine of growth, and the overwhelming evidence supporting this point has prompted most countries to actively pursue trade promotion. Merchandise trade as a share of GDP—the sum of merchandise exports and imports divided by the value of GDP—remained at a less than double-digit figure in China, the U.S., and India until the early 1970s. However, this figure surpassed 45 percent in China and India in 2006. There is a growing recognition that sustainable trade and economic growth demand improving infrastructure and the growth potential in other countries, as the notion that “one cannot beggar the neighbor” comes to mind. In response, China embarked on an extensive initiative to enhance global infrastructure, aiming to facilitate increased trade, foster growth, and generate employment.

The introduction of the BRI led some Western analysts to dub it “China’s Marshall Plan,” but in reality, the two projects differ significantly. The original intent behind the Marshall Plan by the U.S. was to contribute to the economic recovery of Europe to position the region as a crucial counterforce to the Soviet Union. This initiative played a pivotal role in escalating the Cold War and shaping a bipolar world order. In pursuit of global expansion and countering the socialist bloc, the U.S. urgently sought stable and revitalized Western European allies, capitalizing on Europe’s recovery efforts to enhance its own development. However, this assistance resulted in an unequal relationship, imposing numerous conditions that rendered recipient countries passive and subordinate, unable to independently determine economic policy. In contrast, the BRI is grounded in the principles of extensive consultation, joint contribution, and shared benefits. It seeks to build a global community of shared future emphasizing collaboration and mutual prosperity, diverging

from the coercive and unequal dynamics of the Marshall Plan.

A 2017 report published by the Asian Development Bank titled *Meeting Asia’s Infrastructure Needs* estimated that developing Asia must invest US\$26 trillion from 2016 to 2030, or US\$1.7 trillion per year, to sustain growth, eradicate poverty, and address climate change. Currently, the region invests approximately US\$881 billion annually in infrastructure, resulting in an annual financing deficit exceeding US\$900 billion. Notably, China has consistently maintained a trade surplus since 1990, a remarkable achievement for a developing country in the early 1990s.

The Fortune Global 500 list for 2023 features more companies from China than any other country. The Belt and Road framework offers an alternative market for Chinese companies extending beyond China’s borders. Fueled by China’s “going global” strategy, Chinese enterprises have witnessed rapid growth in outbound investment. China’s outward foreign direct investment (FDI) was US\$163 billion in 2022, accounting for 1 percent of the global total for the seventh year in a row according to statistics released by China’s Ministry of Commerce, National Bureau of Statistics, and State Administration of Foreign Exchange.

In its initial years, the BRI gained traction primarily among countries in Central, South, and Southeast Asia. The pivotal moment for Latin America came in 2017 when Panama joined the BRI, marking a watershed moment and sparking widespread interest from other nations in the region. Following these developments, an increasing number of countries, transcending economic status and geographical locations, joined the BRI. The initiative has evolved into a truly global endeavor, uniting many nations on infrastructure construction to promote common growth and development.

Substantial capital outflow from China to other BRI participating countries has occurred. From 2013 to 2022, China’s direct investment in these countries surpassed US\$240 billion, according to the white paper titled “The Belt and Road Initiative: A Key Pillar of the Global Community of Shared Future” released by China’s State Council

Information Office.

BRI BOOSTING CHINA-SINGAPORE COOPERATION

Despite being a key U.S. partner on trade, security, and defense in the Indo-Pacific region, Singapore has skillfully incorporated domestic economic concerns with China's infrastructure ventures, through its effective policies, institutional ingenuities, and highly integrated governance style. While China-Singapore trade and investment cooperation predate the BRI, Singapore's participation in the BRI adds tremendous value. Established in the early 1990s, Suzhou Industrial Park is the first major intergovernmental cooperation project between China and Singapore to share Singapore's industrial experience with China. The success of this project, to some extent, led to the establishment of the Joint Council for Bilateral Cooperation (JCBC) in 2003, focusing on reviewing and enhancing areas of mutual cooperation. The JCBC generated significant enthusiasm in the Singaporean community to actively contribute its efforts and social capital to foster bilateral ties through various business and socio-economic organizations. A conducive environment thus emerged to accept and promote the BRI.

Singapore was a first-mover on establishing the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB), a new multilateral development bank with a mission to finance infrastructure for tomorrow. The AIIB had 109 members as of this September. India joined the AIIB on January 11, 2016, subscribing to US\$8.37 billion, which is 8.6 percent of the total. This made India the second highest subscriber after China, whose total subscription is US\$29.78 billion, 30.7 percent of total. Singapore subscribed to US\$250 million, constituting 0.26 percent of total subscriptions.

China proposed the China-Singapore (Chongqing) Demonstration Initiative on Strategic Connectivity (CCI) as the third government-to-government collaboration project with Singapore. The CCI serves to establish a more direct and efficient trade route linking western China with Southeast Asia, positioning Singapore as a pivotal transport



A landscape installation named the "Golden Bridge on the Silk Road" for the Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation. Created by Shu Yong in 2013, it was composed of nearly 20,000 amber bricks embedded with the national flowers of 53 countries and city flowers of 94 cities involved in the Belt and Road Initiative. (Photo courtesy of Shu Yong)

and logistics hub. Notably, the CCI has played a significant role in mitigating income disparities between China's affluent coastal areas and the comparatively underdeveloped western regions. Simultaneously, the signing of both the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) and the BRI have facilitated a notable influx of Chinese businesses moving into Singapore, unlocking new opportunities in the financial services sector. Chinese banks are making substantial investments in Singapore, contributing to the dynamic evolution of the region's financial landscape.

The BRI is a China-led transformation of international cooperation. In just a decade of operation, the BRI has successfully integrated more countries than any other effort in international relations, contributing to the mutual enrichment of economies through the utilization of comparative advantages. 

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Unleashing the Potential of Civilizational Diplomacy

By Tilak Jha

The China-proposed Global Civilization Initiative has introduced a novel cultural-coexistence framework transcending notions of conflict like the “clash of civilizations” that too often shapes Western diplomacy.

Over the past three years, China has proposed three global initiatives in the fields of development, security, and civilization. The Global Civilization Initiative (GCI) came from the keynote speech by Chinese President Xi Jinping, also general secretary of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee, at the CPC in Dialogue with World Political Parties High-level Meeting on March 15, 2023. In letter and spirit, this initiative underlines China’s readiness and promise to shape a global community of shared future. The stand aligns with China’s

status as a civilizational state.

While some Western nations like the U.S. have fueled devastation for decades, China, as well as India, has largely embraced a path of engagement, dialogue, and common development.

China has brokered a deal to normalize relations between Saudi Arabia and Iran and positioned itself as a credible partner for nations across Africa and Asia. This has compelled established global and regional powers to critically re-evaluate their diplomatic strategies. Collectively, the China-proposed GCI has introduced a novel cultural-coexistence framework



Marathon enthusiasts attend the China-Russia Cross-Border 1+1 Marathon held in Tongjiang City, northeastern China's Heilongjiang Province, August 7, 2016. (Photo by Qin Bin)

transcending notions of conflict like the “clash of civilizations” that too often shapes Western diplomacy. This initiative signifies China’s endeavors to forge a more harmonious international order.

A UNIQUE MODERNIZATION INITIATIVE

One key focus of China’s GCI is modernization. The concept was articulated by President Xi during a discussion on “Path towards Modernization: The Responsibility of Political Parties” at the meeting. “Humanity’s modernization process has once again reached a crossroads of history,” he said, calling on political parties around the world to “put the people first and ensure modernization is people-centered.”

Countries commonly formulate priorities and strategies by drawing

from their historical legacies and future aspirations. Europe’s colonial-era notions of supremacy have significantly influenced its interactions with former colonies and the global community at large. China is walking a unique path of social and economic modernization—in both theory and practice. Now, with the advent of the GCI, China has taken a significant stride by extending its commitment to disseminating the insights gained from its transformative journey. This commitment holds the promise of fostering global harmony and prosperity.

Social and economic advancements are intricately intertwined with political dynamics. It’s essential to underscore the political bedrock of China’s vision of modernization. It is accentuated by China’s recognition of the interconnected and global nature of challenges spanning from

ecological concerns to economic matters. By employing the term “modernization” in a comprehensive manner, China aims to extend an inclusive invitation to political parties worldwide. This invitation, however, has steered clear of delving into the internal politics of other nations. Instead, it has resonated with a commitment to addressing global challenges. Notably, China “firmly opposes hegemony and power politics in all their forms,” calling other parties to “leverage the strength of a new type of party-to-party relations for the building of a new type of international relations and expand global partnerships by fostering stronger partners with world political parties.”

The GCI also addresses refraining from imposing one’s values or models on others and from stoking ideological confrontation. By supporting each other’s independently chosen development path and seeking inspiration from each other’s culture and history, the GCI can enable humanity to overcome the many challenges it encounters. Hence, by modernization, what China really means is a new common framework that can be more acceptable to a diverse set of stakeholders.



A reception ceremony is held when the first Yiwu-Riga freight train arrives in Latvian capital Riga, November 5, 2016. This train departed from Yiwu in eastern China's Zhejiang Province on October 20, 2016. (Photo by Wang Yaxiong)

With the right intentions and the liberating potential of socio-economic growth that the GCI promises, among many other things, China’s modernization could be more effective than that of the West in many ways.

GLOBAL CIVILIZATIONAL FRAMEWORK

Efforts driven by countries with ancient roots aiming to fortify global cultural, societal, economic, and political foundations can be termed as “civilizational diplomacy.” However, before aiming at shaping the world, a country needs to come to terms with its own civilizational legacy.

While India’s social division on the basis of religion pushed it towards a political reluctance to shed its colonial legacy, China has emphasized the significance of Confucianism in nurturing Chinese society and has consistently stressed the importance of morality. The country has made substantial progress in aligning its present with its historical past and future aspirations.

Clear global signals had been pointing to the emergence of China’s GCI. Notably, China’s substantial global engagement has been manifested in the proposal of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), initiation of the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, and active participation in multilateral organizations like BRICS and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization.

Similar to the Great Wall-like economic transformation of China in a matter of just around four decades, the breath-taking scale of global initiatives proposed by the country such as the BRI has taken the world by storm. Few have been able to match the multi-billion funding and the growing reach of the BRI to more than a hundred countries in just around a decade since it was first announced in 2013.

CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR INDIA

Presently, China stands uniquely poised to inaugurate and guide a civilizational diplomacy with worldwide

significance. China's advantages in terms of economic strength, strategic acumen, and geopolitical positioning enable it to undertake an initiative of remarkable magnitude and influence, truly embodying the essence of civilizational exchange. In today's intricate geopolitical landscape, China's commitment to valuing the diversity inherent in civilizations extends an open hand to trading partners. This approach fosters not only beneficial economic ties but also cultivates broader

With the advent of the GCI, China has taken a significant stride by extending its commitment to disseminating the insights gained from its transformative journey. This commitment holds the promise of fostering global harmony and prosperity.

global partnerships across various geographic domains, under terms and conditions that facilitate engagement.

Despite being almost equal to China in human resources and long-term economic potential, India has lagged behind China in many ways over the last four decades. India experienced a period of turmoil due to a number of social and political issues, such as coalition governments and rampant corruption. But since 2014, the Bhartiya Janata Party-led government led by Narendra Modi has revived India's domestic and global prospects. The Modi government has sought to break from India's colonial legacy and revive, "Indianness." It has received its share of

criticism for aggressive politics. However, there is little doubt that India has changed dramatically under the Modi government.

Culturally, India is closer to China and East Asia than the West. A continuous chain of social, cultural, and religious connections between China and India has survived since time immemorial. Still, a few differences and inhibitions have continued to prevail over the ties of bonhomie they started their journey—as *Hindi Chini Bhai Bhai* (meaning "Indians and Chinese are brothers").

While Chinese goods can reach the Indian market, the huge soft power of Indian yoga is also accessible to Chinese people. Without maximizing these synergies, however, this is all India and China can achieve. It is high time for both countries to open the doors wider to each other and facilitate the free trade of ideas and investment. The two nations share historical and contemporary ties, and fostering a stronger partnership can unlock untapped potential and shape a more balanced and harmonious global order. By embracing each other as equal players on the international stage, the two countries can pave the way for a collaborative approach that not only benefits themselves but also contributes to global stability and prosperity.■

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China's Global Vision: A Decade of BRI and Beyond

By Sundar Nath Bhattarai

China's comprehensive action plan has attracted significant public attention, reflecting the global resonance of China's commitment to a sustainable future.

In the complex global landscape, Nepal's close neighbor China has been earnestly engaged in national rejuvenation while fostering friendships and close cooperation with other nations to uplift humanity. This commitment persists despite numerous socio-political and economic challenges gripping the world.

