

Observations on China-U.S.- Indian Competition And Cooperation over the New Silk Road

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Abstract: China, the United State and India have different strategies for building the New Silk Road. The differences lie in the fact that the U.S. main objective is to protect its war achievements in Afghanistan, serve its Central and South Asia strategy, and maintain its world hegemony. While China and India see the New Silk Road as channels for trade expansion, energy supply, and cultural exchanges. Comparing the three New Silk Road strategies, India's is more similar with that of the United States because their routes are more consistent. China's strategy is more inclusive and sustainable. If the three countries have sound cooperation on the New Silk Road construction, they will lead to Asian integration, and vicious competition among them will bring geopolitical unrest for Asia. Therefore, China should try to prevent the geopolitical risks, prioritize development of cross-border transportation with friendly neighbor, and continue to promote interconnectivity of the New Silk Road.

After the end of the cold war, the Silk Road revival receives more and more attention by the international community. In 1995, the European Commission proposed the European-Asian Transport Corridor project, devoted to building the Europe-Caucasus-Caspian Sea-Black Sea-Central Asian transport passage. Since then, the Asian Development Bank (ADB), the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) also started planning and funding Pan-Asian traffic network construction. In 1998, the International Road Federation (IRF) proposed to revive the Silk Road Traffic Connections Program, and hosted the "International Silk Road Conferences" in 1998, 1999 and 2004. After 2000, the United Nations Education and Science Organization (UNESCO) and the World Tourism Organization (WTO) from the perspective of culture, promote the revival of the Silk Road. Since then, China, the United States and India begin showing concerns to build a New Silk Road, and put

forward their own New Silk Road strategies. The U.S. and Indian New Silk Road strategies are similar to each other, while China's strategy shows a bid difference with that of the United States. In terms of the Silk Road linking China and India, there is a larger space for cooperation among China, the United States and India. This article mainly tries to understand the New Silk Road strategies of China, the United States and India, and their competition and cooperation over the Maritime Silk Road and the Land Silk Road.

I. The Strategic Differences on the New Silk Road among China, the United States and India

Among China, the United States and India, it is the United States that first explicitly puts forward the "New Silk Road" strategy. Professor Starr of the Central Asia and the Caucasus Studies, the U.S. Hopkins in 1997 first proposed the "New Silk Road" program (referred to as "the NSR strategy") aimed at Central Asia in a hope to build a transportation

and economic development network with Afghanistan as the center, connected with South Asia, Central Asia and West Asia. Then the U.S. Nebraska Senator Douglas Bereuter submitted to Congress the Silk Road Strategy Bill but did not get through. The U.S. "New Silk Road" program did not become the national strategy until the support by Secretary of State Hilary in 2011. On July 20, 2011, Hilary in India personally announced that the United States will be devoted to the revival of the Silk Road. The American "New Silk Road" strategy unfolded around Afghanistan, its main task is to provide for the Afghan Government adequate financial resources and protect stability and development of Afghanistan after the U.S. military withdrawal.¹ The core content of the U.S. "New Silk Road" strategic planning is to build the Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan - India (TAPI) oil and gas pipeline, and expand a trade network based on Afghanistan, and a Central Asia-Afghanistan-South Asian Power Network (CASA-1000), etc..

The U.S. New Silk Road strategy does not only directly serve Afghanistan, but also indirectly serves its South Asia strategy and Central Asia strategy. The United States shows great interest in another Asian emerging power - India, not only Hilary's New Silk Road strategy speech is made in India, but the Silk Road strategy structuring is also closely tied with the Indian factor. An important goal of the U.S. Silk Road strategy is to get through the strategic channel from India to Afghanistan, and link India and Afghanistan together, while stabilizing Afghanistan and also planning for the American future in India. In addition, the U.S. Silk Road strategy is also planning its future for the Central Asia strategy. The United States intends to establish a stable political order in Afghanistan, promote its economic development, and root out terrorism, and which is taken regarded as a model to encourage other

countries of Central Asia to carry out democratic reform and economic reform in accordance with the American model. On the one hand, it is shaping a friendly Central Asia toward the United States, serving the U.S. economic and political interests; on the other hand,² it can also prevent accession of China and Russia.

