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**The Prospect of Sino-European Cooperation on China's
One-Belt-One-Road Initiative**

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The Prospect of Sino-European Cooperation on China's One-Belt-One-Road Initiative

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When Chinese president Xi Jinping visited Central Asia and Southeast Asia in September and October of 2013, he raised the initiative of jointly building the Silk Road Economic Belt and the 21st-Century Maritime Silk Road. The so-called One-Belt-One-Road (OBOR, or Belt and Road) initiative has since increasingly become a dominant concept in China's diplomacy and has elicited unusual creativity in China's foreign policy making. Not being an audience when the concept was announced, Europe is apparently the geographical end and an indispensable part of the Belt and Road. In other words, without meaningful interplay with Europe, OBOR will be a dead-end project.

A Map of the One-Belt-One-Road Initiative



Source: *Wall Street Journal*, Nov. 9, 2014

Neither the form nor the content of OBOR is fixed, despite the importance attached to it. OBOR has been understood as a strategy, a project, a framework and a policy in various contexts. According to different sources, the number of

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countries it covers ranges from 26 to 64. However, such defect should not prevent serious discussion over OBOR. In 2007, 50 years after the Treaty of Rome was signed, a Luxembourg lawyer who helped draft the treaty revealed that the six founding fathers of a united Europe were publicly pictured signing a thick document that was empty of text, apart from title and signature page.² As now we see, the blank treaty has not prevented Europe from its unparalleled regional integration.

The first part of the paper discusses the nature and the background of OBOR. The second part focuses on the discourse and practice of Sino-European cooperation on OBOR. The last identify problems of and opportunities for cooperation.

I. The Nature and the Background of OBOR

It is difficult to find a counterpart of OBOR. OBOR is not a free trade zone. Nor a sphere of influence. Nor regional integration. It is even not a standard version of inter-regionalism. OBOR is a symbol of China's second wave of Reform and Opening-up (in lack of a better description). It is a mixed product of the dynamics both inside China and in the much broader world.

First, OBOR is China's regional coordinated development strategy with an international dimension.

In December 2014, the Central Economic Work Conference, which was held by President Xi Jinping and considered the highest level meeting on economic issues in China, has proposed five main tasks of the economic work next year. One of them is "optimizing the spatial pattern of economic development". OBOR was listed along with Beijing-Tianjin-Hebei Coordinated Development and Yangtze River Economic Belt as one of the three major regional planning strategies.³ Vice Premier Zhang Gaoli, who was named in February 2015 as the leader of the Leading Group for Advancing the Development of One Belt One Road, vowed in a speech in March 2015 to "improve regional development policies and measures, and continue to implement the overarching strategy of Western Exploration, Northeastern Revitalization, Central Rise, and Eastern Lead, with an emphasis on the three strategies of One-Belt-One-Road, Beijing-Tianjin-Hebei Coordinated Development and Yangtze River Economic Belt, so as to form a new regional development landscape in which different regions can connect with and support

² The ceremony was rushed forward because the French feared that General de Gaulle, then out of office, would return to the presidency and block the treaty. "How EU leaders signed a blank cheque", The Telegraph, 25 Mar 2007, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/1546631/How-EU-leaders-signed-a-blank-cheque.html>.

³ "中央经济工作会闭幕：提 2015 年 5 项任务", 新华社北京 2015 年 12 月 11 日电。

each other and the eastern, central and western part of China interplay with each other.”⁴

China’s regional development planning has gone through several stages. The first is from the 1990s, when the concept of coordinated regional development was created, to the year of 2004, when an overall regional development strategy was announced. The second stage is from 2004 to the year of 2007, when “ecological civilization” was underlined. The third stage is from 2007 to 2013, during which period regional coordinated development merged with a major functional area strategy. The fourth stage begins with 2013 when a comprehensively open regional economic coordinated development strategy represented by OBOR was formed. Some scholar argue that OBOR is an uplift of China’s coordinated regional development strategy, which covers a much wider space including domestic and transnational areas. In this sense, OBOR is no longer a long trade corridor as the Silk Road in history, but a grand strategy that connects China and the world.⁵