The Third Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation testified to China's dedication. Attended by representatives from more than 150 countries, the forum celebrated the remarkable achievements of the decade-long journey of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). In his address, Chinese President Xi Jinping unveiled eight pivotal steps aimed at deepening collaboration among

nations, promoting high-quality Belt and Road cooperation, and contributing to the development of an open, inclusive, and interconnected world.

One focal point of the forum was fostering a more sustainable and greener world. Environmental enhancement, considered as crucial as any other aspect of development, wields the power to improve the living conditions of mankind. China's comprehensive action plan has attracted significant public attention, reflecting the global resonance of China's commitment to a sustainable future.

Nepal's steadfast participation in all major BRI events including the Third Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation underscores its unwavering

commitment as a dedicated BRI participating country. The anticipation surrounding the implementation of the Trans-Himalayan Multi-Dimensional Connectivity Network, celebrated during the Second Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation, further underscores Nepal's enthusiastic engagement with this transformative initiative. This eagerness reflects Nepal's recognition of the strategic importance of the BRI in fostering regional connectivity and development, positioning the nation as a key participant in this dynamic and collaborative endeavor.

China has earned global admiration for its dedicated quest and impactful actions in the realm of poverty elimination. Achieving its first centenary goal of establishing a moderately prosperous society in all respects by 2020, China simultaneously accomplished the remarkable feat of eradicating absolute poverty within its borders. This extraordinary accomplishment, surpassing the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals target by a decade, has exerted a profound impact on the global cause of poverty reduction. It stands as a miraculous achievement, serving as a potent motivator for poverty reduction efforts in developing countries worldwide.

China's collaboration with its neighbors in South Asia such as Bangladesh, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, and Afghanistan, with and without institutional frameworks, has contributed greatly to the reduction of poverty in these countries through various means including innovative methods. It should be noted that South Asia, home to 40 percent of the world's poor, was highly impacted by the dreadful COVID-19 pandemic which further dragged the region into dire poverty. The collaborative and innovative strategies employed in South Asia highlight the effectiveness of China's development cooperation model, offering valuable insights for other regions grappling with poverty-related issues.

China, propelled by a dedicated

commitment to achieving its goal of building a modern socialist country that is prosperous, strong, democratic, culturally advanced, and harmonious, is embarking on a journey to realize the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation in this new era. We, the Nepalese people, extend our profound appreciation and best wishes for the success of these significant endeavors.

Closely related have been China's effective contributions to global diplomacy characterized by principles of peaceful coexistence, non-interference, and peaceful development. China's commitment to multilateralism, both within and outside the United Nations governance system and the world at large, deserves high commendation. President Xi's global initiatives, spanning developmental, security, and civilizational domains, each imbued with distinctive meaning and clearly defined objectives, merit careful study and serious consideration.

In the grand tapestry of global cooperation, China's initiatives testify to its commitment to a shared and interconnected future. As we applaud the BRI's achievements of the past decade, let us look forward with optimism and anticipation. The dreams of China, woven into the fabric of a modern socialist country, resonate not only with its citizens but with a world seeking harmony and progress. We acknowledge the transformative impact it continues to exert on a global scale. May the next chapter of collaboration and shared prosperity foster a world that cherishes unity, sustainability, and the collective well-being of humanity. ■

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A Beacon of Peace for the World

By Yogeshwar Tyagi

The Global Security Initiative aims to eliminate the root causes of international conflict.

The idea of global security emerged in the 1990s in response to global challenges such as global warming, international terrorism, and health emergencies like AIDS and bird flu. Global security, sometimes also referred to as international security, is a term that refers to the measures taken by governments and international organizations such as the United Nations, the European Union, and others to ensure the survival and security of all.

Chinese President Xi Jinping first proposed the Global Security Initiative at the opening ceremony of the Boao Forum for Asia Annual Conference 2022. The initiative called on countries to adapt to the profoundly changing international landscape in the spirit of solidarity and address the complex and intertwined

security challenges with a win-win mindset.

FOCUS ON ROOT CAUSES

With an eye on its mission, the Global Security Initiative engages in a broad range of activities aimed at eliminating the underlying causes of international conflicts, enhancing global security governance, promoting international cooperation to maintain peace and stability in a volatile world, and promoting sustainable peace and development worldwide.

Global security spans five dimensions: human security, environmental security, national security, transnational security, and transcultural security. Risks to global security include a range of threats: regional coercion and meddling, transnational terrorism, health insecurity,

chemical and unconventional weapons, massive displacement of populations, and overwhelming humanitarian crises.

The Global Security Initiative champions commitments in six areas: commitment to a vision of common, comprehensive, cooperative and sustainable security and working together to maintain world peace and security; commitment to respecting the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all countries; commitment to abiding by the purposes and principles of the UN Charter; commitment to taking the legitimate security concerns of all countries seriously; commitment to peacefully resolving differences and disputes between countries through dialogue and consultation; and commitment to maintaining security in both traditional and non-traditional domains.


PEACE THROUGH DEVELOPMENT

In March 2023, China stunned the world by achieving a rare and unexpected diplomatic breakthrough. It brokered an agreement between Iran and Saudi Arabia to restore diplomatic relations. The move could reshape the political landscape of the Middle East. It also highlighted the core principles of China's diplomacy, including the importance of state sovereignty and territorial integrity, non-interference in the internal affairs of states, and opposition to unilateral sanctions and bloc confrontations. The Global Security Initiative seeks to foster a more rational world order and formulate the backbone for a stronger global governance system. The Global Development Initiative, proposed by China at the general debate of the 76th session of the United Nations General Assembly in 2021, aims to steer global development toward a new stage of balanced, coordinated, and inclusive growth. As part of a broader effort, China also introduced the Global Civilization Initiative in March 2023. It calls for respecting the diversity of civilizations, advocating the common values of humanity, valuing the inheritance and innovation



Fireworks are lit up to celebrate the completion of the Peljesac Bridge in Croatia, July 29, 2021. The China-constructed transportation infrastructure project connects Croatia's southernmost Dubrovnik-Neretva County to the rest of the mainland. (Photo from VCG)

of civilizations, and strengthening international people-to-people exchange and cooperation.

The bottom line of the Global Security Initiative is that China is willing to work with all countries to address traditional and non-traditional security challenges, protect peace and tranquility globally, and make the world a better place. The effort seeks to pass the torch of peace from generation to generation to illuminate the globe. 

The author is the founder and director of Indo-China Friendship Culture Centre based in Uttar Pradesh, India.

Embracing BRI Soft Power

By Grzegorz Witold Kolodko

By positioning the soft aspects at the forefront, we aim to create deeper understanding and connections between nations, transcending geographical boundaries.

In an era of irreversible globalization, the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) has emerged as a symbol of collaborative progress, uniting nations in the pursuit of shared prosperity. Commemorating the 10th anniversary of this monumental initiative presents a moment to reflect, recalibrate, and envision a future that transcends physical infrastructure to embrace a holistic approach.

Proposed by Chinese President Xi Jinping, the BRI has evolved over the past decade into a multifaceted endeavor. Recent support from additional initiatives such as the Global Development Initiative, the Global Security Initiative, and the Global Civilization Initiative underscores

China's commitment to addressing diverse challenges on a global scale. However, many have called for introspection and recognition that more can be done to fully unlock the potential of the BRI.

I bring a unique perspective shaped by my former roles as deputy prime minister and minister of finance of Poland. My orientation towards New Pragmatism prompted me to critically examine the outcomes of the BRI over the past decade, especially its impact on a global scale.

While celebrating success stories in many regions in Asia and Africa, disappointment is lingering in Central and Eastern Europe, particularly in Poland. Expectations have not uniformly been met, prompting a collective desire for renewed momentum



Fireworks illuminate the night sky above Doha's Lusail Stadium at the end of the World Cup final in Qatar, December 18, 2022. The stadium was jointly built by China Railway Construction Corporation and Qatar. It is the first time a Chinese company has built a World Cup venue. (Photo by Fu Tian/CNS)

and a more inclusive approach. The evolution of the BRI framework, spanning northeastern Europe all the way south to Greece and including countries in transition like Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, and Hungary, represents an expansive vision for the initiative. However, to truly unleash its potential, I propose a paradigm shift by introducing a soft aspect to enrich the initiative.

A recent article I authored, published in multiple languages, advocates for a broader perspective. Beyond the hard investments in infrastructure, co-financing, and implementing projects such as roads, ports, airports, bridges, tunnels, and energy grids, I propose a deeper commitment to the soft aspects of the BRI after it attracted participation from over 150 countries and more than 30 international organizations. I suggested investing in human capital, fostering joint research and development

projects, promoting cooperation between universities and academies of sciences, facilitating cultural exchange, and translating literary works to bridge the cultural gaps.

By positioning the soft aspects at the forefront, we aim to create deeper understanding and connections between nations, transcending geographical boundaries. While construction of physical bridges and roads remains essential, it is equally vital to channel resources into building bridges of knowledge and cultural exchange. Through collaborative projects in fields such as engineering, medicine, agriculture, and social sciences, we can actively promote mutual learning and innovation. This concerted effort is designed not only to bridge gaps between our cultures, ways of thinking, and systems of values but also to actively contribute to the ongoing and irreversible process of



Attendants greet passengers on a China-Laos cross-border train, April 13, 2023. The China-Laos Railway is the first international railway mainly invested by China, built with Chinese equipment and directly connected with China's railway network after the inception of the Belt and Road Initiative. (Photo from VCG)

globalization.

Embracing globalization in its entirety has yielded manifold benefits. It has become a catalyst for business, entrepreneurship, and international exchange of critical assets such as know-how, licenses, and patents. This extends beyond the tangible realms of capital and technologies to include the invaluable contribution of our labor force. Human ingenuity, coupled with skills and knowledge, has emerged as a cornerstone driving productivity and efficiency. In the realm of competition, globalization stands as a sustaining force, propelling the momentum of social and economic development.

The extraordinary economic progress witnessed in China over the past four decades is a testament to the transformative power of the Chinese government and its visionary leadership. I have noticed the varying attitudes towards China, particularly in the current geopolitical climate marked by the outdated

Cold War mindset preserved by the United States. Protectionism contributes to an atmosphere that hinders peaceful global development. In this challenging context, increased economic and scientific cooperation under Chinese initiatives is not only beneficial but imperative.

We need to demonstrate to the majority of people, intellectuals, and policymakers that cooperation, particularly the exchange of ideas among people and scientific research collaboration, is a far superior path towards global peace and development than the divisive and confrontational approaches reminiscent of Cold War mentalities. My proposition is rooted in the belief that economic and scientific cooperation, coupled with cultural exchange, is an effective antidote to the Cold War mentality prevailing in certain circles. By demonstrating the positive outcomes of collaboration, we can dispel misconceptions and pave a way to a more peaceful, prosperous, and interconnected world.

As we congratulate the achievements of the BRI during its first decade, the time has arrived to envision a future that is wider, deeper, and enriched by the softer aspects of cooperation. The BRI has the potential to transcend physical infrastructure, becoming a catalyst for global peace and development. Let us seize this opportunity to guide irreversible globalization towards a truly win-win future. It won't happen naturally; the effort demands guidelines, intellectual support, and cooperation. ■

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The author is former deputy prime minister and minister of finance of Poland and a professor of economics at Kozminski University. This article is an excerpt from his speech at the Ten Years of the BRI: Media, Think Tank and Youth Dialogue 2023.

People-to-people Exchange for Stronger Ties

By Maitri Sharma

Bringing people-to-people exchange back up to full speed is one of the most important steps to improve the relations between China and India.

China and India, two of the world's oldest civilizations, boast long histories, diverse cultures, and enormous populations. Over more recent centuries, the relationship between the two neighboring nations has been multifaceted, marked by periods of cooperation, competition, and, at times, tension. While they have had their share of conflicts and disagreements, immense potential remains for cooperation and mutual growth between the two nations.

In recent decades, both countries have recognized the importance of enhancing people-to-people exchange as a means to foster mutual understanding, build trust, and strengthen bilateral ties. People-to-people exchange between China and India still offers much to explore in terms of historical roots, contemporary initiatives, and future collaboration possibilities. *China-India Dialogue*

recently interviewed Dr. Geeta Kochhar, senior assistant professor at Jawaharlal Nehru University, to gain insight on how China and India can collaborate and work together to seize a brighter future. The two countries share many similarities, making them ideal partners on kindling significant change in Asia and the whole world.