China has actively responded to the Europe-initiated Silk Road Reconstruction Project, but for a long time has no clear-cut national strategy. It is after the 18th CPC National Congress that China explicitly puts forward the "New Silk Road" strategy. On September 2, 2013, Premier Li Keqiang, during attending the tenth session of Chinese-ASEAN Expo and China-ASEAN Business and Investment Summit, puts forward an intention to resume the glorious history of the "Maritime Silk Road". On September 7, 2013, President Xi Jinping, in his speech delivered during a visit to Kazakhstan, put forward building the "Silk Road Economic Belt" together with Central Asian countries. On October 3, 2013, President Xi Jinping, in his speech delivered at the People's Consultative Assembly of Indonesia, stated his hope of strengthening maritime cooperation with ASEAN countries, developing marine cooperative partnership and jointly building the Twenty-first Century Maritime Silk Road. At the APEC meeting in Beijing in November 2014, China's New Silk Road plan is promoted more deeply, more comprehensively and more substantially. On November 8 at the hosted dialogue meeting on "strengthening the interconnection partnership", President Xi Jinping said that the "One Belt and One Road" are the wings for Asia to take off, "interconnection and interoperability" are blood arteries for the two wings, China looks forward to a breakthrough based on transportation infrastructure, realizing early harvest of Asian interconnection; at the APEC Business Leaders Summit held on 9, President Xi Jinping points

out that China will vigorously promote the Asia-Pacific interconnectivity and infrastructure construction, and announced setting up a US\$40 billion "Silk Road Fund", providing financing support to the "One Belt and One Road" construction; at the Informal Meeting of APEC Leaders on November 11, President Xi Jinping emphasizes that Asian countries should accelerate the improvement of infrastructure construction, and create a full-range interconnection pattern. Although China for a long time has no clear-cut Silk Road national strategy, yet, the Silk Road revival planning has been promoted. China in recent years has actively pushed forward cross-border railway construction, especially in the Chinese border regions (Tibet, Xinjiang, Yunnan, etc.) to built outbound channels, the railway from Urumqi to Holzer opened in December 2013, the railway from Lhasa to Shigatse opened in August 2014, the channel from Kunming, Yunnan to Ruili is also under busy construction. The Indian Government so far has no clear-cut Silk Road national strategy, showing passivity in building a modern Silk Road, but indicating the initial intention of developing the "Silk Road". After the disintegration of the Soviet Union, the Indian Government proposed a "Connecting with Central Asia" plan, but due to the lack of road access directly between India and Central Asia, and continuous unrest of India-Pakistan relations, the "Connecting with Central Asia" Plan advances very slowly.³

In recent years, under the influence of foreign factors, India's "Silk Road" awareness is strengthened gradually, but the strategic planning is still ambiguous. The United States has helped shape India's Silk Road strategy from two perspectives. Firstly, the U.S. New Silk Road strategy takes India as the end destination on land, and provides a fulcrum for India's "Silk Road". After the United States also in July 2012 re-interpreted its "connecting

with Central Asia" new plan, India intends to leverage the U.S. Silk Road strategy to expand its foreign trade. India's New Silk Road Plan mainly includes making access channel for energy and trade with Central Asia, and build transportation infrastructure to Nepal and Vietnam. Secondly, the U.S. academic research studies also help India recover "Maritime Silk Road" awareness. The American scholars invent the "String of Pearls" strategy, inspire thinking by Indian society for the India Maritime Silk Road, "String of Pearls" strategy has become the main content of the Indian Government to understand the Chinese marine policy and to develop its Indian Ocean Security policy.⁴ Aimed at the so-called the "String of Pearls" strategy, India put forward the "Counter-String of Pearls" strategy, namely developing friendly relations with Chinese Asia-Pacific neighbors such as South Korea, Japan and Vietnam, etc.⁵

The three countries' New Silk Road strategies have different strategic objectives. The U.S. New Silk Road strategy mainly lies in maintaining its global leadership. The United States intends, through the construction of New Silk Road, to get a firm control of its axis of Asia –Afghanistan- by relying on India as a backing, deter and fend off China and Russia. The U.S. New Silk Road strategy is a powerful geo-tactical strategy, and its geopolitical intention is greater than its economic intention.⁶ The U.S. "Return to East Asia strategy" and "New Silk Road strategy" together constitute a strategic containment of China from two different perspectives.

Compared with the United States, neither China nor India has the ambitions to establish global hegemony. The main reason for China to revive the Silk Road is to enrich energy resources and trade routes, strengthen political and economic relations with other countries, and stabilize development of the Asian region. The reason that India supports the development

of New Silk Road also lies in securing energy supply, expanding foreign trade, and strengthening foreign exchanges.

These three countries propose different running directions for the New Silk Road. The United States hope to prioritize on connecting the India -Turkmenistan route, which is neither to Russia, nor to China. The U.S. routes constitute the hedge effect on China, Russia and Iran.⁷ India hopes to prioritize interconnection with routes to Russia and Vietnam, but India takes a positive attitude to the Silk Road leading to China. In contrast, China's Silk Road is not a simple sub-zone design, but a much larger grand plan. China's New Silk Road plan is an expanded communication network to all sides, as the center of a circle reaching out to sea and land. The differences between the Chinese routes and the U.S. routes mainly consist of different geopolitical strategies. The United States is neither willing to interconnect with Afghanistan and China, nor willing to see China's economic clout move into Central Asia and West Asia via Afghanistan. The differences between China's routes and India's routes are largely due to an obstacle of the Himalaya Range, whose geographical barriers can be hardly overcome in a short period of time.

