

Article

A Brief Introduction to Xi Jinping's Speech 齐心开创共建“一带一路”美好未来 [Working Together to Deliver a Brighter Future For Belt and Road Cooperation]—US-China Trade Talks, Encircling the US, and the BRI

CPE-Working Group on Empire

The Working Group on Empire of the Coalition for Peace and Ethics (WGE-CPE) examined the proceedings at the Second Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation, held in Beijing from April 25 to April 27, 2019. More specifically the WGE-CPE considered the utility of Xi Jinping's remarks at that event as a source for an understanding of the Chinese conceptualization of its global trade regimes, and the principles and objectives and shape and drive it. This essay introduces the reader to the key remarks that are at the center of this phase of the analysis: Xi Jinping's speech 齐心开创共建“一带一路”美好未来; [Working Together to Deliver a Brighter Future For Belt and Road Cooperation],¹ along with the WGE's Introduction. This introduction does not present an in-depth analysis of Xi Jinping's Speech at the Second Belt and Road Forum, but a gloss about what the speech might point at in the broader context of the USA's reaction to the One Belt One Road. The speech may be read and analyzed on at least three different levels, but that kind of analysis would have the short-coming to further isolate discussion of the Belt and Road Initiative from the real-world contexts where Belt and Road cooperation is already under way. Empire may be theorized in the academia, but its construction takes place in the real world.

If there is anything that clearly emerges from Xi Jinping's Speech at the Second Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation, that something is the very complexity of the BRI. There is more about the BRI than just trade. Therefore, attempts to capture a project as articulate as the BRI within the binaries of tariffs and competing trade blocks might eventually be misleading. Since its launch in 2013, the BRI has been faithfully represented by China for what it is – an initiative articulated around five cores: enhancing policy coordination; facilities connectivity; unimpeded trade; financial integration; people-to-people bonds.

1 The speech was published in original language on the electronic edition of the People's Daily. See, 中华人民共和国主席 习近平, 齐心开创共建“一带一路”美好未来 —在第二届“一带一路”国际合作高峰论坛开幕式上的主旨演讲 [Xi Jinping, President of the People's Republic of China, Working Together to Deliver a Brighter Future For Belt and Road Cooperation], 人民网 [Renminwang], (April 27, 2019), available at <http://politics.people.com.cn/n1/2019/0427/c1024-31053184.html>

Trade is without doubt an important part of the Belt and Road Initiative. But, trade always takes place within broader local, national, supra-national and global contexts. No region, country, or supra-national body trades exclusively with China to the exclusion of other countries. The sustainability of trade inside and across each one of these contexts requires various types of infrastructures. In discussions about the Belt and Road Initiative, the word “infrastructure” often evokes ports, rail-roads, physical and digital high-ways. Yet the Belt and Road Initiative has become a reality on the European continent thanks to the existence of a cultural infrastructure as complex as physical and digital ones. But one perhaps less easy to observe.

America's most recent and observable reactions to the Belt and Road Initiative seems to have focused on only the third component – unimpeded trade. Yet, only a month after the government of the Republic of Italy signed on to the Belt and Road Initiative a partially different signal came from US independent media companies. On May 8, the website SupChina published an article throwing water on the fire of the recent, sustained spate of criticism against the country.² SupChina describes itself as “an independent digital media company dedicated to informing, entertaining, and educating a global audience about business, technology, politics, and culture in China.”³ The article observed how the anxiety expressed towards Italy's signature of the Belt and Road Memorandum of Understanding was unjustified. Written in English, the article seems to have spoken to a foreign and academic audience, rather than to the Italian public.

SupChina succeeded in perceiving the importance of cultural infrastructures and made a laudable attempt to massage those cultural sensitivities *other* US media companies had just offended. But already in 300 BCE, Greek philosopher Aristotle observed how “one swallow does not a summer make”. Therefore, is still too early to gauge whether the article published by SupChina signals an organic, well thought-out attempt by the USA to reinforce shared cultural infrastructures.

It is worth reading Xi Jinping's Speech at the Second Belt and Road Forum against this more nuanced context, for what the speech truly says about the nature and goals of the Belt and Road Initiative. The English full text of the speech follows, as retrieved from the official website of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China.

