

Starting a New Journey for High-Quality Development of the Belt and Road



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Wang Yi was born in 1953 in Beijing. He graduated from the Institute of Asian and African Languages affiliated to the Second Foreign Languages Institute in Beijing. He holds also a master's degree in Economics. In 1981, Wang Yi became a member of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). Between 1982 and 1989, he worked at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China (PRC) (MFA) as an attache, assistant manager and manager consecutively. After serving in various senior positions in MFA in the following years, he served as Ambassador of Japan between 2004-2007. Wang Yi continued his work at the (MFA) as Deputy Secretary of CPC Committee from 2013 until 2018 when he was promoted to the position of Minister of Foreign Affairs. Since the 17th People's Congress, he has also been a member of the CCP Central Committee.

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THE SECOND BELT AND ROAD FORUM FOR International Cooperation (BRF) was held from April 25 to 27, 2019 in Beijing. This was the most important diplomatic event held by China this year, which also marks the 70th anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic of China (PRC). President Xi Jinping attended the opening ceremony of the BRF to deliver a keynote speech, chaired the Leaders' Roundtable, held a series of diplomatic events, and presented the outcomes of the forum to Chinese and foreign media outlets. A total of 40 heads of state, government leaders, and representatives of international organizations met together, and more than 6,000 foreign guests from 150 countries and 92 international organizations took part in the event. During the forum, a high-level meeting, 12 sub-forums, and an entrepreneur conference were held. The success of this BRF has started a new journey of high-quality Belt and Road cooperation, injected new vigor into China's pursuit of open development, voiced our strong determination to uphold multilateralism, and marked another milestone for China and the world in building a global community with a shared future together.

In 2013, President Xi introduced a major proposal for international cooperation – the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). This proposal was based upon his overall assessment of global trends, as well as the objectives of creating a new pattern in China's com-

prehensive opening up and building a global community with a shared future. The purpose of the BRI is to highlight connectivity, deepen pragmatic cooperation, build unity in responding to the various challenges that face humanity, and bring about mutual benefit and shared development. The Second BRF provided an important opportunity to take stock of the progress that has been made in joint development of the Belt and Road.

Over the past six years, total trade between China and BRI countries exceeded US\$6 trillion, while China made more than US\$90 billion worth of direct investment in these countries. A connectivity framework involving six corridors, six types of routes, multiple countries, and multiple ports has essentially taken shape. A large number of cooperation projects have taken off, and the decisions made at the First BRF in 2017 have been implemented smoothly. The success of international cooperation through the Belt and Road has created new platforms for international trade and investment, and unlocked new potential for world economic growth.

Over the past six years, the BRI has upheld the Silk Road spirit of peace, cooperation, openness, inclusiveness, mutual learning, and mutual benefit. It has advocated a global governance philosophy featuring mutual consultation, joint development, and benefit sharing, taken concrete steps toward the establishment of an open world economy, and outlined a new vision for building a fairer and more equitable global governance system. As UN Secre-

tary-General Antonio Guterres pointed out, the BRI aims to make globalization healthier.

Over the past six years, China has built 82 overseas cooperation zones with BRI countries, contributed to host countries by paying over US\$2 billion in taxes and creating nearly 300,000 jobs, and brought more convenient living conditions, better business environments, and more diverse development opportunities to the people of various countries. Thanks to the BRI, some countries have built their first expressway or modern railway, some have developed their own automobile manufacturing industry for the first time, and some have resolved their long-standing electricity shortages. The fruits of Belt and Road cooperation have effectively improved the living standards of people in various countries, and contributed significantly to advancement of the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. According to the World Bank, the BRI has accelerated global poverty reduction.

Our success over the past six years is ample proof that, although the BRI originated in China, its opportunities and benefits belong to the world. The initiative has thus become the most well received international public good and the largest platform for international cooperation.

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The theme of the Second BRF was “Belt and Road Cooperation: Shaping a Brighter Shared Future.” Participants in the forum conducted in-depth discussions on “boosting connectivity for new sources of growth,” “strengthening policy integration to build closer partnerships,” and “promoting green and sustainable development to implement the UN 2030 Agenda,” reaching a number of important outcomes with landmark significance.

First, we drew a blueprint to guide our future course of action.

At the opening ceremony, President Xi delivered a keynote speech entitled “Working Together to Deliver a Brighter Future for Belt and Road Cooperation.” He also conducted in-depth exchanges with heads of state, government leaders, and representatives of international organizations attending the Leaders’ Roundtable. Together, they reviewed past experiences, looked to the future, and drew up plans for going forward, reaching new agreements on a number of important issues in the process. They also explicitly identified high-quality development of the Belt and Road as the central theme for future cooperation, thus defining the plans and direction of Belt and Road cooperation more clearly.