These three countries' strategies have different degree of inclusiveness. Both the United States and India support the "North-South Corridor" plan. Their difference lies in the fact that the U.S. "North-South plan" unfolds around Afghanistan, emphasizing the interests of its own and allies,⁸ with the intention of excluding Russia, Iran, and China. India's "North-South plan" is also a sub-regional interconnection planning, but does not exclude China, Russia and Iran. In contrast, China's New Silk Road strategy shows more inclusiveness, trying to create a win-win trade network in Asian, African and European continents. China's proposed New Silk Road

Planning will be connected with the whole Asian continent, reach all parts of Europe, and will also reach every corner of Africa in the future. The reason why China's New Silk Road Planning is more inclusive roots in its geographical location. China occupies the Asian continent centre, and will run through the entire continent of Asia starting from the Chinese borders, so China's geographical location determines the Chinese New Silk Road strategy has the greatest inclusiveness.

Another important difference is the strategic sustainability. The U.S. New Silk Road strategy mainly depends on the U.S. military presence in Afghanistan. On September 30, 2014, the United States and the Ghani-led Afghan new Administration signed a long overdue "Bilateral Security Agreement". According to the Agreement, the U.S. troops stationed in Afghanistan will be reduced to 9800 by the end of 2014, be halved again in 2015, and be withdrawn completely by the end of 2016. If the United States will complete its withdrawal from Afghanistan in 2016 or so, there exists a huge question mark whether the United States also has the willingness and ability to invest in the New Silk Road construction. In addition, it is true that the United States adheres to global hegemony strategy, but its hegemony is mainly reflected at the sea, and never won hegemonic advantages in Central Asia. The Central Asian Islamic culture also has certain contradictions with the U.S. culture, and has difficulties to completely accept the American political and social model. Therefore, the American New Silk Road strategy faces uncertainties. But China and India themselves are located at important transportation linking-points of the Silk Road, they have the fundamental needs to promote the New Silk Road strategy. No matter what attitudes other Asian countries take, China will continue to strive to realize the revival of the Silk Road. China and Asia together achieve

win-win development, which is a historical process, but also a future pursuit.

II. Competition and Cooperation over the Maritime Silk Road

Competition and cooperation between China, the United States and India over the Maritime Silk Road are mainly reflected by the control of and manipulation of the maritime routes. The different sea power awareness and marine strategies are an important factor leading to the trilateral marine competition. The United States has very strong sea power consciousness; and its special geographical location determines the U.S. attention to openness of the Maritime Silk Road. Both China and India must face the geo-pressures caused by their common rise, making the two countries pay more attention to the connectivity of the Maritime Silk Road. The symbiosis and overlaps of the three countries regarding the Maritime Silk Road brought competition for China, the United States and India, while China-U.S. strategic mutual misgiving and China-India strategic mutual distrust brought the hindrance for building the Maritime Silk Road. But huge trade and energy demand of China, the United States and India (especially between China and India) provide the possibility for their cooperation along the Maritime Silk Road.

The main area of Maritime Silk Road competition between China, the United States and India are in the South China Sea and India Ocean. In the South China Sea, currently, there are relatively more serious conflicts between China and the United States. China's South China Sea policy is helpful to realize the revival of the "Maritime Silk Road". On the one hand, China holds to shelve the disputes with countries surrounding the South China Sea, and gives priority to the development of maritime connectivity; on the other hand, China proposes mutual respect for sovereignty,

peaceful settlement of disputes, and especially bilateral negotiations to settle the sovereignty disputes. The Chinese foreign policy focusing on peace and development in the South China Sea indicates that China really hopes for the marine interconnection. Aimed at the South China Sea, the United States has proposed "free navigation" policy, superficially supports the Maritime Silk Road revival, but has resulted in the fracture of the Maritime Silk Road. The United States overtly or covertly supports the Philippines and Vietnam for provocatively suing China in the International Court of Justice, which in fact prevents countries in the South China Sea from the marine interconnection. Before the U.S. announcement of the "return to Asia-Pacific", the marine interconnection between China and countries in the South China Sea started gradually, and developed well. But the U.S. interventions shape a situation of a stalemate, the interconnection planning as the core of foreign policy is not actively promoted.

India South China Sea policy mainly counteracts the so-called "String of Pearls" strategy, constituting a Northwest Pacific – Southeast Asia-Arabia Sea "China-India confrontation arc".⁹ India in the South China Sea mainly cooperates with Vietnam and the Philippines in the areas of military and oil and gas exploration, and its cooperation with Vietnam is more extensively. Politically, in July 2007, India and Vietnam established Strategic Cooperative Partnership. Economically, India and Vietnam in September 2011 signed an agreement resulting in entering the South China Sea area with the sovereignty disputes for production activities. Militarily, India and Vietnam have launched cooperation of ship-building and missiles, and sent a fleet to Vietnam for Naval joint military drill. On June 12-16, 2013, a 4 ship-fleet of India first visited Vietnam, and then went to the Philippines for a friendly visit for 5 days. On August 5-8, 2014,