BRI IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) serves as an umbrella for various infrastructure connectivity projects, both existing and new. In the past decade, the BRI has fostered cooperation among participating countries to contribute more acutely to local economic development and growth. BRI cooperation provides opportunities to utilize external resources, specifically Chinese resources, to

enhance living environments and promote infrastructure development. A positive impact has been observed in countries where BRI projects have created employment opportunities and facilitated better connectivity. Nepal, for instance, has been enthusiastic about a China-Nepal railway project, which it cannot afford to undertake alone. The railway will connect the two countries, providing a means for goods and personnel mobility, which will create significant development opportunities for Nepal. Similar benefits are being experienced by other BRI participating countries.

SMOOTHING OUT BUMPS

“As of now, India is not directly involved in the BRI, and any claims that it has exerted an impact on collaboration between the two neighbors is false,” said Geeta Kochhar. The BRI hasn’t affected the bilateral relationship between India and China. A great example of broader collaboration between the two countries is the proposed Bangladesh-China-India-Myanmar (BCIM) economic corridor project under the BRI. Further, the Indian government has clarified on numerous occasions that it doesn’t oppose the concept of BRI, but it is concerned about the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). Nonetheless, India is not averse to connectivity projects with China that could benefit the entire region. There are no direct collaborations between India and China under the BRI, and India has faced challenges understanding it. However, many potential benefits could be gained from the initiative. Active engagement and dialogue between countries is important to address risks involved in any government-to-government project and ensure the viability of BRI projects.

Both China and India face a new global challenge due to their large populations. Combined, this population can be both advantageous and burdensome in terms of resources. It is important to consider the implications for humanity. Chinese President Xi Jinping proposed a vision of building a global community of shared future, and Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi has promoted ideas such as *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam* (“One Family,



Two technicians work at a 100-megawatt wind farm located on the outskirts of the town of Zhanatas in Kazakhstan. This wind power project, jointly invested by China and Kazakhstan and built by Chinese enterprises, provides clean energy for locals. (Photo from Xinhua)

One World”). Both nations have clear security structures, which include territorial integrity, sovereignty, and citizen safety. Collaboration between India and China will make dreams of peace come true for a third of the world’s population.

Considering both traditional and non-traditional challenges such as climate change, natural disasters, and disease outbreaks, China and India have a responsibility to work together. When mentioning the 2020 Galwan Valley clash, Kochhar stressed that both sides chose dialogue over war, which demonstrated maturity. This approach needs to be further emphasized, and a regional stability structure with shared aims and ambitions should be established to prevent conflict and create comprehensive understanding and trust-building mechanisms. This will make Asia a more peaceful region, fostering harmony among nations.

PEOPLE-TO-PEOPLE EXCHANGE

Restoring people-to-people exchange to full speed is one of the most important steps to improve the relations between China and India because it can serve as a bridge connecting hearts and a bond that enhances understanding and trust. People-to-people ties have the

power to break barriers, build friendships, and change the world. When people from different backgrounds connect, it presents opportunities to become immersed in a new culture, learn a new language, and exchange ideas. These relationships often lead to enduring partnerships based on mutual understanding, respect, and shared interests.

“As far as China and India are concerned, facilitating channels of travel between the two countries is of utmost importance,” said Kochhar. “To achieve this, direct flights need to resume normal operation along with streamlined procedures.” These steps are essential because they serve as the foundation for fostering people-to-people exchange. Promoting student exchange programs can greatly enhance mutual understanding between the two countries. A balanced exchange of knowledge and experience should be ensured by these programs based on equality and reciprocity. Exchange of scholars and organization of joint seminars and conferences can further facilitate the sharing of expertise and the generation of new ideas for cooperation. This collaboration can span various fields including science, humanities, political studies, among others. By encouraging student exchanges and collaboration in fields such as traditional medicine, artificial intelligence, and green energy, the two can enhance cooperation and create a positive trust-building environment.

Furthermore, exchange of religious and cultural groups will help NGOs play a significant role in promoting the positive image of both countries. Educating each other on the richness and diversity of their cultures can dispel misconceptions and negative perceptions. Moreover, fostering greater media interaction between the two countries is essential for creating a conducive and positive atmosphere. Facilitating open and transparent communication is essential for shaping public opinion. Media organizations play an important role in shaping public opinion, so it is important to allow them to participate actively in the exchange process. Strengthening people-to-people ties requires focusing on broader initiatives and then gradually working towards building local connections.

BETTER SOLUTIONS

China and India shoulder a significant responsibility to shape the future of Asia and the world. People-to-people exchange, grounded in cultural understanding, educational collaboration, and economic engagement, offers a promising pathway to build enduring ties.

Informal summits between Chinese President Xi Jinping and Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, such as those held in Wuhan and Mahamallapuram, have demonstrated the potential for cordial and harmonious relations. Sustaining high-level dialogue and engagements fosters hope and greater cooperation among citizens. Alongside government departments, dialogue should include exchange at all levels including educational institutions, universities, and research centers. China and India should engage in dialogue and confidence-building measures to find peaceful solutions to their differences. By fostering a spirit of cooperation and understanding, both nations can work towards resolving their boundary question and strengthening trust.

While challenges persist, the shared history, cultural affinities, and economic interdependence of China and India provide a strong foundation for constructive engagement. Embracing the potential of technology, empowering civil society, and leveraging the opportunities can contribute to the resolution of longstanding issues and the creation of a more stable and cooperative relationship.

In a rapidly changing global landscape in which challenges transcend national borders, collaboration between China and India has become increasingly essential. By investing in people-to-people exchange, both nations can foster a sense of shared future and contribute greatly to regional stability, economic prosperity, and global harmony. ■

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The author is a journalist with *China-India Dialogue* who has been living and working in Beijing for more than 10 years.

The Future Lies in the Hands of the Young

By Lee Hee-ok

The key to development of the Belt and Road Initiative is closer people-to-people ties, especially among the younger generation.

The international order is now undergoing a pivotal period of transformation. Globalization is waning, and protectionism is on the rise, bringing heightened instability and uncertainty to the global order. Despite our confidence in the course of history, the world may encounter challenges and difficulties during the transitional period as the international order adjusts to new realities. Following the Second World War, the world experienced the Cold War and the post-Cold War era. Now, discussions about a “new Cold War” have resurfaced. However, embarking on a “new Cold War” would be neither practical nor advisable. Cold War mentality will only fuel confrontation and conflict, potentially culminating in eruption of war. Therefore, it is imperative that we

take proactive measures to shape the future of the international order.

This year marks the 10th anniversary of the inception of the Belt and Road Initiative. At its core, this initiative embodies the principles of peaceful cooperation, openness, inclusivity, mutual learning, and mutual benefit. It promotes collaboration, cultural exchange and integration, intellectual cross-pollination, and shared pursuit of development and prosperity. The initiative advances “policy coordination, unimpeded trade, financial integration, facilities connectivity, and closer people-to-people ties,” aligning with contemporary trends including multipolarity, economic globalization, social informatization, and cultural diversity.

In the past, multilateralism and regional cooperation involved various stakeholders including central and local governments, non-governmental organizations, businesses, and universities. Looking forward, the next generation of young individuals should proactively strategize to ensure the sustainability of cooperation and exchange. The vision and orientation of youth exchange should be set.

Youth cooperation and exchange should emphasize reciprocity. There is no culture superior or inferior to another. In the course of youth cooperation and exchange, it's important not only to introduce and promote one's own culture but also to actively embrace and communicate with other cultures. This calls for empathetic consideration, wearing another's shoes, promoting deeper understanding, and fostering mutual respect.

Youth cooperation and exchange should prioritize experience of participants. These exchanges should seek tangible outcomes to make the collaboration more meaningful. A sense of accomplishment deepens and broadens collaborative relationships. Therefore, we need to focus on issues directly relevant to young people to ensure that exchange yields practical results.


Sustainability fosters deep and enduring collaboration. It's crucial to devise progressive and incremental long-term strategies, steering away from pursuit of immediate outcomes. To ensure sustainability, we should advocate for the institutionalized and regularized operation of collaborative platforms and then jointly construct and manage these frameworks.

Diversity will significantly enhance communication and cooperation. As individuals move beyond the confines of national centrism and closed-minded nationalism, the scope for collaboration will expand. The crux is nurturing a blended sense of identity, empowering the younger generation to identify with both their home country and the broader Asian context.

As we commemorate the 10th



Ballet dancers from the National Ballet of China Symphony Orchestra and Switzerland's Rudra Béjart School pose for a photo after a joint performance in Lausanne, Switzerland, November 11, 2015. (Photo by Xu Jinquan/Xinhua)

anniversary of the introduction of the Belt and Road Initiative, staying true to the initiative's founding principles has become crucial. International relations are an extension of interpersonal connections. In the East, there's a belief that establishing trust is possible through benevolence, righteousness, courtesy and wisdom. The key to the initiative's development is fostering closer people-to-people ties, particularly among the younger generation. We should embrace the spirit of seeking common ground while respecting differences and avoid discord and disharmony. This is the only way to realize harmony and win-win cooperation within the framework of the Belt and Road Initiative. 

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Piraeus Port: A Maritime Hub on the Belt and Road

By Luo Jie

After a decade of construction, Piraeus Port has emerged as a pearl of the Belt and Road.

Rows of blue overhead mobile cranes shuttle back and forth with giant mechanical hands moving containers as freighters queue up in the open sea to unload cargo. The busy yet orderly scene is now typical for Piraeus Port in Greece. Located about 10 kilometers southwest of Athens, Piraeus Port is the largest port in Greece and a transportation hub linking the China-Europe Land-Sea Express Line and the Silk

Road Economic Belt. After about a decade of construction involving Chinese enterprises under the Belt and Road Initiative, Piraeus Port has emerged as a pearl of the Belt and Road.

JOINT CONSTRUCTION

Piraeus Port is now wide and deep, featuring a bustling scene with various cargo freighters. A decade ago, the operation of Piraeus Port was in trouble after the 2010 debt crisis in Greece. Every major

sector was greatly impacted, and Piraeus Port was no exception. It suffered losses of 1.3 million euros (about US\$1.4 million) and almost all its customers. Operations had to be suspended.

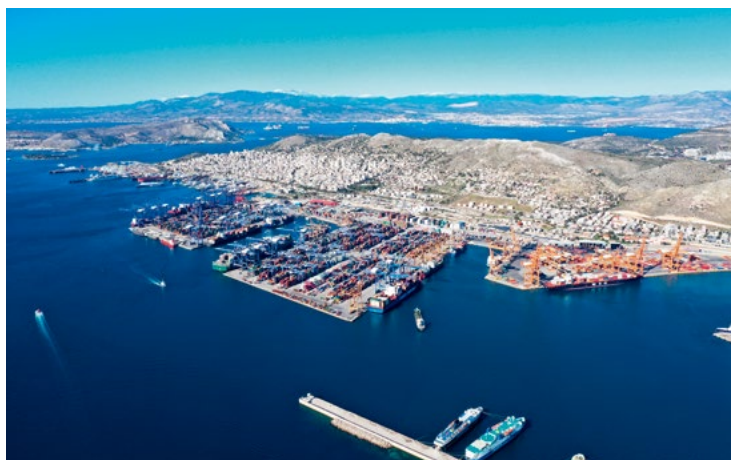
In 2008, China COSCO Shipping Corporation Limited (hereinafter referred to as COSCO) signed a franchise agreement with the Greek port and officially took over the operation rights of its No. 2 and No. 3 container terminals on October 1, 2010.

The Belt and Road Initiative

brought historic opportunities for the port and doubled its cargo handling volume. In 2015, the container throughput of the port increased to 3.36 million twenty-foot equivalent units (TEUs) from 880,000 in 2010, and its global ranking jumped up to 39th from 93rd. The outstanding performance paved the way for COSCO to develop Piraeus Port further. In December 2014, the Greek parliament approved a plan for COSCO to invest 230 million euros (US\$245 million) to expand the western area of No. 3 terminal. On January 22, 2015, the expansion project started. After its completion, the handling capacity of the port increased from 3.75 million to 6.2 million TEUs per year. The number of berths for container vessels with more than 10,000 TEUs increased from three to five. Piraeus Port has become the most competitive container terminal on the Mediterranean coast. On April 8, 2016, COSCO signed an agreement with the Hellenic Republic Asset Development Fund (HRADF) to acquire a 67 percent stake of the Piraeus Port Authority for 368.5 million euros (US\$393 million).