2 Kelly Ng, *Brouhaha Over Italy-China BRI Deal May Be Overrated*, SUPCHINA, May 8, 2019, available at <https://supchina.com/2019/05/08/brouhaha-over-italy-china-bri-deal-may-be-overrated/>

3 SupChina, *About*, available at <https://supchina.com/about-supchina/>

***Working Together to Deliver a Brighter Future For Belt and Road
Cooperation***

*Keynote Speech by H.E. Xi Jinping President of the People's Republic of China At
the Opening Ceremony of the Second Belt and Road Forum for International
Cooperation
2019/04/26*

Beijing, 26 April 2019

*Your Excellencies Heads of State and Government,
Your Excellencies High-level Representatives,
Your Excellencies Heads of International Organizations,
Ladies and Gentlemen,
Friends,*

*Good morning! As a line of a classical Chinese poem goes, "Spring and autumn
are lovely seasons in which friends get together to climb up mountains and write
poems." On this beautiful spring day, it gives me great pleasure to have you with
us here at the Second Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation (BRF).
On behalf of the Chinese government and people and in my own name, I extend a
very warm welcome to you all!*

*Two years ago, it was here that we met for the First Belt and Road Forum for
International Cooperation, where we drew a blueprint of cooperation to enhance
policy, infrastructure, trade, financial and people-to-people connectivity. Today,
we are once again meeting here with you, friends from across the world. I look
forward to scaling new heights with you and enhancing our partnership.
Together, we will create an even brighter future for Belt and Road cooperation.*

Dear Colleagues and Friends,

*The joint pursuit of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) aims to enhance
connectivity and practical cooperation. It is about jointly meeting various
challenges and risks confronting mankind and delivering win-win outcomes and
common development. Thanks to the joint efforts of all of us involved in this
initiative, a general connectivity framework consisting of six corridors, six
connectivity routes and multiple countries and ports has been put in place. A
large number of cooperation projects have been launched, and the decisions of
the first BRF have been smoothly implemented. More than 150 countries and
international organizations have signed agreements on Belt and Road
cooperation with China. The complementarity between the BRI and the*

development plans or cooperation initiatives of international and regional organizations such as the United Nations, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, the African Union, the European Union, the Eurasian Economic Union and between the BRI and the development strategies of the participating countries has been enhanced. From the Eurasian continent to Africa, the Americas and Oceania, Belt and Road cooperation has opened up new space for global economic growth, produced new platforms for international trade and investment and offered new ways for improving global economic governance. Indeed, this initiative has helped improve people's lives in countries involved and created more opportunities for common prosperity. What we have achieved amply demonstrates that Belt and Road cooperation has both generated new opportunities for the development of all participating countries and opened up new horizon for China's development and opening-up.

An ancient Chinese philosopher observed that "plants with strong roots grow well, and efforts with the right focus will ensure success." The Belt and Road cooperation embraces the historical trend of economic globalization, responds to the call for improving the global governance system and meets people's longing for a better life. Going ahead, we should focus on priorities and project execution, move forward with results-oriented implementation, just like an architect refining the blueprint, and jointly promote high-quality Belt and Road cooperation.

- We need to be guided by the principle of extensive consultation, joint contribution and shared benefits. We need to act in the spirit of multilateralism, pursue cooperation through consultation and keep all participants motivated. We may, by engaging in bilateral, trilateral and multilateral cooperation, fully tap into the strengths of all participants. Just as a Chinese proverb says, "A tower is built when soil on earth accumulates, and a river is formed when streams come together."

- We need to pursue open, green and clean cooperation. The Belt and Road is not an exclusive club; it aims to promote green development. We may launch green infrastructure projects, make green investment and provide green financing to protect the Earth which we all call home. In pursuing Belt and Road cooperation, everything should be done in a transparent way, and we should have zero tolerance for corruption. The Beijing Initiative for Clean Silk Road has been launched, which represents our strong commitment to transparency and clean governance in pursuing Belt and Road cooperation.

- We need to pursue high standard cooperation to improve people's lives and promote sustainable development. We will adopt widely accepted rules and standards and encourage participating companies to follow general international rules and standards in project development, operation,

procurement and tendering and bidding. The laws and regulations of participating countries should also be respected. We need to take a people-centered approach, give priority to poverty alleviation and job creation to see that the joint pursuit of Belt and Road cooperation will deliver true benefits to the people of participating countries and contribute to their social and economic development. We also need to ensure the commercial and fiscal sustainability of all projects so that they will achieve the intended goals as planned.

Dear Colleagues and Friends,

Connectivity is vital to advancing Belt and Road cooperation. We need to promote a global partnership of connectivity to achieve common development and prosperity. I am confident that as we work closely together, we will transcend geographical distance and embark on a path of win-win cooperation.