India's so-called ace warship, "Shivalik" missile destroyer visited Vietnamese port city of Haiphong. On September 15, 2014, India and Vietnam signed an agreement, providing Vietnam with US\$100 million the export trade transactions credit, and strengthening energy ties with Vietnam.¹⁰ On October 28, 2014, Prime Minister Modi of India held talks with the visiting Vietnamese Prime Minister Nguyen Tan Dung, one of the issues discussed is India to sell 4 Navy Patrol boats to Vietnam. If the plan is implemented, then it will be India's first major military transfer to Vietnam in recent years.¹¹ This can be seen that India shows very obvious intention by making use of the Philippines and Vietnam to hold up China.

In Indian Ocean, there is a potential conflict between China and the United States. Since entering the twenty-first Century, the United States attaches more and more importance to Indian Ocean. The Indian Ocean is important water for the United States to enter Central Asia and control the Middle East. The United States launched the Iraq War and the Afghan War and their follow-up effects, which are all depends on the U.S. grip of Indian Ocean. Another reason for the U.S. attention to Indian Ocean lies in the enhancing Chinese maritime activities. Robert Kaplan described China's marine activities as a horizontally expanded "two-ocean strategy", namely expanding influence in both the Pacific Ocean and Indian Ocean. The United States attaches great importance to this,¹² and has increased monitoring efforts over Indian Ocean. In November 2011, the United States and Australia reached an agreement on the use of the Port Darwin, and then announced additional troops to station in the Port Darwin. On August 12, 2014, the United States and Australia signed agreements on military deployment at the annual ministerial consultation meeting, allowing 2500 U.S. Marines to station in port Darwin till 2017. The U.S. military deployment

in Port Darwin shows the United States attempts to simultaneously monitor the Pacific Ocean and Indian Ocean, with the potential target directed at the Chinese ocean activities.

There exists more fierce competition between China and India in the Indian Ocean, and ports construction has become the core content of bilateral competition. Port construction in Indian Ocean carried out by China mainly include Kyaukpyu port in Burma, Chittagong port in Bangladesh, Hambantota port in Sri Lanka and Gwadar port in Pakistan, etc.. The Chinese port construction efforts are mainly for the Chinese merchant ships anchoring and loading logistics, serve the Chinese ocean-going trade activities. In addition to ships escort in the Gulf of Aden, the Chinese warships rarely wander into Indian Ocean. But in the eyes of Indian scholars and officials, China's trading activities in Indian Ocean have military purposes, namely containment of India. Especially since the "String of Pearls" strategy invented by American scholars, the India society shows a high degree of identity, and makes a lot of subjective analysis on the Chinese factors in Gwadar port and Hambantota port. Targeted at the Chinese factor in Pakistan's Gwadar Port, India has contracted the building of Iran port of Chabahar. There is only 70 km distance between the two ports.¹³ India has also strengthened military monitoring ability construction at the Nicobar -Andaman Islands close to Malacca, so as to monitor Chinese ships into and out of the Strait of Malacca.

From the cooperation perspective, there also exists strong potential for cooperation among China, the United States and India over the Maritime Silk Road construction, among which the maritime trade provides a cooperation foundation for the three countries. China has huge energy import and products export with the Mid-east and Africa, while India imports oil and gas from the Russian Far

East, has economic and trade exchanges with Japan and South Korea, therefore, the East China Sea, the South China Sea and Indian Ocean for China and India are all very important, to maintain the sea-lanes security has a profound practical significance for them both. The unimpeded sea-lanes also has an important strategic significance for both China and the United States. Both countries heavily dependent on trade, and have huge volume of trade, and need to maintain the open and uninterrupted Pacific.

China and the United States could really shape a good cooperation situation on the "Maritime Silk Road" construction, for example, carry out the international maritime cooperation, such as maritime search and rescue, the joint disaster-relief efforts, etc. But in reality, due to the U.S. adherence to global hegemony strategy, and fending off China, which triggers rather weak willingness for and low-level maritime cooperation between the two countries. The U.S. military exercises in the South China Sea include the U.S.-Thailand "Cobra Gold" military exercises (since 1982), the U.S.-Philippines "shoulder to shoulder" military exercises (since 1991), etc. and these exercises exclude China. China only began limited participation in the USA-led "Pacific Rim" military exercises (since 1971) in July 2014, and this U.S.-led military exercise has been sustained for more than 40 years in the region. However, China and the United States still have their separate actions on natural disasters, such as Japan 3/11 earthquake, Philippines typhoon, Myanmar typhoon, etc.. China and the United States failed to make effective cooperation in the process of searching for Malaysia Airlines flight MH370. The U.S. disaster-relief actions take into consideration too much geopolitical game-play, so the Sino-U.S. cooperation in the South China Sea region is still far from reaching the level between major countries.