In March 28, 2015, the hitherto most comprehensive official guideline on OBOR was published. The guideline is titled “Vision and Actions on Jointly Building Belt and Road”. The guideline was issued by three government departments of China - the National Development and Reform Commission (NDRC, a powerful government department deemed to monitor the Reform and Opening-up of China), the Foreign Affairs Ministry and the Ministry of Commerce, which spells clearly that OBOR is both an internal and an external affair. Eighteen provinces or regions in China have been underlined by the guideline, with their roles in OBOR being stressed. It is safe to say that as a sign of China’s economic spillover, OBOR manifests China’s effort to coordinate regional development, including regions inside and outside China.

China can never make a transnational regional planning strategy successful without benign global trends. Technology and globalization in the 21st century have transformed growth models and economic geography. The heartlands of Africa, South America and Asia that used to be overshadowed by coastline areas have now become new frontiers of global capitalism, thus opening new opportunities for China’s overseas investment. Meanwhile, a new industrial revolution lead by 3D printing, nano-technology and robots and a global industry merged with the Internet, have made climbing up the value chain a more urgent task for China. In a word, OBOR reflects the dynamics of the uneven and combined development of capitalism.

⁴ “张高丽：重点实施‘一带一路’、京津冀等三大战略”，新浪网，2015年03月22日，<http://finance.sina.com.cn/hy/20150322/125721777584.shtml>。The quote is translated by the author.

⁵ 张可云、蔡之兵：“全球化 4.0、区域协调发展 4.0、与工业 4.0——‘一带一路’战略的背景_内在本质与关键动力”，《郑州大学学报（哲学社会科学版）》，2015年5月，第89页。

Second, OBOR is a transnational infrastructure project which aims to unleash the potential of the world economy.

As early as November 2014, when President Xi Jinping chaired a dialogue on regional connectivity before the APEC meeting, he mentioned that connectivity included policy coordination, facilities connectivity, unimpeded trade, financial integration and people-to-people bonds. Such “Five Connectivities” have been recognized as five major goals of OBOR cooperation in the OBOR guideline - “Vision and Actions on Jointly Building Belt and Road”.

China has already had various efficient instruments for policy coordination, trade and people-to-people exchanges with other countries. Among the “Five Connectivities”, only “facilities connectivity” and “financial integration” are new in China’s foreign policy. In the OBOR guideline, facilities connectivity is a “priority area”, which includes: international trunk passageways; infrastructure networks connecting all sub-regions in Asia, and between Asia, Europe and Africa; key passageways, junctions and projects; whole-course transportation; customs clearance; port infrastructure; land-water transportation channels; maritime logistics; civil aviation infrastructure; cross-border power supply networks; power grid; cross-border optical cable networks; and so on and so forth. The infrastructure construction blueprint is underpinned by new financial arrangements in which China plays a major role, for example, the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) and BRICS New Development Bank, Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) financing institution, the Silk Road Fund, China-ASEAN Interbank Association, SCO Interbank Association.

If all the facilities mentioned above come into being, the world around China will look much different from today. Human activities based on such facilities will shrink the vast continent into a closely-knit community. This is the most powerful imagination the ancient “Silk Road” set to inspire.

OBOR has been coined as “China’s Marshall Plan”.⁶ This has been rebuffed by Chinese official media.⁷ However, various “new Marshall Plan” proposals in recent years are of help to understand the role of infrastructure in the OBOR initiative. In 2009, faced with dire consequences of the global financial crisis, Justin Yifu Lin, a Chinese economist and then Senior Vice President of the World Bank, argued that the world needed a new “Marshall Plan”, that is, to increase developed countries’ export demands by investing in global infrastructure. Such a new Marshall Plan was win-win to both developed and developing countries. For the former, new space for structural reform could be created. For the latter, the growth bottleneck could be overcome. Mr. Lin’s idea has been to some extent

⁶ For example, Shannon Tiezzi, “The New Silk Road: China’s Marshall Plan?” *The Diplomat*, November 6, 2014; Michele Penna, “China’s Marshall Plan: All Silk Roads Lead to Beijing?” *World Politics Review*, December 9, 2014.

