

Collaborative Modernization

— The Essence of
“the Belt and Road Initiative”



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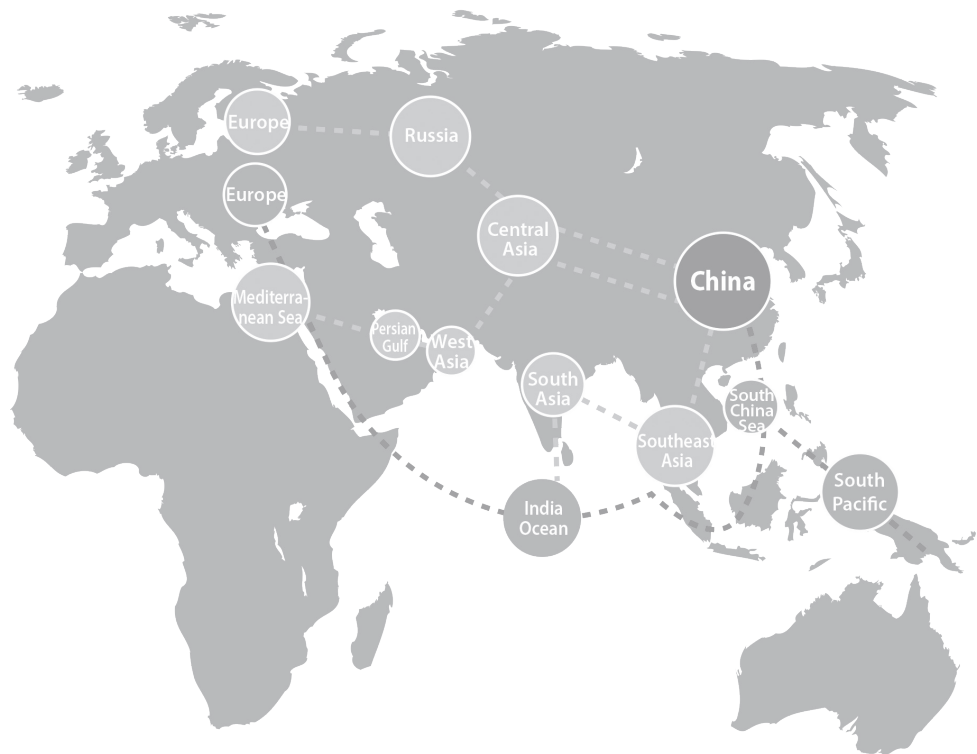
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“Collaborative Modernization”: Essence of the “Belt and Road” initiative

Synopsis

This report suggests that “Collaborative modernization” is the essence of the “Belt and Road” initiative. It is mainly demonstrated from the following three aspects:

Making an analysis on what the “Belt and Road” initiative is

Domestic scholars have explained a lot about the “Belt and Road” initiative, mainly from the perspective of various subjects. Here, we get back to the origin and seek for a simple answer based on the speeches of the Chinese head of state and the official documents of the Chinese government. First of all, these texts are re-edited and sorted out to form the first part of this report, where people may have a clear understanding of the main contents of the “Belt and Road” initiative. Then, keyword statistics through the search function indicate that “common” and “modernization” are the two core keywords.

One is “common.” Firstly, the word “common” appears many times. During the keynote speech delivered by President Xi Jinping at the 2015 annual conference of the Boao Forum for Asia, the word is mentioned 29 times, “community” 14 times, “common development” six times and “win-win” eight times. In the document “Vision and Actions on Jointly Building Silk Road Economic Belt and 21st-Century Maritime Silk Road” issued by the National Development and Reform Commission, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the Ministry of Commerce, the word “common” appears 25 times, “jointly building” 22 times and “shared benefits” three times. Secondly, the word “cooperation,” implying a “common” approach, appears many more times. During the keynote Boao Forum speech by President Xi Jinping, the word “cooperation” is mentioned 34 times; in the document “Vision and Actions on Jointly Building Silk Road Economic Belt and 21st-Century Maritime Silk Road,” it appears 136 times. So, from the perspective of text analysis alone, “common” is one of the core keywords of the “Belt and Road” initiative.

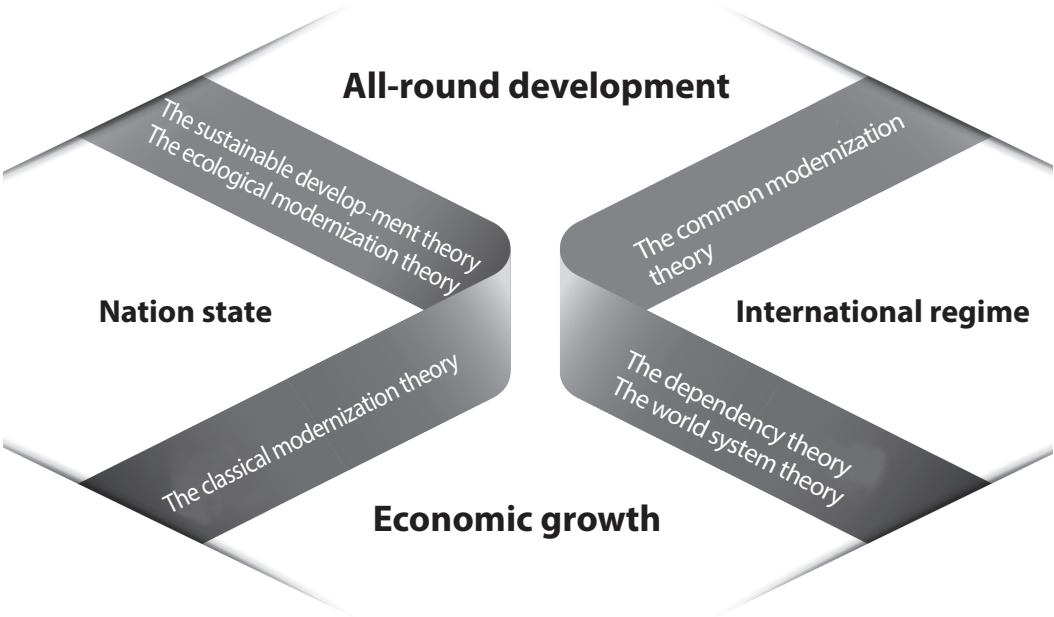
The other is “modernization.” Unlike the word “common” that appears directly, there is no use of “modernization” in the two documents mentioned above. However, we believe