Infrastructure is the bedrock of connectivity, while the lack of infrastructure has held up the development of many countries. High-quality, sustainable, resilient, affordable, inclusive and accessible infrastructure projects can help countries fully leverage their resource endowment, better integrate into the global supply, industrial and value chains, and realize inter-connected development. To this end, China will continue to work with other parties to build a connectivity network centering on economic corridors such as the New Eurasian Land Bridge, supplemented by major transportation routes like the China-Europe Railway Express and the New International Land-Sea Trade Corridor and information expressway, and reinforced by major railway, port and pipeline projects. We will continue to make good use of the Belt and Road Special Lending Scheme, the Silk Road Fund, and various special investment funds, develop Silk Road theme bonds, and support the Multilateral Cooperation Center for Development Finance in its operation. We welcome the participation of multilateral and national financial institutions in BRI investment and financing and encourage third-market cooperation. With the involvement of multiple stakeholders, we can surely deliver benefits to all.

The flow of goods, capital, technology and people will power economic growth and create broad space for it. As a Chinese saying goes, "The ceaseless inflow of rivers makes the ocean deep." However, were such inflow to be cut, the ocean, however big, would eventually dry up. We need to promote trade and investment liberalization and facilitation, say no to protectionism, and make economic globalization more open, inclusive, balanced and beneficial to all. To this end, we will enter into negotiation with more countries to conclude high-standard free trade agreements, and strengthen cooperation in customs, taxation and audit oversight by setting up the Belt and Road Initiative Tax Administration Cooperation Mechanism and accelerating international collaboration on the mutual recognition of Authorized Economic Operators. We have also formulated

the Guiding Principles on Financing the Development of the Belt and Road and published the Debt Sustainability Framework for Participating Countries of the Belt and Road Initiative to provide guidance for BRI financing cooperation. In addition, the Second China International Import Expo will be held this year to build an even bigger platform for other parties to access the Chinese market.

Innovation boosts productivity; it makes companies competitive and countries strong. We need to keep up with the trend of the Fourth Industrial Revolution, jointly seize opportunities created by digital, networked and smart development, explore new technologies and new forms and models of business, foster new growth drivers and explore new development pathways, and build the digital Silk Road and the Silk Road of innovation. China will continue to carry out the Belt and Road Science, Technology and Innovation Cooperation Action Plan, and will work with our partners to pursue four major initiatives, namely the Science and Technology People-to-People Exchange Initiative, the Joint Laboratory Initiative, the Science Park Cooperation Initiative, and the Technology Transfer Initiative. We will actively implement the Belt and Road Initiative Talents Exchange Program, and will, in the coming five years, offer 5,000 opportunities for exchange, training and cooperative research for talents from China and other BRI participating countries. We will also support companies of various countries in jointly advancing ICT infrastructure building to upgrade cyber connectivity.

Imbalance in development is the greatest imbalance confronting today's world. In the joint pursuit of the BRI, we must always take a development-oriented approach and see that the vision of sustainable development underpins project selection, implementation and management. We need to strengthen international development cooperation so as to create more opportunities for developing countries, help them eradicate poverty and achieve sustainable development. In this connection, China and its partners have set up the Belt and Road Sustainable Cities Alliance and the BRI International Green Development Coalition, formulated the Green Investment Principles for the Belt and Road Development, and launched the Declaration on Accelerating the Sustainable Development Goals for Children through Shared Development. We have set up the BRI Environmental Big Data Platform. We will continue to implement the Green Silk Road Envoys Program and work with relevant countries to jointly implement the Belt and Road South-South Cooperation Initiative on Climate Change. We will also deepen cooperation in agriculture, health, disaster mitigation and water resources; and we will enhance development cooperation with the United Nations to narrow the gap in development.

We need to build bridges for exchanges and mutual learning among different cultures, deepen cooperation in education, science, culture, sports, tourism, health and archaeology, strengthen exchanges between parliaments, political parties and non-governmental organizations and exchanges between women,

young people and people with disabilities in order to facilitate multi-faceted people-to-people exchanges. To this end, we will, in the coming five years, invite 10,000 representatives of political parties, think tanks and non-governmental organizations from Belt and Road participating countries to visit China. We will encourage and support extensive cooperation on livelihood projects among social organizations of participating countries, conduct a number of environmental protection and anti-corruption training courses and deepen human resources development cooperation in various areas. We will continue to run the Chinese government scholarship Silk Road Program, host the International Youth Forum on Creativity and Heritage along the Silk Roads and the "Chinese Bridge" summer camps. We will also put in place new mechanisms such as the Belt and Road Studies Network and the Belt and Road News Alliance to draw inspiration and pool our strength for greater synergy.

Dear Colleagues and Friends,

This year marks the 70th anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic of China. Seven decades ago, through the arduous struggle carried out by several generations of Chinese people and under the leadership of the Communist Party of China, New China was founded. We Chinese have since stood up and held our future in our own hands.