⁷ 钟声：“‘一带一路’与马歇尔计划有根本差别”，《人民日报》，2015年2月13日。

discussed by G20 leaders in London in April 2009.⁸ In China, the first person who advocated a “Chinese Marshall Plan” is Xu Shanda, a member of the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC). In August 2009, Mr. Xu proposed that China should create domestic demand through large-scale overseas investment and foreign aid on infrastructure. He thought the plan could also help China export excessive production capacity and speed up internationalization of the Chinese currency.⁹

There are three kinds of cost for capitalists: human cost, tax and material cost. Infrastructure belongs to material cost. In general, capitalists will try their best to avoid the burden of any material cost; that is why the role of state looms large in infrastructure construction. After the global financial crisis, almost all developed countries are in recession. A shortfall of international infrastructure augurs ill for the world economy. China's OBOR initiative, be it tasting like the Marshall Plan or not, is by and large good for related parties and the world economy. This can largely explain why AIIB attracts so much interest worldwide.

Third, OBOR is a trial of new approaches of transnational cooperation.

As the European Community (EC) and the European Union (EU) have long been struggling to find an apt concept to explain themselves to the world, OBOR is looking for a narrative for its transnational development. Chinese scholars have been proposing ideas such as “plurality and openness”¹⁰ and “symbiosis”¹¹ for the new phenomenon OBOR created.

Flexibility and openness is no doubt a striking feature of OBOR. The OBOR guideline points out that the Belt and Road is “open to all countries, and international and regional organizations for engagement”. The guideline also stresses that the Belt and Road initiative “should be jointly built through consultation to meet the interests of all”. In practice, the Chinese government has indeed emphasized a synergy of OBOR and the other countries' pet projects.¹² AIIB is also funded by several dozen countries.

⁸ “林毅夫夫人：新马歇尔计划欲带动全球经济复苏”，《北京晚报》，2009年03月11日，<http://finance.sina.com.cn/j/20090311/14295961716.shtml>；季桂保：“林毅夫：以‘新马歇尔计划’带动全球经济复兴”，《文汇报》，2012年10月16日，http://www.21ccom.net/articles/qqsww/qjj/article_2012101669157.html。

⁹ 金玲：“‘一带一路’：中国的马歇尔计划？”《国际问题研究》，2015年第1期；“政协委员许善达提议实施中国马歇尔计划”，《经济参考报》，2009年8月6日。

¹⁰ 李向阳：“论海上丝绸之路的多元化合作机制”，《国际政治与经济》，2014年第11期，第15页。

¹¹ 张艳璐：“欧亚联盟与新丝绸之路经济带的复合型共生关系分析”，《国际展望》，2015年第2期；衣保中、张洁妍：“东北亚地区‘一带一路’合作共生系统研究”，《东北亚论坛》，2015年第3期。

¹² In May 2015, President Xi Jinping visited Russia, Kazakhstan and Belarus. In Russia, the two heads of state signed and released the "Joint Statement on Cooperation of Connection between the Silk Road Economic Belt and Eurasian Economic Union", which is another major progress made by the "Belt and Road" initiative in Eurasian continent and is of great and profound significance. President Xi Jinping and President Nursultan Nazarbayev both decided to accelerate the docking of the Silk Road Economic Belt and Kazakhstan's

A combination of state and market is also a salient feature. OBOR is a platform built by governments for market. The “Vision and Actions on Jointly Building Belt and Road” articulates that “the Initiative follows market operation” and to “encourage commercial equity investment funds and private funds to participate in the construction of key projects of the Initiative”. An NDRC official confirms that the Belt and Road Initiative does not include a compulsory list of projects and companies should evaluate the risk of specific OBOR projects independently.¹³ China’s Silk Road Fund also works as a company.¹⁴

Besides, although the “Vision and Actions on Jointly Building Belt and Road” has summarized the Silk Road Spirit as “peace and cooperation, openness and inclusiveness, mutual learning and mutual benefit”, the OBOR initiative does not set up any new standards or norms. This is very different from the EU or even some free trade zones, which are bound by laws and norms.

