

An Understanding of The Maritime Silk Road International Strategic Importance

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"The Maritime Silk Road" conception has a very significant international strategic importance, and to China, will certainly play a great role in promoting its economic development, which is only on the surface, and an in-depth reading is that it is a top-level strategic design, whose strategic role with the passage of time will be enlarged.

In his address to Indonesian National Assembly in October 2013, President Xi Jinping proposed to build the "Twenty-first Century Maritime Silk Road", which is further confirmed by Premier Li Keqiang's government work report in March 2014, who emphasized that "China should pay close attention to planning and building the Silk Road Economic Belt and the Twenty-First Century Maritime Silk Road". This indicates that the Maritime Silk Road has become an important part of strategic design for deepening reform by China's New Administration, and attracts close attention at home and abroad. At present, the academic circles may pay more attention to its economic development significance, and view it as the new packaging of the market economy with Chinese characteristics to respond to a new round of globalization challenges, but the author argues that it's the international strategic importance that is perhaps more significant, and can be regarded as in-depth strategic planning of China diplomacy in the new period. From the perspective of mainstream international relations theories, "the Maritime Silk Road" shows at least the strategic significance of the following three aspects.

From the perspective of realism, "the Maritime Silk Road" reflects the strategic

needs to maintain marine rights and interests.

Since the U.S. implementation of return to the Asia-Pacific strategy in 2010, China's peripheral security situation is becoming increasingly worrying. In addition, impacted by the historical issues of the "Cold War legacy" and the realistic conflicts in the post-Cold War, East Asian countries have seen their contradictions intertwined and interests interconnected, especially Western Pacific Ocean geopolitical factors are crowded with each other, which, if not handled properly, can easily lead to crisis. How to break through the "Eastern tension" dilemma caused by the U.S. rebalancing strategy of return to Asia-Pacific? "The Maritime Silk Road" has become a good choice.

In fact, "the Maritime Silk Road" is an important composition of China's strategic shift - shifting from the "East-oriented strategy" to the "West-oriented strategy", and temporarily avoids the crowded geopolitical factors in East Asia, turning to the promising western region, achieving an objective of playing advantages (such as economic and trade, infrastructure) to avoid disadvantages (such as military and security pressures). In addition, the "Maritime Silk Road" is regarded as a sign of emerging strategic change. Although China is a major country with huge land mass and sea water, yet, a mini-country with sea power. China has for a long time focused on land rights and interests, and paid inadequate attention to the sea power and marine rights and interests. And the oceans will be the most important resources of future development for human society, especially since the "United Nations Convention on the

Law of the Sea" went into effect in 1982, all countries in the world have strengthened their attention to and maintenance of maritime rights and interests, and China has become more and more aware of this. The initiative of "the Maritime Silk Road" is an important signal, and shows that China will attach more importance to ocean, and to the maintenance of marine rights and interests.

From the perspective of liberalism, to build "the Maritime Silk Road" is promoting values with Chinese characteristics

U.S. former Secretary of State Rice pointed out in a diplomatic speech that a major power could not only produce abundant material products, but also must be capable of producing rich spiritual products, missing either one is not a world major power. The "spiritual products" she here refers to are very rich in content, but the values and the discourse power are very important aspects. Undeniably, China is already the largest producing country of material products in the world, but not a major country of the spiritual products with weak international discourse. The new central collective leadership attaches more and more importance to the international discourse building, the concepts of the "Chinese dream", "new major-country relations", "community of destiny", "new concept of interests" put forward show voices with China's characteristics, and show to the international community the "Chinese ideas". "The Maritime Silk Road" is reflected on this strategic need.