China and India show much more positive attitude of cooperation on the Maritime Silk Road construction. Dependence of both China and India on the Pacific Ocean and Indian Ocean is very high; their common interests determine their cooperation prospect. China's Maritime Silk Road construction does not exclude India, and expects Indian active participation. During February 10 to 12, 2014 at the 17th round of talks on boundary issue by the special representatives of China and India held in New Delhi, the Chinese representative Yang Jiechi invited India to jointly build the Twenty-first Century Maritime Silk Road, Indian Security Advisor Menon accepted the invitation of the Chinese side, and made positive comments on the Maritime Silk Road.¹⁴ Some Indian scholars propose that China and India can help each other in the face of non-traditional security threats on the sea, the Indian navy can provide security protection for the Chinese business activities in Indian Ocean and the Malacca Strait, while the Chinese navy can provide security protection for the Indian trading activities in the East China Sea and South China Sea, the two countries should use their own maritime power and geographical geo-advantages to integrate each other's strength rather than undermine each other's impact.¹⁵

III. Competition and Cooperation on the Land Silk Road

Competition on the Land Silk Road (the Northern Silk Road, the Southern Silk Road) among China, the United States and India embodied in the different planning of specific run of the Silk Road. For the Northern Silk Road, there exists certain competition and contradiction between the "North- South channel" (Turkmenistan - India) supported by the United States and India and "Eastern Channel" (China-Europe) supported by China. For the Southern Silk Road, the three countries

have a long history of cooperation, such as the ancient tea on horse road and Stillwell Road are the witness for their traditional cooperation. Because of large population and trade volume, there exists a strong potential for cooperation on the Southern Silk Road construction between China and India.

From the perspective of building the Northern Silk Road, there exists some competition among China, the United States and India. The "North-South Channel" the United States attempts to get through almost does not meet the New Silk Road planned by China. It is not because that China does not support construction of the "North-South Channel", but this "North-South Channel" is not the current priority project of the Chinese Government. On the one hand, the situation in Afghanistan is still uncertain, China hastily opens China-Afghanistan channel, which presents political risks, and will also face a series of complex non-traditional security threats; on the other hand, the Wakhan Corridor China-Afghan channel must cut across is geographically very steep, so development costs and future benefits are disproportionate. Regarding route selection for the Northern Silk Road, China hopes to get through the China-Kyrgyzstan-Uzbekistan channel and China-Kazakhstan channel as priorities. India and the United States alike, which have no demand for the China-Kyrgyzstan-Uzbekistan channel, and China-Kazakhstan channel, neither will they prioritize their support on these projects. India's geographical location determines Indian hope for the New Silk Road to be pushed forward along both sides of the Himalaya Range. India supports the U.S.-led "North-South Channel" construction, because it helps the expansion of India's trade routes. Along the "North-South Channel", India will not only obtain resources and energy from Central Asia, but also can enter Europe and get Indian trade route to Europe. There exists

certain competitive relationship between the "North-South Channel" by the United States and India, and China's "East Channel". Whichever channel is prioritized on development will get more attention, and may possibly delay other channel's construction.

Regarding construction of the Southern Silk Road, there is also certain competition between China and the United States. The Southern Silk Road includes interconnecting all routes with China, India and Southeast Asia (Singapore). China-Singapore line can be subdivided into three branches, one is Guangxi-Vietnam- Thailand-Singapore, the second is the Yunnan-Laos- Thailand-Singapore, the third is Yunnan-Myanmar- Thailand-Singapore. First of all, China's route via Vietnam is deeply subjected to the Chinese-Vietnamese relations deadlock. China-Vietnamese relationship since the U.S. return to the Asia-Pacific region in 2009 has been in a state of fluctuation, on the contrary the U.S.-Vietnam relationship has become heated. In July 2013, the United States and Vietnam announced the establishment of "Comprehensive partnership". At present situation, it is hard to expect the China - Vietnam Silk Road to smoothly open. Secondly, China - Myanmar route is also subjected to the changing international political environment and the progressing domestic situation of Myanmar. Myanmar is in a political process of democratization, the United States and India try hard to win it over. In December 2011, Secretary of State Hilary first visited Myanmar, and encouraged its domestic political process. For China-Myanmar relations since 2011, the shelved Myitsone Hydraulic Power Station and Leipzig copper mine events damage the Sino-Myanmar economic cooperation. On July 20, 2014, Myanmar Ministry of Railways announced the Sino-Myanmar strategic Railway plan dashed to the ground.¹⁶ Myanmar future political

orientation determines the complex fate of the New Silk Road through Myanmar.