No wonder Western strategists reckon OBOR as a bewildering government initiative. However, it would be misleading to think that OBOR is a product of China’s whim. Against the backdrop of deepened globalization, the political border of nation-states has been increasingly out of pace with functional units of the world. The world is no longer divided by physical or cultural boundaries, but by the conflict of different functionalities. Nation-states become only one type among many governance structures. Various global and regional mechanisms constitute a network of global policy regimes. As the recent European Debt Crisis as well as the dead-end of multilateral free trade negotiations show, too rigid a international regime might not necessary fit into a fast-changing world. A more fluid and interchangeable transnational arrangement is required to fit into the evolving governance network. OBOR no doubt is initiated and powered by China; nevertheless, China is not the center of OBOR. OBOR in nature is more like a network: every knot along the Belt and Road will have de facto veto power in the network, but new knots can always join in and revive the network.

economic strategy of "Bright Road". In Belarus, the two sides agreed to build a joint industrial park as a flagship project of cooperation on the Silk Road Economic Belt. In July 2015, Chinese Premier Li Keqiang visited the EU headquarters for the 17th China-EU summit. The joint statement of the summit confirmed “their strong interest in each other's flagship initiatives”, that is the Belt and Road Initiative and the Investment Plan for Europe (the Juncker Plan). Leaders decided to support synergies between these initiatives, and directed the China-EU High-Level Economic and Trade Dialogue in September to “develop practical avenues for mutually beneficial co-operation, including through a possible China-EU co-investment vehicle”.

¹³ 孙韶华、方烨：“多地‘一带一路’对接方案成形”，《经济参考报》，2015年4月29日，http://caijing.chinadaily.com.cn/2015-04/29/content_20574660.htm.

¹⁴ The China Silk Road Fund Limited Liability Company was founded with a registered capital of 61.525 billion USD and its shareholders include the Export-Import Bank of China as well as three companies owned by China’s foreign exchange reserves, China Investment Corporation and China Development Bank.

II. Discourse and Practice

Three features emerge from the author's scrutiny of elite discourse and government practice concerning OBOR in the framework of Sino-European relations.

First, Sino-European cooperation on OBOR is gaining momentum.

Chinese policy makers think highly of Europe in terms of its role in OBOR. As early as late March 2014, Xi Jinping pointed out in his speech to German audience during his first official visit to Europe as Chinese president: "China and Germany are located at the two ends of the Silk Road Economic Belt, and both are two major economies and growth poles of Eurasia. Cooperation (between China and Germany on the Silk Road Economic Belt) is beneficial to both countries, to Europe and to the world."¹⁵ The OBOR guideline issued by the Chinese government in March 2015 also makes it clear that:

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

Since the outbreak of the global financial crisis in 2008, China has been playing a more active role in shaping Sino-European relations. China has been steadily pushing forward Sino-European cooperation on OBOR. In March 2014, five months after the concept of OBOR was proposed, Chinese President Xi Jinping made his first visit to Europe. Xi took office in March 2013, and during his first year in office, he visited Russia, Africa, Latin America, and had an unusual personal meeting with US President Barack Obama in Sunnylands estate, California. Xi's visit to Europe set the tone of Sino-European relations in the next five to ten years and completed geographically his creative global diplomacy. During his visit, OBOR was not in the spotlight. However, Xi has quietly done some „greenfield investment". He chose the city of Lyon as the first stop in France, which was the end of the ancient Silk Road. He mentioned the ancient Silk Road and elaborated the history of Sino-European cultural exchanges in his speech at UNESCO headquarters in Paris.¹⁶ A joint China-EU statement specifies that "in

¹⁵ “中联部副部长周力：欢迎德方积极参与一带一路建设”，环球网，2015-06-01，<http://world.huanqiu.com/exclusive/2015-06/6569135.html?referer=huanqiu>。The text is translated by the author.