In recent years, Asia-Pacific has become the world's economic development engine, is the region with most rapid economic development in the world, all influential major countries in the region have put forward their strategic conceptions for the regional development, western countries such as the United States, Japan and others have proposed a strategic design similar to the "Silk Road",

but China's "Maritime Silk Road" formulation has better historical culture foundation and the realistic possibility. Because "the Marine Silk Road" proposed by the Chinese Government is inheritance and development of Chinese ancient Maritime Silk Road spirit in continuation for two thousand years. The Chinese ancient Maritime Silk Road was formed in Qin and Han Dynasties, developed in the period of the Three Kingdoms and Sui Dynasty, became prosperous in Tang and Song Dynasties, and transformed in Ming and Qing Dynasties, and is the most ancient sea lanes known to the world, commercial trade routes linking with Asia, Africa and Europe, and the maritime transportation corridor of ancient China for transportation, trade and cultural exchanges with foreign countries. Peaceful maritime trade brought about economic win-win situation, collisions between different civilizations, and harmonious exchanges of relevant nations. These are different from the aggression and expansion reflected by the modern Western oceanic culture. The modern Western countries, through the great geographical discoveries, found the world, ruled the world, and led the 400-year globalization filled with the inhuman bloody wars and conflicts.

Undoubtedly, China's ancient Maritime Silk Road is contribution to human harmony spirit by the ancient Chinese civilization, whose value connotation embodies mainly: interoperability, openness and inclusiveness, win-win cooperation, and common destiny. These thoughts are the value concepts and the international norms inherited by the Twenty-first Century Maritime Silk Road proposed by the Chinese Government. The influential international discourse and standards often have the long historical inheritance and accumulation. China's ancient Maritime Silk Road is maintained for two thousand years, continuously, exchanging goods, and disseminating

civilization, is historical and cultural quality symbols of China's, the author thinks that, the "Twenty-first Century Maritime Silk Road", as the "Chinese dream" international extension, also needs this symbol.

From the perspective of constructivism, "the Maritime Silk Road" embodies the "Greater Asia-Pacific" Regional Identity

Identity plays a very important role in international relations, to build identity is an important method to reduce strategic misjudgments and avoid international conflicts. Admittedly, a reason that the current China's peaceful rising process meets with such great difficulties is closely related to its confused and missing national identity in the Asia-Pacific region.

Due to historical and realistic reasons, the development situation of countries in the Asia-Pacific region is very complex. There are both the most developed countries, and also very backward countries; both socialist countries and capitalist countries; both a country outside of the region but forgets for a moment the Asia-Pacific region, and also a country located in the East but poses itself as one of the Western countries. Such complex national identity cognition results in various contradictions and continuous disputes for countries of the Asia-Pacific region, which is one of the important reasons that impact the current Asia-Pacific regional security and stability.

China, as a major country located in the Asia-Pacific region, has the responsibility to promote its regional identities. The author argues that the proposed "Maritime Silk Road" can be regarded as an effective way for the Chinese government to promote the Asia-Pacific region to build the national identities. The Maritime Silk Road is connected to East Asia and South Asia, communicated with the Pacific and Indian oceans, and

constitutes a geo-political "greater Asia-Pacific" region. The implementation of this strategy is obviously beneficial to cultivate the regional identity. Bring to full play its advantages as the regional largest economy; China will make contributions to build "Greater Asia-Pacific" identity. At present, China and ASEAN have built the world's developing countries largest free trade area, China for 4 consecutive years has become the largest trading partner of ASEAN, and ASEAN is China's third largest trade partner. Building the Twenty-first Century Maritime Silk Road vigorously promotes the construction of upgraded China-ASEAN FTA, promotes policy communication, road interconnection, trade smoothness, and currency free circulation, and peoples affection to each other, which will become the common aspirations of the people of various countries along the Maritime Silk Road. This will not only help to build the "Greater Asia-Pacific" regional identity, but also help to strengthen the Chinese affinity, contributing to the peaceful rise of China.

"The Maritime Silk Road" conception has profound strategic importance, which, as far as China is concerned, certainly has a great role in promoting its economic development, but this is the superficial, an in-depth understanding is that it should be the strategic design at a top-level, and its strategic role will get enlarged with the passage of time. "The Maritime Silk Road" conception takes the economic and trade cooperation as the guide and foundation, the political and diplomatic cooperation as the premise and means of promotion, the promotion of cultural exchanges and elimination of security risk as an important objective, bears profound and far-reaching strategic significance to deepen regional cooperation, promote the Asia-Pacific prosperity, and push forward global development.