High-quality Belt and Road cooperation is an important concept that President Xi has introduced in consideration of the needs of the world as a whole. High quality is absolutely necessary for drawing a meticulously detailed blueprint of cooperation, and will undoubtedly push the BRI to achieve deeper and more practical significance and progress steadily over the long term. This important concept is in tune with the common wishes of our BRI partners, and points the way for countries involved to move forward together. It has thus won recognition and high praise from all participants.



The Leaders’ Roundtable at the Second Belt and Road Forum in Beijing, April 2019.

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To achieve high-quality development of the Belt and Road, it is imperative that we uphold the principles of mutual consultation, joint development, and benefit sharing. The essence of these principles is the practice of multilateralism, which stresses that all countries should engage in collective discussion of major issues that affect the group and make incremental progress on these issues by each exerting their respective strengths and working to the best of their abilities. The most fundamental point is ensuring that cooperation conforms to the common interests of all parties and meets their common needs, thus making cooperation more effective, appealing, and sustainable; this is an integral part of "high quality."

High-quality Belt and Road cooperation must uphold openness, integrity, and environmental friendliness, reach toward high standards, sustainability, and the improvement of public wellbeing, and focus on the core task of ensuring that the fruits of cooperation benefit the people of all countries involved. All BRF participants endorsed the concept of people-centered development and agreed to actively align themselves with universally accepted international rules, standards, and best practices. They were unanimous in the belief that doing so will lead to more effective connectivity between nations, more robust economic growth, closer international cooperation, and better lives for the people.

Second, we made practical gains by pooling our strengths.

The Leaders' Roundtable of the Second BRF released a joint communiqué that was unanimously

adopted. It brought together the political consensus of all participants on Belt and Road cooperation, and became the most important outcome of this forum. In its role as host country, China also issued a list of 283 deliverables, thus sketching a picture of great promise for future Belt and Road cooperation.

China signed a series of inter-governmental agreements on practical cooperation projects such as the China-Myanmar Economic Corridor, and launched new cooperation funds as well as third-party market investment and financing projects with Italy and other countries. Enterprises from various countries reached numerous agreements on industrial capacity and investment cooperation.

BRF participants released a number of major cooperation proposals and reports. China released a report entitled "The Belt and Road Initiative: Progress, Contributions, and Prospects," exhibiting the consensus and achievements reached by participants in Belt and Road cooperation, and setting forth proposals and suggestions for high-quality development. China and other participants published the Debt Sustainability Analysis Framework for Participating Countries of Belt and Road Initiative to provide guidance for financing cooperation. The BRF Advisory Council submitted a report to the forum, putting forward policy recommendations regarding the future priorities of Belt and Road cooperation and the direction of the forum's development. Relevant parties also jointly launched the Beijing Initiative for the Clean Silk Road and the Cooperation Initiative on Silk Road of Innovation, and issued the Green Investment Principles. These outcomes expounded the principles of mutual consultation, joint development, and benefit sharing, and embodied the concepts of openness, integrity, and environmental friendliness.

The entrepreneur conference attracted business leaders from more than 80 countries and regions, who signed cooperation agreements on projects worth more than US\$64 billion.

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Third, we developed partnerships to deepen connectivity.

Over the past six years, more than 150 countries and international organizations signed agreements on Belt and Road cooperation with China. As a result, the BRI's circle of friends is constantly expanding and an interconnected cooperation network is taking shape.

At the forum, President Xi put forward a proposal to build a partnership for global connectivity, calling on all participants to make connectivity their focus as they build stronger partnership through international cooperation on the Belt and Road. During bilateral meetings, President Xi had in-depth discussions with international guests on opportunities for cooperation under the BRI framework, and broader consensus was reached on the issue of boosting connectivity.

The concept of a partnership for global connectivity represents a continuation and development of the Silk Road spirit in the new era. This partnership is not a geopolitical tool, but a proposal for cooperation that seeks shared development through concerted efforts. Instead of scrapping the old system, it serves to consolidate and complement existing cooperative relationships, and therefore is conducive to forming synergy by pooling strengths. This partnership is not for the exclusive enjoyment of a certain few; instead it is a broad platform for open cooperation that welcomes more interested coun-