¹⁶ “习近平在联合国教科文组织总部的演讲”，新华网巴黎 2014年3月27日电。

view of the great potential to improve their transport relations, both sides decided to develop synergies between EU policies and China's 'Silk Road Economic Belt' initiative and jointly to explore common initiatives along these lines."¹⁷ It is possible that the outbreak of the Ukraine crisis and Russia's annexation of Crimea not long before Xi's visit have played a role in persuading Europe to have a more open attitude toward China's presence in its neighborhood. In July 2015, Chinese Premier Li Keqiang visited Europe for the 17th China-EU summit and made the gesture for cooperation into a concrete China-EU co-investment vehicle. Chinese media coverage on the summit was all about "strategic synergies" between China's OBOR and the EU's Juncker Plan.¹⁸ The summit joint statement claimed that "leaders decided to support synergies between these initiatives, and directed the EU-China High-Level Economic and Trade Dialogue in September to develop practical avenues for mutually beneficial co-operation, including through a possible China-EU co-investment vehicle."¹⁹

The most eye-catching phenomenon on the ground is the boom of cargo trains between China and Europe. Since the first train from Chongqing to Duisburg opened in March 2011, a dozen cities in China including Wuhan (2012), Zhengzhou (2013), Chengdu (2013), Suzhou (2013), Yiwu (2014), Hefei (2015), Harbin (2015), Xiamen (2015), etc., have seen their cargo trains going to Europe. Since July 2014, these train lines were given a common name *Zhong Ou Banlie* (China-Europe Cargo Train). Central European countries are the most enthusiastic partners in Europe for cooperation on transportation construction. The 3rd summit of China and Central Eastern European Countries (CEECs) in December 2014 decided to "improve the China-Europe international railway container traffic, making it a priority in deepening mutually-beneficial cooperation between China and Europe and improving connectivity and market-access between Asia and Europe"; the leaders also prepared to establish an association on transport and infrastructure cooperation and an association on logistics cooperation.²⁰ According to Wang Mengshu, a senior engineer from China Railway Tunnel Group, China is even planning to build two high-speed railway to Europe by 2020.²¹

¹⁷ "Deepening the EU-China Comprehensive Strategic Partnership for mutual benefit ", Joint Statement 140331/02, Brussels, 31 March 2014, http://eeas.europa.eu/statements/docs/2014/140331_02_en.pdf

¹⁸ For example, "中欧聚焦'战略对接'", 人民日报海外版, 2015年07月01日; 孙奕: "中欧战略对接有深意", 新华网布鲁塞尔 2015年7月3日电。

¹⁹ "EU-China Summit joint statement: The way forward after forty years of EU-China cooperation," 29 June, 2015, http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/zxxx_662805/t1277467.shtml.

²⁰ The Belgrade Guidelines for Cooperation between China and Central and Eastern European Countries, December 17, 2014, http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/wjdt_665385/2649_665393/t1224905.shtml.

²¹ 李志全: "中国工程院院士: 2030年中国高铁或直通欧洲", 中新社北京2010年3月12日电。

EU Member States are taking the lead of Sino-European cooperation. In March 2015, the United Kingdom became the first Western country declaring its participation of the founding of AIIB, despite discontent from the United States. The UK's unexpected move encouraged almost all major Western countries (except US, Japan, Canada) to join the AIIB. In June 2015, Hungary became the first country in the West to sign a memorandum of understanding on jointly pushing forward the OBOR construction. In July 2015, during Premier Li Keqiang's visit to France, China and France announced a joint agreement to cooperate in third markets.

Sino-European cooperation on OBOR is not as sensational as the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, the China-Belarus Industrial Park, or the pledged synergy between OBOR and the Eurasia Union. Neither AIIB nor the "China-EU co-investment vehicle" has come into operation. Nevertheless, it is fair to say that the cooperation is on the right track and has shown great potential.

Second, Sino-European cooperation on OBOR are primarily driven by political and economic elites rather than scholars.