China and India have bright prospects for cooperation in the Southern Silk Road construction. The routes of both China and India to Singapore meet and overlap, so the driving power of competition and cooperation is very strong. From the perspective of trade, the modern Southern Silk Road has the extremely important strategic significance for both China and India. In 2002, China and ASEAN signed the "China - ASEAN FTA Framework Agreement", resulting in bilateral trade amounting to US\$54.767 billion, as of the end of 2013, the volume of trade between China and ASEAN reached US\$443.61 billion. At present, China is the largest trading partner of ASEAN, ASEAN is China's third largest trading partner and fourth largest export market and second largest source of import. In the aspect of investment, ASEAN is one of the fastest growing areas receiving China's outbound investment, as of the end of 2013, the accumulated non-financial investment in ASEAN countries by China's enterprises totals US\$29.34 billion. Similarly, the ASEAN is also very important for Indian trade. "India-ASEAN Free Trade Agreement" was signed in August 2009, and goes into effective as of January 1, 2010, then the two sides have carried out liberalizing trade talks in service and investment. By the end of 2013, the volume of India-ASEAN bilateral trade reached US\$76.0 billion. Therefore, both China and India hope to build trade channels to Southeast Asia (Singapore). Before China-Singapore route and India - Singapore route meet in Thailand, some competitive relationship exists between the two. The Indian Government hopes to build India's route to Vietnam as a priority, far back in 2003, Prime Minister Vajpayee shouted a slogan to build the "railway to Hanoi". China prioritizes construction of Yunnan-Bangkok channel. It is true that there are inconsistencies between the

route choices by the two countries, but the India-Singapore route and China - Singapore route meet in Thailand and then through to Singapore, and also have great potential for cooperation.

Another branch of the South Silk Road (Southwest China - Myanmar - India Northeast) is different with other route. This line is a model of China-U.S.-India cooperation. China's channel to India has a long history of cooperation. In the ancient times, the tea on horse route is China-Indian cultural and trade communication channel. In the modern time, the Stillwell Road communicating China and India made a significant contribution for the three countries to successfully resist Japanese fascism in World War II. The Stillwell Road still has important significance of demonstration for trilateral cooperation on the New Silk Road. China since 2004 starts reconstructing the Stillwell Road to Myanmar and India. From the aspect of reality, the New Silk Road connecting China and India highlights particularly importance. Indian PHD Chamber of Commerce trade data displays, as of the end of 2013, bilateral trade volume of China and India reached US\$49.5 billion, surpassing the United States (US\$46.0 billion), China becomes the largest trading partner of India. Once the transportation corridor between the two countries is completed, which will be very obvious for trade promotion, according to estimates, the completed Land Silk Road will increase China-Indian volume of trade by roughly 5 times.¹⁷

In addition, the railway connecting Southwest China and Northeast India will help their economic development, help poverty reduction in less developed areas of the two countries, can also promote transit trade, Bangladesh, Myanmar and other countries will be benefited a lot.¹⁸ However, China-India channel also faces with a hard political problem, namely the delayed China-Indian boundary

issue. The boundary dispute is the thorny issue of bilateral political trust and economic exchanges. The two countries in the La Dwas region have occasional the so-called "tent intrusion" incidents, Indian senior officials uninterruptedly visit the disputed area between China and India. Since 2008, Indian former Prime Minister Singh had three visits to Zangnan, India's former president Patil and President Mukherjee in April 2009 and November 2013 respectively visited Zangnan. These events make the bilateral trust deficit stay on. The interconnection on land between the two countries needs to be based on high-level trust, but to the contrary, the bilateral mutual trust has not reached the level for smoothly cross-border transport cooperation. As late as July 2006, an important trade post (the Nathu La pass) located in the ancient Silk Road was re-opened. Therefore, only China and India should overcome the political obstacles of the boundary disputes as soon as possible, can they quickly promote construction of the New Silk Road connecting the two countries.

IV. The Geopolitical Consequences of Competition and Cooperation over the New Silk Road Among China, the United States and India and China's Diplomatic Response

The Silk Road revival is a major event in re-drawing a map of the world, and its impacts just begin showing. It can be predicted that, cross-border channels connecting most countries will increase dramatically over the next 100 years, and most of which will become high-speed railway, Asian Geopolitical layout and intercontinental geopolitics will witness major changes. There is no doubt the impact of cooperation and competition over the New Silk Road among China, the United States and India will be global. According to the assessment of PWC macroeconomic research team, GDP of these three countries by 2050 will become the world's top three, and be way ahead of other

countries. Regarding construction of the New Silk Road, if the world's top three can have goodwill cooperation, they will catalyze the world huge geo-integration. If they carry out vicious competition, then, the revival of the Silk Road will evolve into a new round of geopolitical containment, and bring the whole world a devastating impact.

Benign cooperation produces positive results. First of all, cooperation on the New Silk Road carried out by China, the United States and India will create a new wave for the Asian regional integration. Regional integration is highly subjected to transportation technology and transportation infrastructure construction, the respective New Silk Road planning will inject new impetus to regional integration. The New Silk Road planning by the three countries is not only helpful to strengthen connectivity of sub-regions such as Southeast Asia, South Asia and Central Asia, also contribute to the integration of whole Asia. Secondly, accompanied by the enhanced integration of Asia, status of the Asian countries in the world pattern will get a profound change. The Silk Road construction connecting China and India will bring an enormous trade impetus and development opportunities for the two countries. The simultaneous rise of China and India will deeply change the world system. At the same time, along with the rise of China and India, some Asian medium-sized countries such as Iran, Turkey, etc. will also gain development opportunities in the Silk Road revival.