Over the past seven decades, we in China have, based on its realities, constantly explored the way forward through practices, and have succeeded in following the path of socialism with Chinese characteristics. Today, China has reached a new historical starting point. However, we are keenly aware that with all we have achieved, there are still many mountains to scale and many shoals to navigate. We will continue to advance along the path of socialism with Chinese characteristics, deepen sweeping reforms, pursue quality development, and expand opening-up. We remain committed to peaceful development and will endeavor to build a community with a shared future for mankind.

Going forward, China will take a series of major reform and opening-up measures and make stronger institutional and structural moves to boost higher quality opening-up.

First, we will expand market access for foreign investment in more areas. Fair competition boosts business performance and creates prosperity. China has already adopted a management model based on pre-establishment national treatment and negative list, and will continue to significantly shorten the negative list. We will work for the all-round opening-up of modern services, manufacturing and agriculture, and will allow the operation of foreign-controlled or wholly foreign-owned businesses in more sectors. We will plan new pilot free trade zones and explore at a faster pace the opening of a free trade

port. We will accelerate the adoption of supporting regulations to ensure full implementation of the Foreign Investment Law. We will promote supply-side structural reform through fair competition and open cooperation, and will phase out backward and excessive production capacity in an effective way to improve the quality and efficiency of supply.

Second, we will intensify efforts to enhance international cooperation in intellectual property protection. Without innovation, there will be no progress. Full intellectual property protection will not only ensure the lawful rights and interests of Chinese and foreign companies; it is also crucial to promoting China's innovation-driven and quality development. China will spare no effort to foster a business environment that respects the value of knowledge. We will fully improve the legal framework for protecting intellectual property, step up law enforcement, enhance protection of the lawful rights and interests of foreign intellectual property owners, stop forced technology transfer, improve protection of trade secrets, and crack down hard on violations of intellectual property in accordance with law. China will strengthen cooperation with other countries in intellectual property protection, create an enabling environment for innovation and promote technological exchanges and cooperation with other countries on the basis of market principles and the rule of law.

Third, we will increase the import of goods and services on an even larger scale. China is both a global factory and a global market. With the world's largest and fastest growing middle-income population, China has a vast potential for increasing consumption. To meet our people's ever-growing material and cultural needs and give our consumers more choices and benefits, we will further lower tariffs and remove various non-tariff barriers. We will steadily open China's market wider to quality products from across the world. China does not seek trade surplus; we want to import more competitive quality agricultural products, manufactured goods and services to promote balanced trade.

Fourth, we will more effectively engage in international macro-economic policy coordination. A globalized economy calls for global governance. China will strengthen macro policy coordination with other major economies to generate a positive spillover and jointly contribute to robust, sustainable, balanced and inclusive global growth. China will not resort to the beggar-thy-neighbor practice of RMB devaluation. On the contrary, we will continue to improve the exchange rate regime, see that the market plays a decisive role in resource allocation and keep the RMB exchange rate basically stable at an adaptive and equilibrium level. These steps will help ensure the steady growth of the global economy. Rules and credibility underpin the effective functioning of the international governance system; they are the prerequisite for growing international economic and trade relations. China is an active supporter and

participant of WTO reform and will work with others to develop international economic and trade rules of higher standards.

Fifth, we will work harder to ensure the implementation of opening-up related policies. We Chinese have a saying that honoring a promise carries the weight of gold. We are committed to implementing multilateral and bilateral economic and trade agreements reached with other countries. We will strengthen the building of a government based on the rule of law and good faith. A binding mechanism for honoring international agreements will be put in place. Laws and regulations will be revised and improved in keeping with the need to expand opening-up. We will see that governments at all levels operate in a well-regulated way when it comes to issuing administrative licenses and conducting market oversight. We will overhaul and abolish unjustified regulations, subsidies and practices that impede fair competition and distort the market. We will treat all enterprises and business entities equally, and foster an enabling business environment based on market operation and governed by law.

These measures to expand opening-up are a choice China has made by itself to advance its reform and development. It will promote high-quality economic development, meet the people's desire for a better life, and contribute to world peace, stability and development. We hope that other countries will also create an enabling environment of investment, treat Chinese enterprises, students and scholars as equals, and provide a fair and friendly environment for them to engage in international exchanges and cooperation. We are convinced that a more open China will further integrate itself into the world and deliver greater progress and prosperity for both China and the world at large.

Dear Colleagues and Friends,

Let us join hands to sow the seeds of cooperation, harvest the fruits of development, bring greater happiness to our people and make our world a better place for all!

In conclusion, I wish the Second Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation a full success!

Thank you!