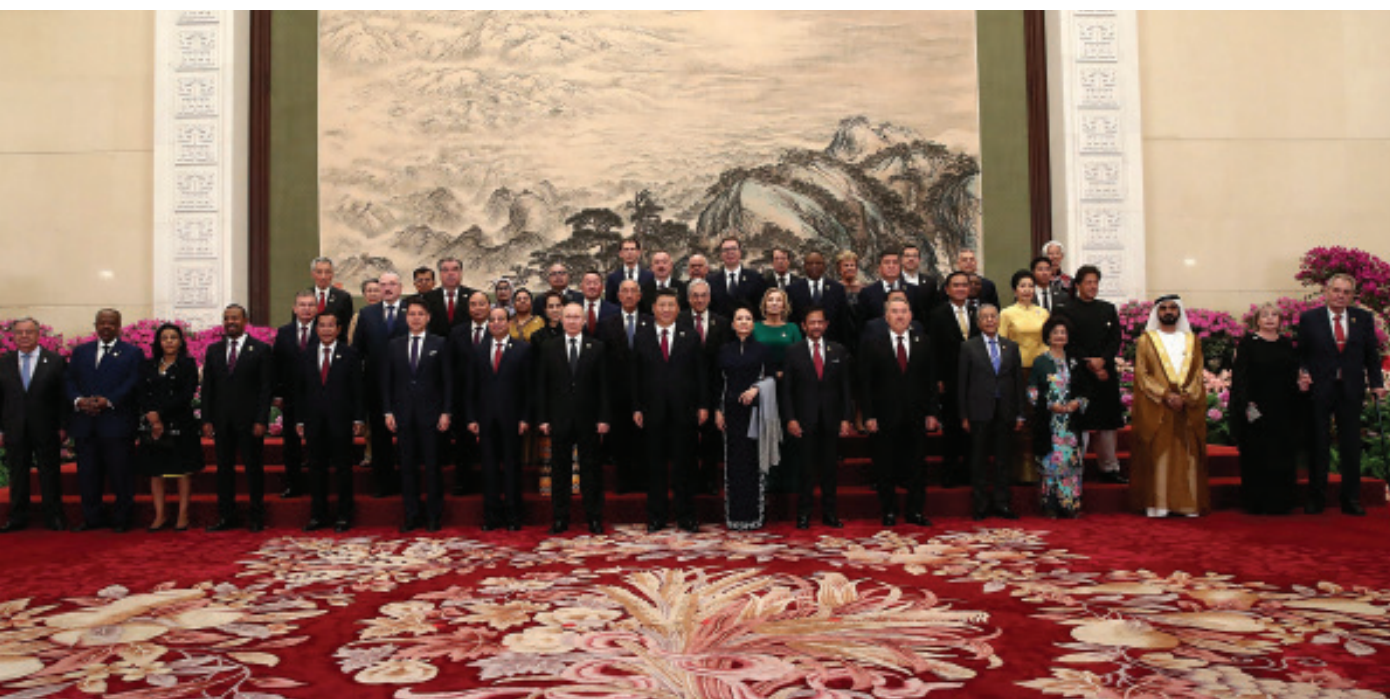
tries and international organizations to take part. As soon as it was introduced, the proposal to build a partnership for global connectivity was immediately met with an enthusiastic response from the international community. It is their hope to strengthen coordination of development policies, plans, and initiatives with China and other countries on the basis of connectivity in order to achieve shared development and common prosperity.

Fourth, we jointly established mechanisms to provide strong support.

Through six years of joint effort, we have seen a basic framework for international Belt and Road cooperation take shape that is guided by the BRF and supported by multilateral and bilateral cooperation in various fields. This has provided effective institutional guarantees for long-term development of the Belt and Road.

The BRF is the most high profile platform for cooperation under the BRI framework. At the Second BRF, participants worked together to enrich ideas, identify priorities, and create achievements of cooperation, and clearly defined the blueprint and objectives for high-quality development of Belt and Road cooperation. All participants praised China for its efforts in holding the first and second forums, and expressed their hope that the BRF will continue to be held.

Third-party market cooperation has become an important new platform for Belt and Road cooperation. It aims to achieve the effect of building something greater than the sum of its parts by encouraging participants to exert their strengths and form synergy together. During the BRF, China signed a number of documents on third-party market cooperation with countries and international and regional organizations such as Austria, Switzerland, Singapore, and the UNDP. The Silk Road Fund and the European Investment Fund announced the



The Second Belt and Road Forum in Beijing, April 2019.

establishment of various co-investment schemes for third-party markets. Such moves have given international cooperation through the Belt and Road even fuller and more powerful meaning.

Important progress was made during this forum with regard to multilateral cooperation through the Belt and Road. Working together with our partners and upholding the principles of openness, inclusiveness, and transparency, we improved and developed a number of platforms for multilateral dialogue and cooperation in specialized fields, and launched several initiatives for multilateral cooperation covering multiple issues such as transportation, development financing, taxation, environmental protection, intellectual property rights, and clean governance, thus providing strong backing for broadening and deepening cooperation in these areas.

Fifth, we upheld openness and demonstrated China's sense of responsibility.