In view of the fact that China, the United States and India have certain degree of suspicions over each other strategy so they can easily slide into strategic confrontation. China's activities in Indian Ocean are taken for "extending military influence in the name of the maritime trade protection," also some scholars view ports built by China along the Maritime Silk Road as "informal military bases" ¹⁹ Some U.S. scholars believe that the

Chinese construction of the Land Silk Road is a "mercantilist" behavior,²⁰ affecting the U.S. world hegemony. India also has some scholars follow the "String of Pearls" conspiracy theory, and hold that Chinese port construction is a strategic action of encircling India.²¹ In turn, most China researchers do think that the U.S. New Silk Road strategy is containment actions on China. Malignant competitions among the three countries will bring the negative consequences of geopolitical containment.

Vicious competitions will produce at least four negative consequences.

Firstly, distorted routes. The fierce competitions over the New Silk Road among China, the United States and India may block or distort the run of the New Silk Road. China's routes to Afghanistan, Iran and Turkmenistan may remain intact for a long time, the Chinese cross-border railway to Singapore via Myanmar may be met with long-term shelving, a route between China and India will not be able to get through either. The New Silk Road can not form an all-dimensional linear communication network, but in the fragmented state.

Secondly, deteriorated relations between major countries. Competitions over the New Silk Road among China, the United States and India is just a microcosm of the state national competition by the three countries, if the Silk Road competition races into a geopolitical containment, so their political and military relations will get into trouble.

Thirdly, small countries are forced to "choose sides". Competitions among China, the United States and India may cause small countries' division. Before the U.S. announcement of the "return to Asia-Pacific", the East Asian regional cooperation is an open model of multilateralism, but with the U.S. in-depth involvement in East Asia, open multilateralism meets with challenges. Small countries in East Asia are more and more subjected to competitions among China, the

United States and India, gradually opening a "taking side" trend. Although the current process is not too clear, if the present stalemate continues, then this process is likely to become clearer.

Fourthly, the Silk Road key-points game-play. The New Silk Road is composed of a number of long transport lines. With fierce competitions among China, the United States and India, countries along the New Silk Road and the Silk Road Transportation key-points could face risks of geopolitical unrest.

In Southeast Asia, Myanmar may become a representative of the international game-play. Myanmar is another Chinese exit to India and Southeast Asia, but in recent years, the tendency of the political situation in Myanmar and roping in Myanmar by the Western forces indicate that Myanmar may also slide into geopolitical confrontations. In Central Asia, Afghanistan and Kyrgyzstan are likely to face the complex geopolitical game-play. The ability to resist political risks by the two countries is relatively low, so they can be easily used by other major powers as tools to contain China. In addition to easy occurrence of the geopolitical game-play at some Silk Road nodes within Asia, the most obvious geopolitical game-play will take place at the intercontinental connection points, such as the connecting points of Ukraine and Turkey between Asia and Europe, and the connecting points of Egypt and Israel between Asia and Africa, etc. So, these countries are located in the intercontinental traffic hub, and also located in Huntington's "broken belt of civilizations", hence, very easy to induce geopolitical game-play.

In the face of possible geopolitical consequences of competitions on the New Silk Road among China, the United States and India, how should China respond?

First of all, from the long-term strategic perspective, China should take correct attitude,

and take precautions on long-term basis. The New Silk Road construction cannot be completed in a short time, but a project lasting a hundred years. Therefore, in the face of challenges from the United States and India, China neither needs to become too nervous; nor to struggle for a lost section or two. As long as there is no large-scale devastating war, the world will always be closely connected together; the regional integration process is always moving forward, and independent of man's will. China needs not feel nervous over the U.S. and India proposed New Silk Road Plans, but should steadily push forward the New Silk Road construction in line with its own pace.

Secondly, China should make full use of its own natural advantageous status in the Silk Road revival; actively implement the interconnection and interoperability plan with friendly neighboring countries. Because a road (railway or highway) has born fragility, and is vulnerable to interference of terrorism and the politics of opposition parties, so sound bilateral political relations become a prerequisite for the Silk Road cooperation. In terms of the present China surrounding environment, China has a good relationship with Laos, Kazakhstan, Mongolia, etc. and its bilateral relations is stable, therefore it can prioritize development of cross-border traffic with these states, thus forming a good demonstration effect. Especially the route between China and Laos should be a focus of cross-border traffic for China to promote, not only because of the good political relationship between the two countries, but also because the completion of this route can serve as a "bridge" so as to realize the railway connection between China and Singapore. In addition, along this line, Cambodia is Chinese friendly neighbor. Thailand also attaches great importance to traffic connection with China. Compared with other cross-border lines, the possibility of

building this line is the greatest, and its economic value is also the highest. On August 2, 2014, the new Administration of Thailand approved Sino-Thai High-speed Rail plan, whose move also reflects promising prospects of the line.