The OBOR initiative is such a bold move that some Chinese scholars claim it "a Copernicus Revolution of the Chinese diplomacy".²² As mentioned above, the Chinese leaders are taking the lead in both designing and implementing the initiative. Chinese scholars are largely following the lead of politicians and merchants, though they have also raised doubts about OBOR.²³ When it comes to Sino-European cooperation on OBOR, the Chinese scholars tend to interpret or to substantiate the official policies rather than to challenge such policies²⁴; they are in general more optimistic than cautious²⁵; they have learned European scholars' suspicions on OBOR but generally think such suspicions are not well grounded²⁶.

In Europe, it is also the merchants and top leaders taking the lead. The most decisive and brave decision from the European side so far - Britain joining in the

²² 赵可金：“‘一带一路’引发中国外交‘哥白尼式革命’”，中国网，2015-05-04，http://www.china.com.cn/opinion/think/2015-04/30/content_35457622.htm。

²³ As an ECFR report has noticed, see François Godement and Agatha Kratz (eds): "One Belt, One Road: China's great leap outward", ECFR, 10th June, 2015, http://www.ecfr.eu/publications/summary/one_belt_one_road_chinas_great_leap_outward3055.

²⁴ For example, 王义桅：“中欧在海上丝绸之路的合作”，《国际援助》，2015年第1期；赵可金：“中欧战略伙伴关系为一带一路谋势”，中国网，2015年6月18日，http://opinion.china.com.cn/opinion_90_131990.html。

²⁵ Chinese scholars have mentioned possible obstacles for Sino-European cooperation on OBOR, for example: 李燕宇：“‘一带一路’带给中欧地缘关系的机遇与挑战”，《长江丛刊·理论研究》，2015年4月。But the mainstream sentiment is optimism, for example: 黄卫平：“新丝绸之路经济带与中欧经贸格局新发展——兼论跨亚欧高铁的战略价值”，《中国流通经济》，2015年第1期，第87页。

²⁶ 王义桅：“一带一路 欧洲人在顾虑啥？”观察网，2015年4月29日，http://www.guancha.cn/WangYiWei/2015_04_29_317701.shtml；“一带一路的国际态度：十分诱人 但仍需深入研究”，新华社·瞭望东方周刊，2014年11月10日，<http://finance.sina.com.cn/world/gjjj/20141110/101720775477.shtml>；曹辛：“如何在欧洲推动‘一带一路’？”，《中国经济信息》，2015年第15期。

AIIB, is believed to be made by the UK Treasury (rather than the Foreign Office) for the City of London.²⁷ European political veterans have been apt to grasp the core of OBOR. German Minister for Foreign Affairs Frank-Walter Steinmeier compares the emergence of BRICS and the new Silk Road to Leibniz's proposal for a German-Sino cooperation on the development of the Eurasian continent in 1697.²⁸ Former French Prime Minister Dominique de Villepin points out in *Les Échos* that OBOR reflects the real global trend and Europe should seize the opportunity. He argues, economically, OBOR will introduce the Chinese style of planning into international cooperation; politically, OBOR can contain the extremism in the Middle East and Central Asia; and internationally, OBOR will start a new wave of multilateral cooperation.²⁹

But Sino-European cooperation on OBOR has not drawn much attention. On August 10, 2015, the author's search for "China OBOR" without any limitation in LexisNexis, a world leading news database, only produced 45 results. None of these results have much to do with Europe. European think tank researchers understand the domestic (development in Xinjiang), regional (cross-border trade and infrastructure) and global (creation of supply lines) benefits OBOR is meant to bring³⁰, but are less enthusiastic and more cautious on OBOR. As Francois Godement, a leading China watcher in Europe, argues: "Is this a viable strategy, considering the obvious integration of coastal China in the global economy? Can geopolitical action trump economic interdependence, or will it drag down China's overall competitiveness?"³¹ When it comes to Sino-European cooperation on OBOR, Europeans are especially worried about China's opaque strategic intention and China's dominant role in the project.³²

Third, the current Sino-European cooperation on OBOR is primarily driven by and limited to economic concerns.

Though the political and strategic implication of OBOR have been widely discussed by both Chinese and European intellectuals, all concrete achievements of Sino-European cooperation on OBOR, including the boom of cargo trains between China and Europe, the AIIB, the "China-EU co-investment vehicle", the infrastructural projects in Central Europe, etc., are all in the economic field.