WIN-WIN COOPERATION

COSCO enacted a series of big moves in port management, construction, market expansion, and other fields, including investing more than US\$300 million in renovation, updating outdated facilities, improving customer services, strictly controlling expenses, and exploring



A bird's-eye view of Piraeus Port in Greece. Located about 10 kilometers southwest of Athens, the capital of Greece, the port is known as the "Gateway to Southern Europe." It is a maritime hub for China-Europe trade and an important project of the Belt and Road Initiative. (Photo from Xinhua)

international markets. The operation efficiency of Piraeus Port has gradually improved. Three months after COSCO took over the management of the port, its monthly ledger turned from red to black, and its operation situation changed dramatically. Now, Piraeus Port has reemerged as a cutting-edge comprehensive port rivaling the best in the world. Its container terminal has 11 vessel berths, with an annual capacity of 7.2 million TEUs, and can accommodate the largest container vessels in the world. The port's automobile wharf has five berths, with a total handling capacity of 600,000 vehicles per year. Its cruise terminal has 11 berths and three waiting halls, which can accommodate the latest generation of large

cruise ships. Its ferry terminal has 41 berths to link to various islands in the Aegean Sea, with an annual capacity to serve 20 million passengers. Piraeus Port also has bonded warehouses of 7,600 square meters and a logistics park covering an area of 86,000 square meters. And it is connected to all transportation modes such as sea, highway, rail, and air.

Driving Local Development COSCO directly created about 3,000 jobs, bringing big changes to local economic and social development and residents' lives. Local resident Varela has been working at Piraeus Port since 2010. During those 13 years, she has experienced great personal growth thanks to the company's support.



A container terminal of Piraeus Port. (Photo from Xinhua)

Among the robust support, the measure that has given her the greatest help and has been most welcomed by the port's employees was an education aid fund offered by COSCO. Launched in 2018, the program is committed to helping employees continue their studies. Thanks to the program, Varela, who works in the financial department, chose to pursue an MBA in shipping. So far, more than 10 Greek employees have completed further studies with the help of the program and improved their living standards. COSCO has actively fulfilled its social responsibilities during the construction and development of Piraeus Port. Since 2021, through Greek charity organizations, the company has expanded assistance targets to more

vulnerable groups such as seniors without families, the disabled, and children in need of special care. In May 2022, a signing ceremony for an agreement to the transfer of an underwater museum site was held by COSCO and the Greek Ministry of Culture and Sports. According to the agreement, the company would provide Greece with approximately 13,000 square meters of space for the construction of the Greek Underwater Archaeological Museum. Planners hope the move will help promote the development of archaeology and cultural tourism in Greece. According to statistics, under COSCO's management, Piraeus Port has directly donated more than 400,000 euros (about US\$426,000) in cash and materials for locals over the past decade-plus.

NEW GOALS

To ensure neighboring countries benefit from Piraeus Port, COSCO has integrated its comprehensive advantages in shipping and ports and explored a new trade corridor linking China with Central and Eastern Europe—the China-Europe Land-Sea Express Line.

The China-Europe Land-Sea Express Line is an important channel connecting the sea and land. It starts from Piraeus Port in the south, passes through Skopje in North Macedonia and Belgrade in Serbia, and finally reaches Budapest in Hungary. As a stop on the express line, Piraeus Port has quickly climbed from a single service route to the Czech Republic to a hub offering diversified railway services. In June 2022, a special train for Hisense home appliances bound for Slovenia departed the Port of Trieste in Italy on the China-Europe Land-Sea Express Line. It marked the official opening of the fourth route of the express line on the European continent. Covering nine countries with 1,500 stations to serve a population of 71 million, this express line will greatly save time and costs for freight transportation. 



All Is Well: The Rich History and Promising Future of China-Kazakhstan Relations



By Liu Xia

Under the Belt and Road Initiative, China and Kazakhstan have jointly deepened their historical friendship and close-knit neighborhood to maintain the millennia-old Silk Road bond.

As neighboring countries connected by the same mountains and rivers, China and Kazakhstan have conducted exchanges for thousands of years, jointly composing a magnificent feat on the ancient Silk Road.

Over the past 31 years since the establishment of diplomatic relations, the two countries have carried out

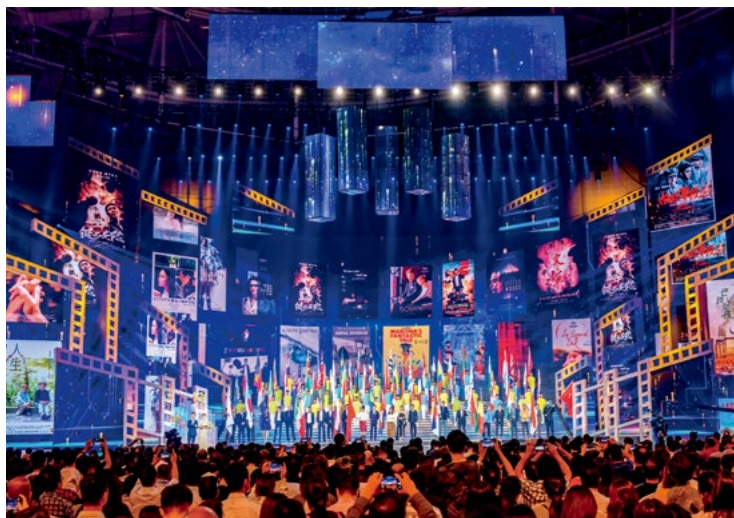
high-level exchanges and cooperation in fields such as culture, education, sports, healthcare, media, science and technology, becoming increasingly close to each other.

Especially under the Belt and Road Initiative, China and Kazakhstan have jointly deepened their historical friendship and close-knit neighborhood to maintain the millennia-old Silk Road bond.

CLOSE CULTURAL AND ARTISTIC EXCHANGES

In May 2019, the first China-Kazakhstan co-produced film, *The Composer*, was released. The film tells the story of famous Chinese musician Xian Xinghai and Kazakh musician Bakhytzhan Baikadamov forging a deep friendship amid adversity during wartime.

In 1942, Xian, blocked



The closing ceremony of the sixth Silk Road International Film Festival is held in Fuzhou, Fujian Province, October 20, 2019. The Silk Road International Film Festival, as an important platform for cultural exchanges and people-to-people bonds among Belt and Road partner countries, has become a grand gathering for movie directors and fans from around the world. (Photo by Chen Nuan)

from returning to China, was stuck in Almaty, Kazakhstan. Stranded far away from his kin, Xian suffered from poverty and illness. At that moment, Baikadamov offered him a helping hand.

Based on a common pursuit of music and a shared love for their countries, they collaborated on many music projects, leaving a valuable legacy in the history of Kazakh music. The story of their friendship was spread by word of mouth among local people.

To commemorate the sincere friendship between Xian and Baikadamov, the Almaty government named a street near Baikadamov's

former residence Xian Xinghai Avenue and erected a monument for him. In Xian's hometown of Guangzhou, China and Kazakhstan jointly built the Xian-Baikadamov Friendship Road.

Following the release of the movie *The Composer*, the book *Life of the Chinese Composer Xian Xinghai* in Kazakhstan was published in Chinese, Russian, and English. Baikadamov's daughter Badergan Baikada Mowa expressed gratitude to Kazakhstan and China for recording this episode of history in the form of movies, books, and construction projects and pledged to do her

best to pass on the story of friendship to the next generation.

Amity between the people holds the key to sound state-to-state relations. In recent years, outstanding Chinese film and television works have been translated and presented on Kazakhstan's screens, including the TV series *Family on the Go* and *All Is Well* and the documentary *A Bite of China I*, which were welcomed by local viewers.

"A Kazakh who wants more Kazakh people to understand China's stories" is how Yeltai identifies himself. After graduating with a degree in journalism, Yeltai worked as a reporter and producer. He studied at China's Northeastern University for three years and went back to Kazakhstan to work in 2012. Several years of experience in China have made him feel that Kazakh people do not know enough about China which leads to misunderstandings.

To reduce the gap between the two peoples, Yeltai and his team translated many Chinese film and television works into Kazakh and distributed them to Kazakh TV stations. Among them, *All Is Well*, a popular TV series in China, set a record for the highest rating of a Chinese TV series in Kazakhstan when it was broadcast on Astana TV in 2020.

The booming development of Chinese variety shows also attracted Yeltai's

attention. With his help, young Kazakh singer Dimash Kudaibergen got a chance to perform on the Chinese stage, enabling more Chinese people to find out about Kazakhstan and its national culture.

Yeltai considers a deeper understanding of each other's cultures and closer friendship between the two peoples the greatest achievement of his career.

BROAD SPACE FOR EDUCATIONAL COOPERATION

Educational cooperation is an important part of cultural exchanges between China and Kazakhstan.

Within the frameworks of the University Alliance of the Silk Road and the Asian Universities Alliance, many first-class universities in the two countries have established cooperative relationships and carried out a series of cooperation projects involving language exchange, mutual recognition of credits, teacher exchanges, and student exchanges to help the youth of the two countries enhance cultural exchange and communication.

Chinese universities such as Beijing Foreign Studies University, Northwest University, and East China Normal University have cooperated with Kazakh research institutions to establish research centers in Kazakhstan to carry out social, cultural, political, and economic research on

the Central Asian country and provide support for exchange between China and Kazakhstan in various fields.

More and more young people in Kazakhstan are optimistic about China's development and the future of China-Kazakhstan relations. Many young Kazakh scientists, diplomats, and entrepreneurs who graduated from Chinese universities have now become new envoys of Silk Road friendship and continue to contribute their talents to the partnership between China and Kazakhstan.

"An old Chinese saying goes that 'a distant relative is not as good as a close neighbor,' which fully illustrates the friendly relations between the people of Kazakhstan and China," said Yereusitsova, chairman of the Kazakhstan Association of Graduates Studying in China.

Now, "Chinese fever" continues to spread in Kazakhstan. At the five Confucius Institutes now operating in Kazakhstan, about 3,000 people complete Chinese language training every year.

"Over the past three decades, the number of students in Kazakhstan studying Chinese has increased nearly a hundred times," said Clara Hafizova, an academician at the Kazakh Academy of Natural Sciences and a famous sinologist. Chinese

has become one of the most popular majors at universities in Central Asian countries as the demand for Chinese language talent is growing.

There is also a broad space for China-Kazakhstan vocational education cooperation. In September 2022 during Chinese President Xi Jinping's visit to Kazakhstan, the two heads of state reached a consensus on opening a Luban Workshop in Kazakhstan. The Luban Workshop project in Kazakhstan has already been launched by Tianjin Vocational Institute.

China is strengthening communication and cooperation with Kazakhstan and other countries around the world to build new paths and platforms for promoting cooperation in vocational education and jointly cultivating more technical professionals to assist national economic and social development and international cooperation in various fields. 

Seeding Indonesia's Future

By Lu Zhou

Photos courtesy of Syngenta Group China

Chinese seeds have helped enhance Indonesia's food security and promote local poverty alleviation.



Pak Muzanni, a local rice farmer in West Kalimantan, one of Indonesia's major crop-producing regions.

“A rice grain can save a country or make it fall,” noted

Yuan Longping, a prestigious Chinese agronomist known for pioneering the development of the world's first hybrid rice varieties.

Food security has always been at the top of the agenda for agricultural cooperation between China and Indonesia, the most populous and the fourth most populous countries worldwide respectively. Now, among the over 80 hybrid rice varieties

imported by Indonesia, more than 60 come from China. Chinese seeds have helped enhance Indonesia's food security and promote local poverty alleviation.

RELIEVING FOOD SHORTAGE

Indonesia boasts desirable natural conditions for multiple grain harvests within a year, including fertile land, abundant rainfall, and rich water resources. Indonesia once achieved its food self-sufficiency in 1984 through introducing high-yield crop

varieties and improving irrigation facilities.

However, since the 1990s, Indonesia has once again resorted to importing large amounts of food, after much of its arable land was converted in order to keep up with the country's continuous population growth and accelerated industrialization and urbanization. Since 2005, the Indonesian government has gradually introduced new hybrid rice varieties from abroad, more than 90 percent of which are imported from China.

Indonesia plays a major role in traditional rice cultivation, with cultivation areas ranking third globally. However, the yield per unit area had been within a relatively low range due to outdated cultivation methods and farmers' lack of awareness of high-yield hybrid rice varieties in the past. In December 2008, the Chinese and Indonesian governments signed a framework agreement on hybrid rice technology. Efforts were made to help Indonesia develop relevant technology and increase rice production through conducting trial demonstrations of hybrid rice technology, organizing Indonesian technical personnel to receive training in China, and cultivating new hybrid rice varieties that are more suitable for local soil and climate conditions.

At present, hybrid rice technology has been successfully tested in many places of Indonesia, including Daerah Istimewa Yogyakarta, North Sumatra,



A paddy field in Indonesia.

Lampung, South Sulawesi, and West Kalimantan. These varieties have garnered widespread acclaim from local agricultural officials and farmers alike.