Thirdly, building the New Silk Road leading to South Asia, China should pay more attention to developing interconnection and interoperability with India. The common demand on the New Silk Road by China and India determines the cooperation prospect. In spite of the existential unresolved boundary disputes between China and India, the two countries have consistent goals of economic development, and both sides have a strong demand for each other's market, thus determining the major economic value for China and India by the road linking. Now, because of the border problems, China's plan to get through to India Northeast from Tibet cannot be implemented due to still uncertain Myanmar's domestic situation, the cross-border railway from Yunnan into Myanmar and then into India also temporarily faces political obstacles, so China currently should actively promote the connection of Tibetan railway with the Nepalese railway, can explore together with India and Nepal the docking of India-China Railway with Nepal Railway. At the same time, China should pay attention to construction of the railway section in Bangladesh within the China-India- Bangladesh-Myanmar regional planning. If the China-India-Bangladesh-Myanmar New Silk Road plan cannot start in the short term, so China should work on the long-term basis, and lay out a plan for the future in Bangladesh. China should make active investments in Bangladesh railway and other infrastructure construction, aiming at China-India- Myanmar-Bangladesh Silk Road interconnection.

Fourthly, regarding the New Silk Road

construction leading to Europe, China needs to give priority to development of transit routes through Russia and Kazakhstan.

The significance of doing this is temporarily bypassing the U.S. Silk Road in Afghanistan, uniting Russia to jointly promote the New Silk Road construction, and maximally avoid geopolitical risks. But the problem this section faces with is the track inconsistency between the Russian railway system and the Chinese Railway system. China uses the international standard track of 1435 mm, while Russia and CIS countries use the track of 1524 mm. Since Russia still has a potential concern for China's New Silk Road into Central Asia, therefore rail exchanging temporarily at borders is inevitable, but even so, China should also strengthen the railway cooperation with Russia and Central Asian countries. Measures for China to eliminate Russian concerns are to strengthen bilateral cooperation in the political field, to enhance bilateral coordination in the SCO, to invite Russia corporations to participate in Central Asian high-speed railway construction, and can also try to set up a "Central Asia and Russia high-speed railway coop mechanism", hence, providing all the participating countries with economic benefits.

Fifthly, China should take advantage of relevant regional organizations to cooperate with countries along the Silk Road. China carries out cross-border transportation construction, which although plays a tremendous role in promoting local economy, while some foreign forces are still accustomed to look at this issue from a geopolitical perspective, thus, causing huge international resistance. In order to smoothly promote construction of the New Silk Road, China should carry out a more active and effective communication with ASEAN, SAARC and other regional organizations, and promote the New Silk Road construction after having achieved greater regional consensus. The

SAARC, ASEAN and the Central Asia Regional Economic Cooperation Organizations all have real needs for intercommunication and interconnection, China should strengthen political dialogue, deepen strategic cooperation and partnership, and actively promote the New Silk Road Planning in regional organizations.

Sixthly, China should actively build a new mechanism of international transportation. The current Asian transport cooperation mainly relies on the push by regional organizations, but international transportation cooperation itself should also have similar international financial organization or international security organization as its own cooperation platform. China, as a country with strong advantages in transportation field, can consider the planning of regional international transportation mechanisms in the region, such as the New Silk Road Cooperation Organization, the New Silk Road Construction Union, (regional) High-speed Rail Joint Mechanism, the Silk Road Cross-Border Trade and Development Mechanism, the Silk Road Countries Visa and Travel Mechanism, the New Silk Road Cultural Exchange Mechanism, and host the International Silk Road Forums, etc..

Seventhly, since the New Silk Road construction needs tremendous amount of capital to support, so China should make more efforts in financing the New Silk Road construction. On the one hand, China can provide investments for the New Silk Road construction projects within the existing regional organization framework, for example depending on the Asian Development Bank, the BRICS banks to provide construction funding. At the same time, based on specific circumstances, it actively calls for formation of specialized financial institutions, such as establishment of an International Silk Road Fund, found a New Silk Road Development Bank or an Asian Infrastructure Bank, to provide strong financial support for the New

Silk Road construction. Financial support should not only be made for countries with a funding gap to build the Silk Road, but also for the people along the Silk Road. The New Silk Road funds should provide investment and financing support for development and environmental protection along the Silk Road, ensuring residents along the Silk Road enjoy real benefits. The New Silk Road Fund should

also invest in education of countries along the New Silk Road, actively supports and nurtures a large number of New Silk Road builders, minimize the geo-political thinking on the New Silk Road construction, and shape powerful renewed waves of the New Silk Road in the international community (especially in the Asian continent).

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