Belt and Road cooperation is a grand stage upon which China and the world are becoming

more connected to each other. During the forum, President Xi delivered several important speeches to national leaders and public figures from various fields. Looking back at China's extraordinary course of development over 70 years since the founding of the PRC, he emphasized that China will continue to advance on the path of socialism with Chinese characteristics, remain committed to comprehensively deepening reform, pursuing high-quality development, expanding opening up, and following the path of peaceful development, and strive to build a global community with a shared future.

Meanwhile, the president earnestly declared that China will adopt a whole series of important new measures for reform and opening up, including easing market access for foreign investment in more areas, stepping up international cooperation on intellectual property rights protection, increasing imports of goods and services even further, engaging in international coordination of macroeconomic policy more effectively, and putting greater emphasis

on the implementation of opening up policies. He stressed that China's policy to expand opening up is a choice that it has made of its own accord in light of objective requirements for the country's reform and development. He also called on countries of the

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world to create favorable environments for investment and give equal treatment to Chinese enterprises, students, and scholars. President Xi's rousing words conveyed to the world the critical message that China is dedicated to expanding opening up across the board, exhibited China's sincere desire to make greater contributions to humanity, demonstrated China's resolve to safeguard its legitimate rights and interests, and made the world more confident about pursuing shared development with China.

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Belt and Road cooperation has begun a new journey toward high-quality development, transforming from an abstract overall outline into a meticulously detailed blueprint. We will act in accordance with the ideas and objectives raised in President Xi's opening address, strengthen coordination and cooperation with all parties in line with the agreements that we have reached, promote implementation of the BRF's outcomes, actively build a partnership for global connectivity, and promote consistent progress for international cooperation through the Belt and Road.

We will strengthen infrastructure connectivity.

President Xi pointed out that infrastructure is the cornerstone of connectivity. Working together

with all parties concerned, we will accelerate the development of high-quality, sustainable, hazard-resistant, affordable, inclusive, and accessible infrastructure, and focus on ensuring the sustainability of Belt and Road cooperation in the economic, social, fiscal, financial, and environmental domains.

By doing so, we will create cooperation projects that will stand the test of time and win popular approval. We will build a network of connectivity guided by the flows of economic corridors, built on major transportation routes and information highways, and supported by railways, ports, and pipelines so that we may bring about interconnected development more effectively.

We will uphold openness and mutual benefit.

President Xi pointed out that if man stopped the river from flowing into the ocean, then eventually there would come a day when the ocean dries up. Though the world economy is facing grave challenges, we must not stop the river from flowing; we must uphold openness and cooperation, unequivocally oppose protectionism, vigorously promote liberalization and facilitation of trade and investment, and support the circulation of goods, capital, technology, and personnel. This will provide powerful momentum and vast potential for growth of the global economy.

We will focus on innovation-driven development.

President Xi pointed out that innovation is the source of productive strength, and that it is necessary for enterprises to be competitive and countries to thrive. In conformity with the trend of the times, we will continue to deepen cooperation and exchange on innovation and drive forward the development of digital, network-based, and smart technologies. We will work together to explore new technologies and new ways of doing business, and seek out new growth drivers and means of development. We will advance the Belt and Road Science, Technology, and Innovation Cooperation Action Plan, implement

the BRI Talents Exchange Program, and build the Digital Silk Road and the Silk Road of Innovation.

We will promote balanced development.

President Xi pointed out that the greatest imbalance in the world today is imbalanced development. We will uphold the philosophy of people-centered development and ensure that the fruits of Belt and Road cooperation benefit the people in order to satisfy the yearning of people around the world for a better life. We will see that the concepts of green and sustainable development are incorporated into the selection, implementation, and management of Belt and Road cooperation projects, and work with those concerned to implement plans and initiatives for cooperation including the Belt and Road Sustainable Cities Alliance, the BRI International Green Development Coalition, and the Green Investment Principles for the Belt and Road, with a view to creating more opportunities and potential for the growth of developing countries.

We will deepen exchange and mutual learning.

President Xi pointed out that we must build

bridges for different cultures to learn from each other and create a pattern of multi-faceted people-to-people exchanges. To do so, we must deepen cooperation in fields such as education, science, culture, and sports, bolster exchange between parliamentary bodies, political parties, and non-governmental organizations, and promote communication between social groups such as women, young people, and the disabled. By doing so, we will fill the annals of the Silk Road with more brilliant tales of intercultural interaction.

Belt and Road cooperation is a great initiative aiming at achieving common prosperity through consultation and collaboration. Looking toward the future, it will undoubtedly unlock glorious new prospects for China's open development, bring new opportunities for improving the wellbeing of people around the world, and make important new contributions for building a global community with a shared future. (From: English Edition of *QiuShi Journal*, April-June 2019, Vol.11 No.2 Issue No.39) 🌸