CULTIVATING THE ISLANDS

Since China is the first country to successfully achieve mass production of hybrid rice, Chinese companies enjoy more competitive advantages in rice technology cooperation with Indonesia.

In West Kalimantan, one of Indonesia's major crop-producing regions, local farmers had struggled with meager incomes for quite a long while in the past due to the low-level agricultural production technology.

Pak Muzanni, a local rice farmer, left his hometown for Malaysia to make a living with his wife at a young age. In 1999, they started to plant rice after returning to their hometown. At that time, the annual rice yield per hectare was only about 1.8 tons. "The seeds were not in good quality," Muzanni recalled. "And we lacked access to skills training and had little knowledge about planting—we even thought that we could do nothing but wait for the harvest once a year after the seeds were sowed."

Since 2014, under the Belt and Road Initiative, Muzanni has cooperated with an agronomist team of Syngenta Group China. Now he can harvest rice three times per year with greatly



Pak Muzanni (middle) talking with agronomists from Syngenta Group China.


improved yields thanks to technical guidance. Muzanni organized more than 40 local farmers to form a mutual-aid group to receive training on agricultural technology and financial services supported by the government and enterprises.

According to Puba, head of the Indonesian branch of Syngenta Group China, they dispatched a team of agronomists to each of the main islands of Indonesia to offer free guidance on agricultural technology to local farmers, involving seed selection, irrigation, fertilization, and others.

Additionally, the company also promotes quality rice varieties, shares experience in plant protection, and provides agricultural insurance to local farmers.

Syngenta Group China has also created a farmers-oriented Modern Agriculture Platform to provide farmers and partners of the food value chain with comprehensive services both online and offline. For one thing, it develops one-stop solutions tailored according to farmers' needs and soil conditions, fully applies new agricultural technologies such as satellite remote sensing and drone

crop spraying, and limits the use of pesticides and chemical fertilizers to reduce the impact on the environment. For another, it establishes direct partnerships with large-scale distributors to sell high-quality agricultural products at desirable prices and realizes the full controllability and traceability of agricultural products to ensure food safety.

"Now, the annual rice yields for most farmers reach seven to eight tons per hectare, and some even harvest nine tons per hectare," Muzanni beamed. "Our lives are getting better." 

Bridges of Cooperation and Friendship

By Amangeldiyev Sapargeldi

The Belt and Road Initiative has created a common and harmonious home for people by promoting global cooperation and development.

In 2013, Chinese President Xi Jinping proposed the Silk Road Economic Belt and the 21st-Century Maritime Silk Road, which are collectively known as the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), during his visits to Kazakhstan and Indonesia, respectively. Since then, the BRI has elicited positive responses from an increasing number of countries and international organizations, capturing global attention.

The uniqueness of the BRI is that it originated in China, but belongs to the



An aerial view of Jiayu Pass at the westernmost end of the Great Wall of the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644). Located in Gansu Province, Jiayu Pass, a cultural intersection of the ancient Silk Road and the Great Wall, was an ancient hub for economic and cultural exchanges between China and the West over 2,000 years ago. (Photo by Luo Ming)



The bustling Qingdao Port, Shandong Province. The Belt and Road Initiative boosts international trade and cultural exchange. (Photo from Xinhua)

whole world. Rooted in history, it envisions a future with greater cooperation and development among diverse countries. The BRI focuses on regions such as Asia, Europe, and Africa while keeping its doors open to partners worldwide.

Over time, the BRI has evolved from a mere vision into concrete actions, progressing from the initial stage to accelerated development, transforming from a Chinese proposal into international consensus. Particularly in energy cooperation, the initiative has emerged as a pioneer in promoting efficient energy use, providing new opportunities for regional

energy collaboration.

I hail from Turkmenistan, and my opportunity to study in China is a direct outcome of a Belt and Road project. Turkmenistan's participation in the BRI has resulted in positive strides in Sino-Turkmen cooperation. Diplomatic relations between Turkmenistan and China, now in their 31st year, have been elevated to a comprehensive strategic partnership. This collaboration not only contributes to the development of both nations but also fosters stability and prosperity in the region.

In 2015, riding the wave of the BRI, I embarked on an academic journey as

an international student in China. I experienced firsthand the alignment of China's food, traditional culture, and lifestyles with my own values and habits. My chosen field of study, energy engineering, was influenced by my exposure to the energy sector from an early age. All of these instilled in me a profound sense of belonging.

In 2020, I graduated from China University of Petroleum and later enrolled at Peking University, transitioning my focus from petroleum engineering to mechanics (energy and resources engineering). My research team is dedicated to areas such as energy

conservation, emission reduction, new energy utilization, and energy cascade use, contributing to achieving carbon peaking and carbon neutrality goals.

Simultaneously, China's endeavors in ecological and environmental protection have allowed me to witness the positive changes firsthand. The significant improvement in Beijing's air quality and the concept of "green, shared, open, and clean" Beijing Winter Olympics advocated by China made for an outstanding event. I had the privilege of being part of the opening ceremony, which was an unforgettable experience in my life as a foreign student.

Active participation in various activities has enabled me to yield fruitful

results in competitions and academic research, both on-campus and off-campus, promoting exchange between Turkmenistan and China. Through visiting different parts of China, I experienced the unique characteristics of each place and gained an understanding of diverse cultures and local customs. Wherever I have been in China, I have witnessed the local government's efforts in environmental improvement, ecological protection, and urban beautification, efforts that deserve recognition and promotion. I have observed the Communist Party of China's tireless efforts to pursue happiness for the people and advance the progress of humanity.

Eight years of studying

in China provided me with a comprehensive understanding of the country. Every day, I witness the beauty and development of China. For me, China has become a second home, and I believe more foreigners will come to study, work, and live here.

The BRI has brought numerous benefits to ordinary people, including policy coordination, connectivity of infrastructure and facilities, unimpeded trade, financial integration, and closer people-to-people ties. It has created a common and harmonious home for people by promoting global cooperation and development. I believe people around the world will walk further down the road of peace, prosperity, openness, green development, and innovation—a path that brings different civilizations together. ■



— A gilt silver pot. The artifact unearthed in Guyuan, Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region, is a treasure of the Sassanian Empire of Persia with a history of around 1,500 years. It bears witness to the commercial trade between China and Persia on the ancient Silk Road. (Photo from CFB)

— The author is a Turkmen student at the College of Engineering, Peking University.

A Cambodian Perspective on the Belt and Road Initiative

By Sovinda Po

The BRI has exerted a notable impact on Cambodia's economic development and infrastructure projects over the past decade.

After making substantial strides in economic development, technological innovation, and international cooperation, China has emerged as a catalyst for global progress and a hub for constructive dialogue.

China's commitment to openness, dialogue, and international engagement is exemplified by the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), which seeks to foster connectivity, promote economic cooperation, and enhance people-to-people exchange across continents. The 10th anniversary of China's proposal of the BRI



An automated container terminal at Qingdao Port in eastern China's Shandong Province. (Photo by Sun Jintao)

marks a significant milestone in one of the world's most ambitious infrastructure and development initiatives.

In terms of scale and scope, the BRI, proposed in 2013 by Chinese President Xi Jinping, is an extensive framework covering both the land-based Silk Road Economic Belt and the maritime-focused 21st-Century Maritime Silk Road.

In terms of infrastructure development, the BRI has been instrumental in financing and constructing a wide range of infrastructure projects including roads, railways, ports, airports, and energy facilities. These advancements have improved regional connectivity, reduced trade barriers, and facilitated economic growth by bridging infrastructure gaps.

In terms of economic opportunities, the BRI has created significant development opportunities for participating countries. It has promoted trade and investment by opening up new markets, facilitating cross-border business collaborations, and attracting foreign direct investment.

In terms of connectivity and integration, one of the primary goals of the BRI is to enhance connectivity within and between participating countries. By improving transportation and communication networks, the initiative seeks to promote regional integration, facilitate the flow of goods and services, and foster cultural and people-to-people exchanges. The BRI has encouraged global collaboration and multilateral

partnerships. Through promoting cooperation among international organizations, regional development banks, and participating countries, the initiative has leveraged collective strength, facilitated sharing of best practices, and ensured inclusive and sustainable development.

Over the past decade, the BRI has evolved from its initial focus on infrastructure development to encompass broader themes such as green development, digital connectivity, and people-to-people exchange. This evolution reflects the adaptability and responsiveness of the initiative to emerging global challenges and opportunities.

For Cambodia, the 10th anniversary of the BRI is particularly significant. The BRI has exerted a notable impact on Cambodia's economic development and infrastructure projects over the past decade.

The initiative has played a crucial role in improving connectivity between Cambodia and China. It has facilitated the construction of infrastructure projects such as highways, bridges, and ports, which have strengthened transportation networks and boosted trade between the two countries. Notable Chinese infrastructure projects in Cambodia include the Sihanoukville Special Economic Zone, the Phnom Penh-Sihanoukville Expressway, the Phnom Penh-Bavet Expressway (under construction), the Cambodia-China Friendship Bridge,

and the Siem Reap Angkor International Airport.

The BRI has boosted investment and trade opportunities for Cambodia. Chinese investment under the BRI has opened up new avenues for economic cooperation and trade between China and Cambodia. Increased Chinese investment has supported the development of various sectors in Cambodia including manufacturing, agriculture, tourism, and energy.

The BRI has promoted regional integration between Cambodia and other Southeast Asian and East Asian countries. The initiative has connected Cambodia with neighboring countries and facilitated cross-border trade. Infrastructure projects such as the Cambodia-Laos-Thailand Railway and the Phnom Penh-Bangkok Expressway have strengthened regional connectivity, trade, and people-to-people exchange.

Moving forward, China and Cambodia should continue to focus on infrastructure development in rural areas of Cambodia, sustainability of BRI projects, human capital development, public-private partnerships, cultural exchange and tourism, transparent governance and risk management, and regional cooperation. ■

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The author is director of the Center for Southeast Asian Studies at the Institute for International Studies and Public Policy of the Royal University of Phnom Penh.

Third BRF: A Beacon for High-Quality BRI Cooperation

By Qaiser Nawab

Over the past decade, the BRI has transcended its conceptual stage, evolving into a tangible global reality.

The third Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation (BRF) took place in Beijing from October 17 to 18. This forum, held under the theme “High-quality Belt and Road Cooperation: Together for Common Development and Prosperity,” signified a major milestone. Chinese President Xi Jinping not only graced the opening ceremony with his presence

but also delivered a keynote speech, hosted a welcome banquet, and engaged in bilateral activities with esteemed guests who gathered in China to attend the grand event.

The third BRF was more than just a diplomatic gathering; it symbolized the realization of a visionary blueprint for a global community of shared future. The monumental Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) has

roots in history, drawing inspiration from the ancient Silk Road that once linked Asia, Europe, and Africa. The Silk Road facilitated cultural exchange and propelled human progress, a legacy revived by President Xi’s visionary proposal of the BRI in 2013. His proposal united nations worldwide in a collective endeavor to promote peace, development, and shared prosperity.

Over the past decade, the BRI has transcended its conceptual stage, evolving into a tangible global reality. It has transformed the landscape of international cooperation, transcending political and ideological boundaries. By focusing on economic globalization and improving the global governance system, the BRI has presented practical solutions to global development challenges, aiding nations on their journey to modernization while fostering unity and cooperation for a shared future.

Central to the initiative are the principles of extensive consultation, joint contribution, and shared benefits. These principles represent a departure from traditional geopolitical power struggles, emphasizing a more equitable and inclusive approach to international cooperation. Every nation, regardless of size or development stage, is recognized as having a role to play and a voice to be heard. This commitment translates into opportunities for countries to participate on equal footing and share their collective wisdom.

Extensive consultation nurtures multilateralism, enabling collective decision-making that respects each nation's unique characteristics. It encourages collaboration among economies at various stages of development, establishing innovative



The exquisite mural depicting a dancer playing the *pipa* (Chinese lute) behind her back, housed in the 112th cave of the Mogao Grottoes in Dunhuang, northwestern China's Gansu Province, reflects the integration of the diverse cultures of the Western Regions, Central Asia, and Central China. (Photo by Sun Zhiyang/China Pictorial)

The BRI provides a path to lasting peace, sustainable prosperity, openness, innovation, and social progress, offering a model of international cooperation that transcends traditional geopolitical rivalries and underscores the power of unity and cooperation.

cooperation mechanisms. These principles actively engage businesses, capitalizing on their expertise and resources for mutual gain, while looking to governments to play a pivotal role in creating platforms, establishing mechanisms, and providing guidance.