²⁷ 乔纳森·古思里：“英国缘何钟情亚投行？”《金融时报》中文网，2015年03月27日，<http://www.ftchinese.com/story/001061272>。

²⁸ 远达：“外媒：中国扩大对欧洲投资令美欧关系发生改变”，中国日报网，2014年10月16日电，http://world.chinadaily.com.cn/2014-10/16/content_18754123.htm。

²⁹ “法国前总理：唯有一带一路能反映全球化新趋势”，环球时报网站，2015年03月13日，<http://oversea.huanqiu.com/article/2015-03/5896162.html>。

³⁰ Camille Brugier, "China's Way: The New Silk Road", European Union Institute for Security Studies, May 2014, http://www.iss.europa.eu/uploads/media/Brief_14_New_Silk_Road.pdf.

³¹ François Godement and Agatha Kratz (eds): "'One Belt, One Road': China's great leap outward", ECFR, 10th June, 2015, http://www.ecfr.eu/publications/summary/one_belt_one_road_chinas_great_leap_outward3055.

³² 冯迪凡：“德法智库看‘一带一路’：欧洲不能总跟在中国后面”，一财网，2015年8月20日，<http://www.yicai.com/mnews/2015/08/4674656.html>。

III. Problems and the Prospect

In the short term, there are no real obstacles for Sino-European cooperation on OBOR. China and Europe have had a solid record of economic cooperation in recent years. Besides, the political atmosphere is good. China is the most ardent EU proponent among major powers after the European debt crisis and continues to treat Europe as a strategic pole. At the same time, Europe has rediscovered China as a rising superpower that it can get along with. In this sense, Sino-European relations have fully recovered from the rupture caused by the Tibet riot and the Beijing Olympics in 2008, and have transformed the 2003-2006 “strategic honeymoon” into a robust marriage.

The short term tasks are pretty much technical ones. The most imminent task is to jointly identify and implement concrete programs under the framework of AIIB, the “China-EU co-investment vehicle” and the China-CEEC arrangements. If possible, it would be better to involve more European think tanks, scholars and small businesses in the discussion of OBOR cooperation, so that OBOR would not be crippled by a possible slowdown of the Chinese economy in the following years.

On the long run, China and Europe also have strong reasons to cooperate on OBOR. The first reason is that the new global trends behind the OBOR initiative as mentioned earlier in the paper - adjustment of global economic geography, industry transformation powered by new technology, and the changing role of the nation-states - will breathe new life into Sino-European cooperation. The second reason is that in most countries and regions OBOR is designed to cover there is a strong European presence (most notably Russia and Eurasia). Europe’s role in OBOR will grow as the strategic and cultural ramifications of OBOR grow.

The global and profound repercussions of Sino-European cooperation on OBOR also mean that any challenges, whenever they emerge, will be intriguing ones. At the end of the day, a fundamental question will beg for an answer. And the question will keep emerging once in a while with various disguises.

The question is: what is the relationship between OBOR and the existing international order? Is OBOR part of the old order, or a revision of the old order, or part of a new order? If the rise of China will definitely change the form of the order, will it change the content of it as well?

Other countries along the Belt and Road might not bother to ask such questions. It is good for them, since there won’t be an accepted wisdom on such question.

The US opposition of European countries joining the AIIB has made manifest European ally’s uneasiness over such question. And widespread suspicion in Europe of China’s deepened cooperation with Russia reflects Europe’s uneasiness.

The uncertainty of the answer to this question will lead to a functionalist approach of Sino-European cooperation. The current focus of cooperation is in the

economic field. It is possible (but not guaranteed) that economic cooperation will spill over to political domain, that is, China and Europe have a structurally coordinated method to work on extremism, nonproliferation, climate change, military conflicts and other global affairs. Gradually, there might be a convergence of OBOR, Eurasian Union and the EU. It is not necessarily a bad thing for the EU, since the regional order imposed by the EU is now in great trouble.