Shared benefits lie at the core of the initiative. It's about promoting win-win

cooperation to ensure that no country is left behind. The BRI prioritizes development, poverty eradication, job creation, and improvements in people's well-being. It transcends mere infrastructure development to encompass areas like public health, education, and disaster mitigation. By promoting impactful projects, the initiative directly enhances

the lives of people in participating countries, thereby realizing the vision of a global community of shared future.

The BRI is also dedicated to green, low-carbon development and respecting the natural world and its laws. It serves as a robust response to pressing global issues such as environmental degradation and climate change. By fostering cooperation on green infrastructure, renewable energy, eco-friendly transportation, and sustainable finance, the BRI stands at the forefront of combating climate change and advancing sustainable development.

Clean governance is an integral aspect of the initiative's success. It ensures that resources and projects are managed with integrity and efficiency. Efforts to combat corruption and promote lawful operations guarantee that the initiative remains a beacon of clean governance and financial transparency.

The BRI sets a course towards global well-being, with a vision to create lasting peace, universal security, and sustainable prosperity. It represents a new model of international relations based on mutual respect, equity, justice, and win-win cooperation, fostering a new vision of common, comprehensive, cooperative, and sustainable security.

The initiative seeks to build a prosperous,

inclusive, and balanced future by discarding exploitative colonialism in favor of win-win outcomes and shared development. By prioritizing development as a common goal, the BRI leverages resources and strengths to ignite the growth engines of participating countries, thus nurturing a new global economic growth center.

With a commitment to openness that transcends borders and ideologies, the BRI aims to create an environment conducive to open development and construct a system of international trade and investment rules that are fair, equitable, and transparent. The initiative seeks to build an open global economy that benefits all, echoing the shared commitment of the world to global economic interconnectivity.

In its pursuit of innovation, the BRI leverages digital and smart development to explore new business forms, technologies, and models. It seeks fresh sources of growth and innovative development pathways to drive transformative advancements. The initiative aims to build a resource-efficient, eco-conscious, and low-carbon Silk Road that makes significant contributions to addressing climate change.

Promoting equality, mutual learning, and inclusiveness among civilizations is the core

of the BRI's mission. It aims to foster mutual understanding, respect, and trust among nations, broadening consensus on ideas and values and achieving new human progress. By encouraging deeper exchange among political parties, social organizations, think tanks, and sub-national communities, the initiative aims to improve the lives of people around the world.

It is evident that the BRI is not just a collection of infrastructure projects. It is a visionary blueprint for a global community of shared future, embodying a commitment to equality, inclusiveness, and mutual benefits, embracing green and clean development, and paving the way to global well-being. The initiative provides a path to lasting peace, sustainable prosperity, openness, innovation, and social progress, offering a model of international cooperation that transcends traditional geopolitical rivalries and underscores the power of unity and cooperation. The third BRF yielded substantial outcomes and marked a pivotal moment in the journey toward a better world. ■

The author is president of the Belt and Road Initiative for Sustainable Development (BRISD), a global think tank headquartered in Islamabad, established in conjunction with the 10th anniversary celebration of the BRI.

战略合作伙伴
STRATEGIC
PARTNERS



ONE PLANET
一个地球



Voice for snow leopards

Harmony between humans and nature

为雪豹发声 与自然共生



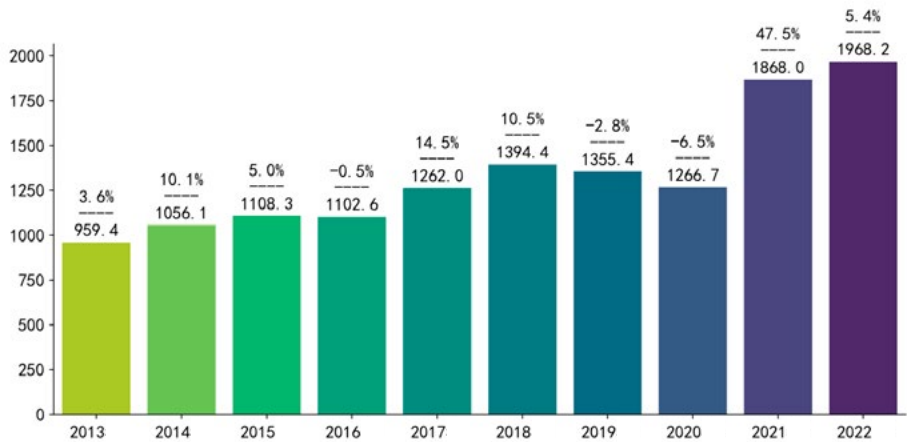
BRI at 10: China and South Asia Experience Robust Trade Growth

Designed by Liu Peiyao

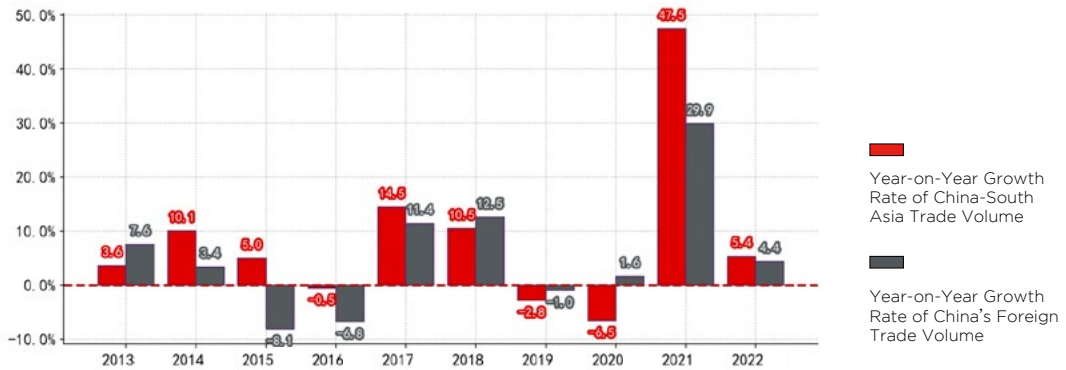
China and South Asian countries form an expansive market together, boasting a population of about three billion and contributing roughly one-fifth of the global economic aggregate. Over the past decade, collaborative efforts under the framework of the Belt and Road Initiative have aligned development

strategies, harnessed complementary advantages, and facilitated substantial progress in connectivity, infrastructure, trade, and investment. From 2013 to 2022, China-South Asia trade volume doubled to nearly US\$200 billion, with an impressive annual growth rate of 8.3 percent. 📈

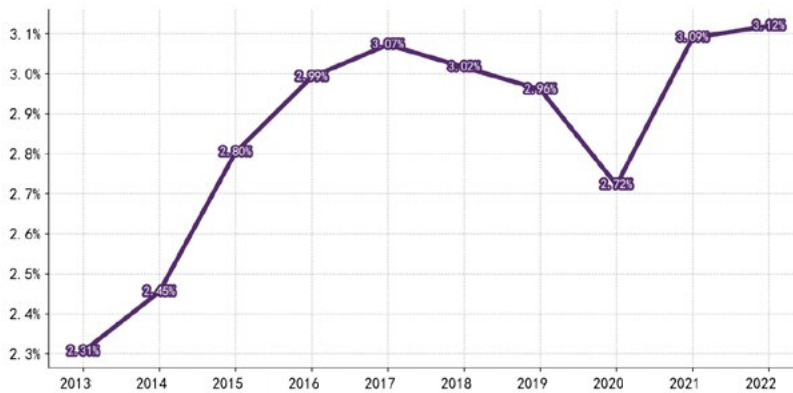
China-South Asia Trade Volume and Year-on-Year Growth Rate 2013-2022 (US\$100 million)



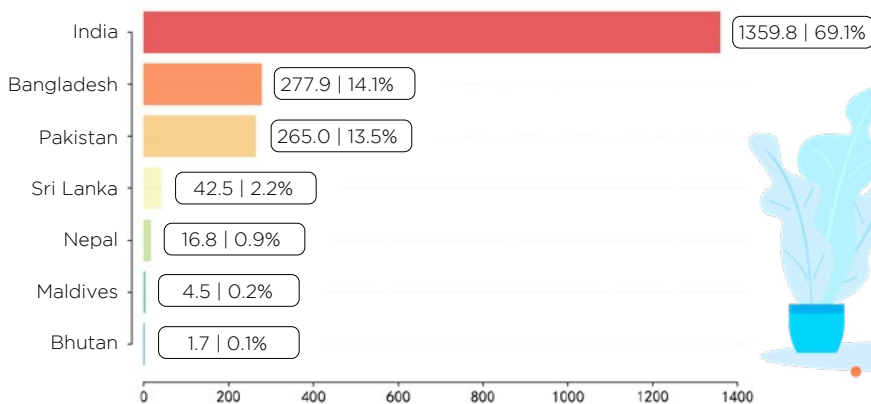
Year-on-Year Growth Rate of China-South Asia Trade and China's Foreign Trade 2013-2022



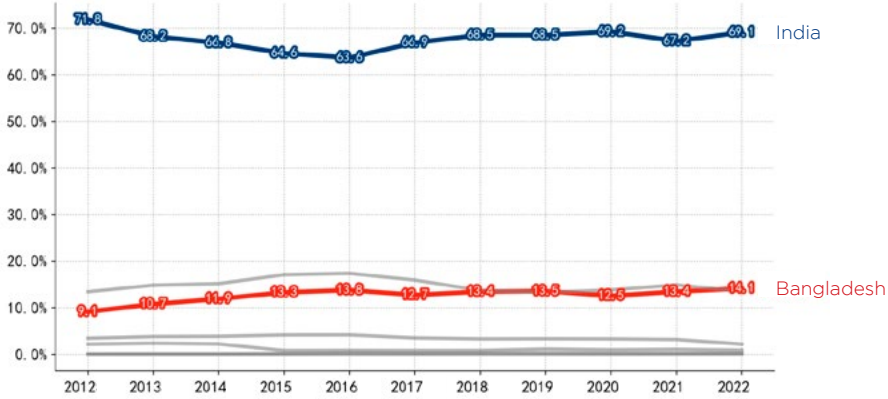
Share of China-South Asia Trade Volume in China's Total Trade Volume 2013-2022



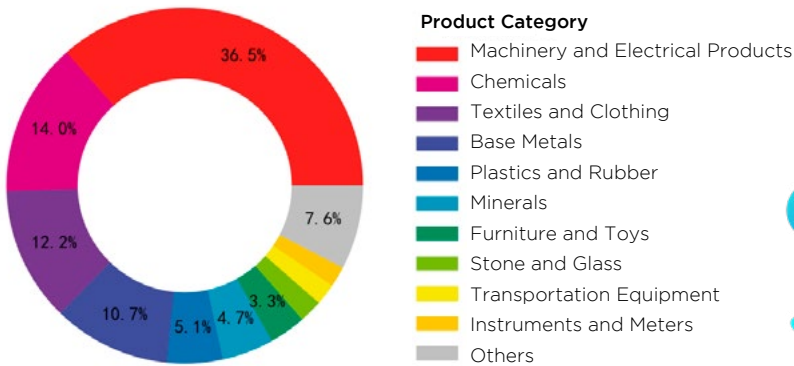
Trade Volume and Percentage Distribution between China and South Asian Countries in 2022 (US\$100 million)



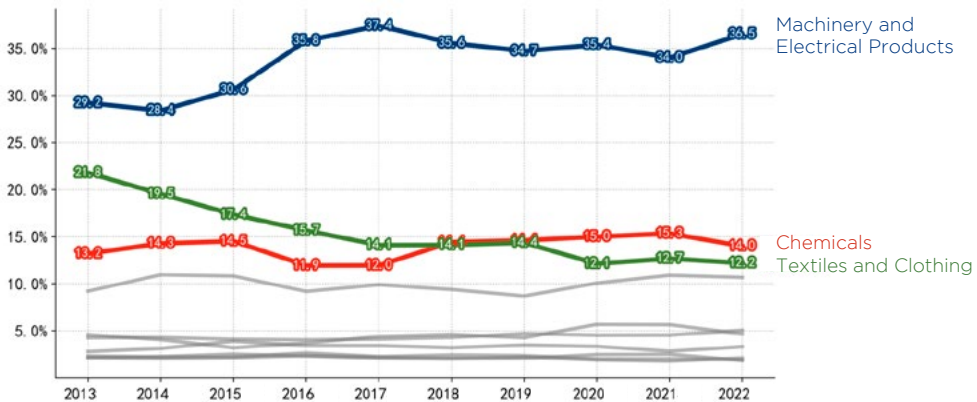
Changes of Percentage Distribution of Trade Volume between China and South Asian Countries 2012-2022



Percentage Distribution of Trade by Product Category between China and South Asian Countries in 2022



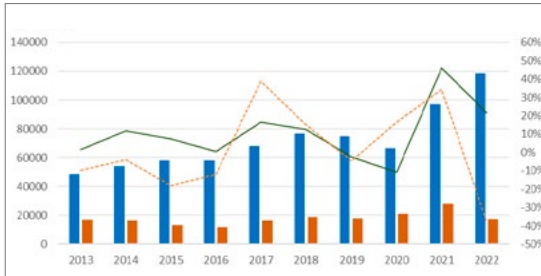
Changes of Percentage Distribution of Trade by Product Category between China and South Asian Countries 2013-2022



China's Import and Export Volume with South Asian Countries and Year-on-Year Growth Rate 2013-2022

Exports Imports Year-on-Year Growth Rate for China's Exports to the Country

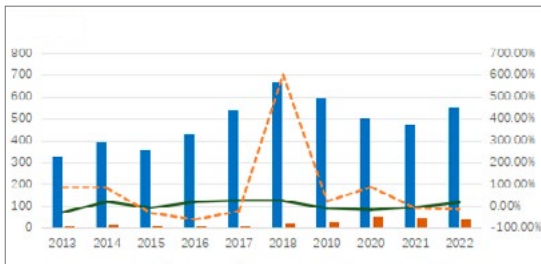
Year-on-Year Growth Rate for China's Imports from the Country



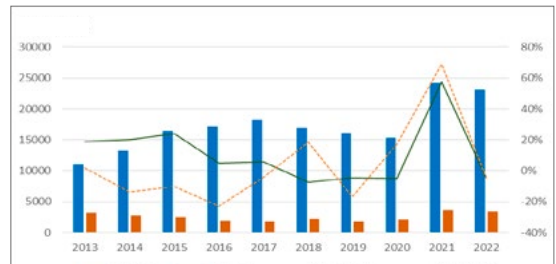
China's Import and Export Volume with India and Year-on-Year Growth Rate 2013-2022 (US\$ million)



China's Import and Export Volume with Nepal and Year-on-Year Growth Rate 2013-2022 (US\$ million)



China's Import and Export Volume with Afghanistan and Year-on-Year Growth Rate 2013-2022 (US\$ million)



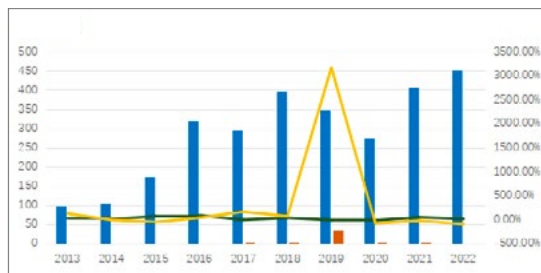
China's Import and Export Volume with Pakistan and Year-on-Year Growth Rate 2013-2022 (US\$ million)



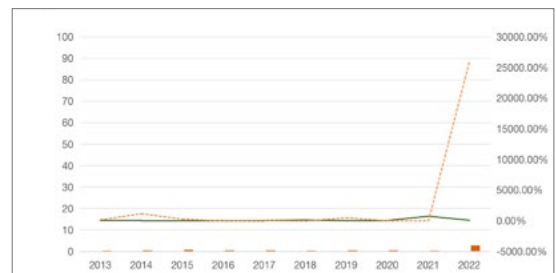
China's Import and Export Volume with Bangladesh and Year-on-Year Growth Rate 2013-2022 (US\$ million)



China's Import and Export Volume with Sri Lanka and Year-on-Year Growth Rate 2013-2022 (US\$ million)



China's Import and Export Volume with the Maldives and Year-on-Year Growth Rate 2013-2022 (US\$ million)



China's Import and Export Volume with Bhutan and Year-on-Year Growth Rate 2013-2022 (US\$10,000)

Source: *The Belt and Road Initiative: A Decade of Collaboration—China-South Asia Cooperation and Development Report* by Professor Zhang Xiaotao's team from China's Central University of Finance and Economics

Tides of the Times: Exploring Ancient Flow and Modern Conservation

Concept by *China-India Dialogue*

Witnessing Romantic Protection

Wu Jiru

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Birth place: Lanxi, Zhejiang

Current residence: Hangzhou, Zhejiang



In September 2022, when I had just arrived at the Communication University of Zhejiang's School of Journalism and Communication as a first-year graduate student, I was honored to participate in the "Grand Canal National Park" short video series project sponsored by the China Academy of Art. The project invited experts and scholars to introduce six ancient bridges in four provinces and municipalities along the Grand Canal. The video featured techniques such as oral narration, interviews, and a documentary follow-up.

I was responsible for producing a short video about the Tongyun Bridge in Beijing, and Chinese photographer Ji Hongwei, already famous for his images of the northern canals, was assigned to provide oral

storytelling materials for me. I could hardly find any information about the bridge on the internet. It seemed to have been forgotten by many. But during the storytelling, Ji vividly recounted everything he knew about the bridge with tremendous details, including stories about the facial expressions of each little stone lion on the bridge piers and the patterns of each carved vase of the bridge deck.

I started to realize that the lack of written and visual records prevented stories about the Grand Canal and the ancient bridges along it from being widely known. The video production filled a gap in the history of the Tongyun Bridge through digital media.

During shooting, I became aware of how complex the process of protecting ancient bridges can be. It's not just

about perfectly restoring the appearance—technicians must focus on how best to scientifically repair them while respecting every mottled mark of history.

In the footage about ancient bridges, experts generally focused on restoration of ancient bridges and how they coexist harmoniously with contemporary cities. Broken lions remain on the Tongyun Bridge, and a high-speed railway forms a perpendicular intersection with the ancient Sihe Bridge. Such unique snapshots were based on respecting the objective existence of the ancient bridges.

In December 2022, we participated in the Grand Canal Ancient Bridge Image Exhibition funded by the China National Arts Fund. Combining photographic handbooks, sound, video, image installations, and other media forms, the exhibition displayed more than 500 photographic works related to the ancient bridges on the Grand Canal and some original photos of the ancient canal bridges from the late Qing Dynasty (1644-1911) and the early Republic of China period (1912-1949), including landscape pictures, restoration scenes of ancient bridges, and images of residents coexisting in harmony with the bridges. Each work tells a story reflecting the centuries-old craftsmanship of ancient bridges and the long-standing culture of the canal. I was perhaps most impressed by an image of the Gongchen

Bridge in Hangzhou covered in snow. From a bird's-eye view, snowflakes slowly and gently fell on the wet bridge, creating a poetic and picturesque vista.

An ancient landmark in Hangzhou, the Gongchen Bridge has quietly hovered over the canal for a century, witnessing the changes in Hangzhou. The Gongchen Bridge was also the inspiration behind the mascot “Chen Chen” for the Hangzhou Asian Games. It has emerged as a notable reminder that uses more vivid and flexible methods to

photo of the Grand Canal that he took. He explained that it was captured via a method of his own invention. Contrasting aerial photography with drones today, he relied on an aircraft flying at low altitudes to obtain such precious pictures.

He also showed us two canal landscape images taken decades apart. The surrounding buildings changed drastically, but the canal continuously nourishing the land on the banks remained static.

The ancient bridges over the canal, each with at least

The Grand Canal is silent and the ancient bridges are mute. They cannot evolve with the advancing pace of the times and gradually gaps widened in the digital age. But today, countless people still guard the canal and preserve its history and culture however they can.

enrich images of the canal and ancient bridges to attract more people to pay attention to their stories.

Local residents have led an affluent life because of the canal. In April 2023, during a Jiaxing intangible cultural heritage event called the Net-Boat Fair, we visited the city to interview famous local photographer Yan Xinrong. Yan showed us the first aerial

a century-old history, have mostly maintained their original shapes thanks to continuous repairs and restorations. However, hardly any texts or images about them can be found on the internet. As a new generation of conservators, we are striving to strengthen “digital conservation” of various historical sites and cultural relics, so as to make up for

their deficiency in digital media.

Thanks to Yan Xinrong's innovative canal photography decades ago, many now understand the old canal from a new perspective. Perhaps in the decades to come, the videos and images of ancient bridges we create today will empower future generations to see the Grand Canal as it is now.

Compared to the long-term guardians of the canal, we are like tourists hurriedly passing by as we carry out the short video shooting project, but the canal still ripples through our hearts as it exerts a far-reaching influence.

The Grand Canal is silent and the ancient bridges are mute. They cannot evolve with the advancing pace of the times and gradually gaps widened in the digital age. But today, countless people still guard the canal and preserve its history and culture however they can. This is the only way to see, protect, and record the canal. We were honored to witness this romantic guardianship and protection.



Efforts related to river and canal rehabilitation and conservation are at the center of India's drive towards sustainable development. With a particular emphasis on their applicability to contemporary metropolitan environments, let's explore the various viewpoints, insights, and human stories underlying India's water revival initiatives.

As a travel enthusiast, I've voyaged to many places in India and personally witnessed the changes along the way. A spectacular evolution is happening in the heart of India, where the dynamic pulse of modern life blends with old echoes of history. The vibrant story is engraved into the very environment, and it's not just a tale for textbooks or boardroom debates. India has embarked on a remarkable journey to revitalize its rivers and canals, a journey that has exerted an impact well beyond the borders of its waterways, given its rich cultural past.

I first became aware of the contradiction in India's relationship with its rivers during a personal boat ride

along the Ganges. Long neglected and contaminated, the Ganges was considered a spiritual lifeline. Still, there was a hint of change amid the age-old ghats and the steady chants of prayers. It became evident to me as I traveled through the restored areas, dotted with vibrant flowers and brimming with aquatic life, just how dedicated India is to protecting its waterways.

India has worked to redefine its environmental story when it comes to conservation. The foundation of this project has been the Namami Gange initiative, introduced in 2014. This initiative blends community development, afforestation, and infrastructure development. Through an intricate network of sewage treatment plants and riverfront development projects, the Ganges is shedding its polluted past to breathe life back into the holiest of the holy.

One of the most striking elements of India's approach is the integration of traditional wisdom with contemporary solutions. In Varanasi, I spoke with local activist Gauri Ma, who emphasized the significance of community involvement in the cleaning and preservation of the Ganges. "It's not just about installing advanced filtration systems," she remarked. "It's about inspiring a sense of responsibility in the people. When communities actively participate, the impact is not just environmental. It's social and cultural." The revival efforts also underscore a shift in mindset from viewing rivers and canals as mere resources

India's Aquatic Renaissance

Sana Neware

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Birth place: Nagpur, India
Current residence: Bangalore, India

to recognizing them as dynamic ecosystems essential for the well-being of urban populations.

The success of India's initiatives can be attributed not only to governmental policies but also the resilience of local communities. I encountered this firsthand in Udaipur, where a community-led project transformed the ancient stepwells into vibrant community spaces, combining heritage conservation with water management. "When people take ownership,

in the face of urban sprawl, nature and modernity can coexist harmoniously. The transformation of the Mithi River, once a polluted drain, has showcased the city's determination to balance development with environmental conservation.

The impact of these initiatives is not confined to the riverbanks; it is reverberating through the veins of urban landscapes. Green spaces have sprouted along canal banks, offering respite from the concrete jungle. Architectural

leading the way in transforming dilapidated riverfronts into vibrant public spaces. The Sabarmati Riverfront is now a symbol of sustainable urban development. Walking its promenades shaded by verdant foliage, I witnessed how a once shunned river became the heartbeat of a city. As I strolled around, I couldn't help but notice the laughter of children playing by the water, a stark contrast to the once desolate and polluted stretch of land. India's river and canal revival projects are not just altering landscapes, they are instilling a sense of ownership and responsibility in the people, fostering a collective consciousness about a sustainable future.

India's aquatic renaissance testifies to the belief that healing our planet begins in the heart of our urban landscapes, where the past, present, and future converge in a dance of renewal. The blueprint laid by India's river and canal revival projects offers insights for any city grappling with the consequences of haphazard development. The metamorphosis of these water bodies is not only an engineering marvel but also a triumph of human spirit, proving that even seemingly insurmountable challenges can be tackled with vision and determination. As India's water bodies undergo remarkable changes, they become living examples of the positive impact that strategic planning, community engagement, and environmental consciousness can exert on our shared urban spaces. 🌱

The revival efforts also underscore a shift in mindset from viewing rivers and canals as mere resources to recognizing them as dynamic ecosystems essential for the well-being of urban populations.

changes become sustainable," Rajesh Kumar, the project manager, said. "Our ancestors understood the delicate balance between human needs and nature. We're reclaiming that wisdom."

While India's efforts are commendable, challenges persist. Rapid urbanization, industrialization, and climate change continue to exert pressure on water bodies. However, innovation is prevailing. In Mumbai, a groundbreaking project aims to transform the Mithi River into an ecological corridor and demonstrate that even

marvels like the Sabarmati Riverfront in Ahmedabad seamlessly integrate water bodies into the urban fabric, creating recreational spaces that double as ecological sanctuaries. These projects have challenged the conventional notion that environmental degradation is a necessary sacrifice to advance urban development.

The concept of riverfront development has gained prominence, not just as an aesthetic endeavor but as a strategic urban planning initiative. Cities like Ahmedabad and Varanasi are

Experiencing Belt and Road Film Week

By Shi Chuan

Photos courtesy of Shi Chuan

Viewing films from the Belt and Road Film Week feels like a cultural adventure, enabling me to explore the unknown.

This year marks the 10th anniversary of the Belt and Road Initiative and also the 5th anniversary of the Shanghai International Film Festival's Belt and Road Film Week. Five years ago, I was honored to be invited as a film picker for this segment, tasked with reviewing each of approximately 20 films that made it to the final selection.

Having been engaged in the Shanghai International Film Festival's selection process for over two decades, I've found that compared to the festival's main competition sections such as the Golden Goblet Awards and the Asian New Talent Award, the selection criteria for the Belt and Road Film Week

are notably more demanding. These heightened standards are due to the geographical diversity of the countries involved in the Belt and Road Initiative, which span from Central Asia to the Middle East, Southern Europe, and Central and Eastern Europe and reach from Southeast Asia to South Asia, Africa, and South America. The vast geographical scope naturally results in an unparalleled tapestry of cultures, encompassing a rich variety of ethnic groups, religions, languages, customs, and lifestyles. The cultural contexts of many films related to the Belt and Road often reach well beyond my existing knowledge, presenting a significant challenge to a judge's

overall cultural literacy, film expertise, international political and economic knowledge, and even foreign language proficiency.

In most cases, the selection process for this section tends to be rather slow because of a frequent need to pause and consult reference materials along the way in order to fully grasp the characters and events within the storyline. In 2023, a documentary-style co-production by Austria and other countries tells the story of a wedding photographer's quest across Eastern European nations to uncover the vanishing ancient Jewish music known as Klezmer. The film's locations span Ukraine, Romania, Serbia, and various other countries,



Shi Chuan (first left, on the stage) presides over the Belt and Road Film Culture Roundtable Talk, 2018.

featuring a range of local dialects alongside Hebrew and Yiddish languages. Through this journey of discovery, the film aims to shed light on the current status of ancient Jewish communities in Eastern Europe and explore how they construct cultural and ethnic identity through traditional music. While watching this film, I found myself pausing it almost every few minutes because there were numerous unfamiliar terms in the English subtitles, necessitating frequent dictionary references to ensure a thorough comprehension of the plot and themes.

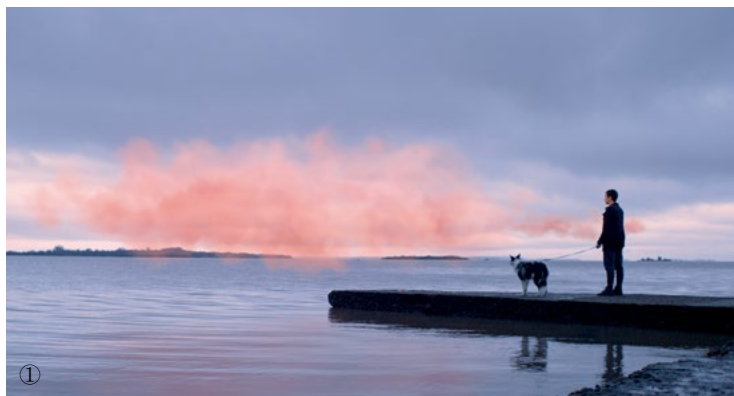
I was deeply impressed by a Laotian film titled *Goodbye Mister Wong*, which I watched in 2021. It was my first time

experiencing Laotian cinema, and fortunately, the storyline was easy to follow. The film revolves around a village in Laos where the land is slated for purchase by developers for the construction of a factory. The villagers find themselves caught between a desire for modernization and reluctance to let go of their traditional way of life. Chinese cinema in the 1980s often explored similar themes, so despite the different cultural backgrounds, we can still find things that resonate like experiencing modernization.

When Iranian cinema is mentioned, names like Abbas Kiarostami, Jafar Panahi, and Asghar Farhadi, among other art-house film masters, usually

come to mind. However, the Iranian film *Butterfly Swimming*, which I watched in 2020, is an intriguing thriller with a shade of Hollywood-style storytelling. It excels at creating a suspenseful atmosphere, controlling narrative pacing, utilizing visual and auditory elements, and portraying the characters at a world-class standard.

When watching a movie in a theater, most audiences approach it with an expectation to encounter the familiar, like going on a date with characters and stories they already know. Even with new releases, there's often a sense of encountering "familiar strangers." However, watching films from the Belt and Road Film Week involves



① A still from the Brazilian movie *The Pink Cloud* (2021). ② A still from *The Klezmer Project* (2023), a film jointly produced by Austria and Argentina. ③ A still from the Laotian movie *Goodbye Mister Wong* (2020).

of this circle of knowledge, enabling me to venture into the unknown.

Over the past five years of working with the Belt and Road Film Week, I feel it has grown into the most unique, dazzling, and dynamic section within the Shanghai International Film Festival. Showcasing the cinematic cultures of the Global South, as the Belt and Road Film Week does, is a rare sight at other international film festivals. And the countries and regions participating in the Belt and Road Film Week are eager to showcase their realities and cultural achievements on this international platform. Therefore, the Belt and Road Film Week facilitates cultural dialogue between the Belt and Road region and world cinema.

I sincerely hope that the Shanghai International Film Festival will elevate the Belt and Road Film Week to a permanent competition section and places its three awards alongside the festival's permanent awards, the Golden Goblet Award and the Asian New Talent Award. This can further amplify and highlight the distinctive characteristics and strength of the Shanghai International Film Festival, making it stand out from its peers globally. 📽️

far more cultural exploration. If describing the extent of human knowledge as a circle, the inside of the circle represents the known world, while the

outside is the vast expanse of the unknown space. Watching films from the Belt and Road region feels like continuously expanding the boundaries

The author is a vice chairman of Shanghai Film Association, a professor at Shanghai Theater Academy, and a renowned movie critic and expert.



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to enjoy clean air.**

Road to Exchanges and Mutual Learning

By Yue Ran

The Silk Road shares much with silk. Sometimes it is like flowing silk threads. Some lines are clear, and some are intermittent. And sometimes it is like a large silk net covering a vast land with gorgeous patterns.



**From Zhang Qian to Marco Polo:
Eighteen Lectures on the Silk Road**

by Rong Xinjiang
Jiangxi People's Publishing House
November 2022

Thousands of years ago, the Romans in the Mediterranean region were amazed by silk they called “Seres” (Latin for “Chinese”), while the Chinese on the other side of the Eurasian continent were intoxicated by the fragrance of grape wine in jade cups.

Since Zhang Qian, an envoy of the Western Han Dynasty (202 B.C.-8 A.D.), embarked on a journey to the Western Regions, the

Silk Road has connected China and other countries in Central Asia, West Asia, and South Asia with the melodious sound of camel bells.

Based on the latest archaeological findings and authoritative research outcomes, the book *From Zhang Qian to Marco Polo: Eighteen Lectures on the Silk Road* covers 18 special topics on the ancient Silk Road including the routes,

towns, wars, material exchange, population flow, political power, settlements, archaeological excavations, and cultural relics. It shines light on the cultural value and historical role of the Silk Road in terms of cultural exchange and mutual learning between Chinese and foreign civilizations during the 1,400 years from Zhang Qian's journey to the Western Regions to Italian traveler Marco Polo's visit to China in the Yuan Dynasty (1271-1368). The book also explores the rich meaning, contemporary value, and global significance of the Silk Road.

This book is forward-thinking and inspiring. The author, Professor Rong Xinjiang, provides many details that cannot be found in other academic works on the Silk Road. He referred to Khotanese travel notes unearthed in Dunhuang, Sogdian and Uighur documents unearthed in Turpan, and other historical materials found in China.

"The Silk Road shares much with silk. Sometimes it is like flowing silk threads. Some lines are clear, and some are intermittent. And sometimes it is like a large silk net covering a vast land with gorgeous patterns," Rong said.

He stressed that the ancient Silk Road was divided into many parts for most periods in history. Only by connecting all the parts can we gain an overview of the entire Silk Road. Therefore, to better explore



Marco Polo called Hangzhou, which was the capital of the Southern Song Dynasty (1127-1279), "Quinsai" in his book *The Description of the World*, an account of his journey to the East. In the book, he praised Quinsai as the most magnificent and prosperous city that he had ever seen in the world. (Photo courtesy of Jiangxi People's Publishing House)

the rich connotations of the Silk Road, we should recognize the contributions of all countries and peoples across each segment of the ancient trade route.

The heart of the book is an in-depth exploration of the contemporary value of the Silk Road. The book focuses on the interactions between China and ancient Iranian civilizations such as Persia and Sogdiana, and the cultural exchange between China and Dashi (the Arab Empire). The regions involved are important participants in today's Belt and Road Initiative. In-depth examination of the past provides historical references and fuel for exchange and mutual

learning between Chinese and foreign civilizations in the contemporary era.

The two lectures "All Roads Lead to Chang'an" and "Diverse Cultures of Chang'an in the Tang Dynasty (618-907)" focus on ancient Chang'an and discuss the impact of foreign civilizations on China, outlining the important trajectory of contact, collision, and exchange between China and the outside world, highlighting the fine tradition of Chinese culture to draw on the strengths of others to promote integration and innovation across different historical periods.

It also showcases the Silk Road spirit of peace



The Buddhist historical painting *Zhang Qian's Mission to the Western Regions* on the north wall in Cave 323 of the Mogao Caves in Dunhuang. During the Western Han Dynasty (202 B.C.-8 A.D.), Zhang Qian's expedition of the Western Regions marked the foundation of the ancient Silk Road. (Photo from CFB)

scriptures soon shifted from oral to written.

After paper was used to copy Buddhist scriptures, it played a fundamental role in promoting the spread of Buddhism from India to the Western Regions and then to the Central Plains of China, which can be seen in the fourth lecture "The Contribution of Paper to the Spread of Buddhist Scriptures along the Silk Road."

The spread of cultures along the Silk Road strengthened understanding and sympathy between different civilizations and laid a historical foundation for the integrated development of the world. 🌐

and cooperation, openness and inclusiveness, mutual learning, and mutual benefit, which is also the core reason for the steady and long-term development of the Belt and Road Initiative.

The book also examines the spread of Chinese culture to the West and its significance to the world from new perspectives such as papermaking, classics, and letters. Papermaking is one of the four great inventions of ancient China. Because of its portability, paper became the main writing material and an essential item for business

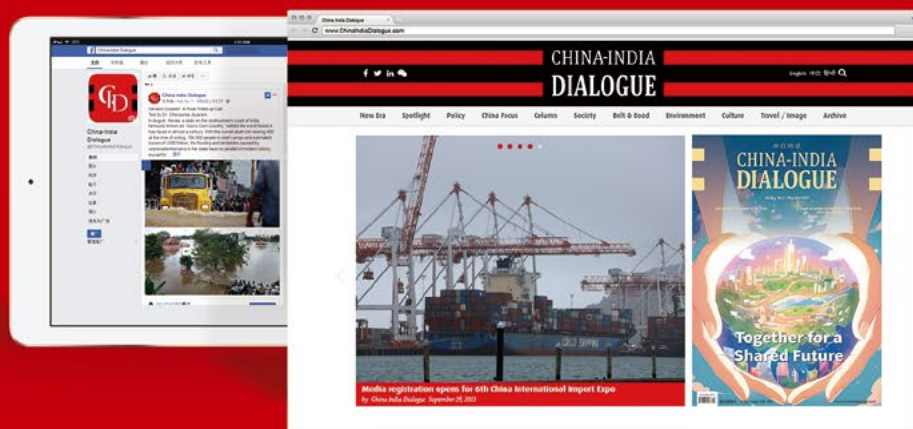
travelers on the Silk Road. It played an important role in the smooth and orderly operation of the Silk Road.

The introduction of Buddhism to China was a major event in the history of human civilizations. Especially, after the decline of Buddhism in India, the significance of this cultural dissemination became even more prominent. Translation of Buddhist scriptures started in an era of oral interpretation. Thanks to the historical opportunity presented by the great development of paper writing in China, translation of Buddhist



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