that “modernization” is also one of the core keywords of the “Belt and Road” initiative. The main reasons are: firstly, the word “development” is similar in meaning to “modernization,” and that appears many times in the two documents. During President Xi’s speech, for example, it is mentioned 56 times; in the document “Vision and Actions on Jointly Building Silk Road Economic Belt and 21st-Century Maritime Silk Road,” it appears 35 times. Secondly, a careful analysis of the main contents of the “Belt and Road” initiative in the official documents shows that it’s appropriate to summarize them with the word “modernization” or “development.”

Therefore, this report asserts that “common” and “modernization” are the core keywords of the “Belt and Road” initiative.

Tentatively proposing the concept of “Collaborative modernization”

Based on the logical collation of modernization theories, we have designed a standard of classification, that is, the existing modernization theories can be classified in two categories -- nation state/international regime and economic growth/all-round development. The first describes the main body of modernization, namely, who is in the process of modernization? Is it nation-state-oriented or international-regime-oriented? Nation-state-centered orientation means focusing on a nation state’s internal development to promote its own interests; an international-regime-centered orientation refers to focusing on the common development of many countries in an international regime based on common interests. The second describes the goals of modernization, namely, why do we carry out modernization? Does it focus on economic growth or all-round development? All-round development includes not only development in the economic, political, cultural and social sectors, but coordinated development between human society and their ecological environment.



A preliminary collation and analysis of the above modernization theories shows that, firstly, the classical modernization theory is nation-state-oriented and focuses on economic growth; second, the dependency theory and world system theory are international-regime-oriented and also focus on economic growth; third, the ecological modernization theory and sustainable development theory focus on all-round development (mainly referring to the coordinated development of the economy and ecological environment), but are still nation-state-oriented. See the figure below.

It logically follows that modernization which is international-regime-oriented and aims at all-round development is called “common modernization.” It has the following basic features:

- **Goal orientation: for the common interests of humankind**
- **Agent: international community**
- **Core principle: win-win cooperation**
- **Strategic focus: ecology, population and international cooperation**

Essence of the “Belt and Road” initiative: “Common Modernization”

According to the official documents about the “Belt and Road” initiative and the main ideas and contents of “common modernization,” we believe the essence of the “Belt and Road” initiative is “common modernization.” It can at least be illustrated from the following five aspects:

- **Goal: realizing common interests**
- **Agent: community composed of several countries**
- **Principles: “wide consultation, joint contribution and shared benefits” and “win-win cooperation”**
- **Contents: Connectivity is the mainstream.**
- **Measures: International cooperation is the core.**

These five aspects are also on the significant research agenda of common modernization along the “Belt and Road.”

Criticism and suggestions are appreciated. We welcome those who are interested to carry out joint research on the subject of common modernization along the “Belt and Road.”

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Based on the speeches of Chinese President Xi Jinping and the official documents of the Chinese government, this article examines the meaning, nature, aims, principles, contents and measures comprising “the Belt and Road Initiative” and comes up with two core keywords: “common” and “modernization.” Then, based on two different scales -- nation state/international regime and economic growth/all-round development -- it analyzes various modernization theories and their features to develop the concept of “collaborative modernization” and its major features. Finally, according to the above analysis, it is concluded that the essence of “the Belt and Road Initiative” is “collaborative modernization.”

What is “the Belt and Road Initiative”?

This is a core question, and also an issue of most concern for foreign countries. According to President Xi Jinping's speeches and the official documents released by the Chinese government, the main contents of “the Belt and Road Initiative” (B&R Initiative) include the following aspects:

The meaning of the B&R Initiative

(For China) The initiative will enable the country to further expand and deepen its opening-up.

(For Asia) The initiative originates in Asia, relies on Asia and benefits Asia. Focusing on the connectivity of Asian countries, it aims to expand their common interests.

(For the countries along the "Belt and Road") Accelerating the building of the "Belt and Road" can help promote the economic prosperity of the countries along the route as well as overall regional economic cooperation, and strengthen exchanges and mutual learning between different civilizations.

(For the world) The initiative will enable China to strengthen its mutually beneficial cooperation with countries in Asia, Europe and Africa and the rest of the world, and help promote international peace and development. They are a great undertaking that will benefit people around the world.

The nature of the B&R Initiative

The B&R Initiative is the common undertaking of China and its Asian neighbors. It is not closed, but open and inclusive; it does not constitute a solo performed by China, but rather a chorus of all the countries along the route. It does not aim to replace existing re-

What is “the Belt and Road Initiative”?

gional cooperation mechanisms or initiatives, but promote integration and the complementary aspects of the development strategies of the countries along the route based on existing mechanisms. It is not an empty slogan, but a tangible practical measure bringing real benefits for these regions and countries. (Xi Jinping)

The B&R Initiative was proposed by China, but it has no monopoly. It does not represent a solo, but rather a symphony; not a one-man’s show, but group calisthenics. (Li Zhaoxing)

The B&R Initiative is an ambitious economic vision of the opening-up of and cooperation among the countries along the "Belt and Road."

It represents a way for win-win cooperation promoting common development and prosperity and a road towards peace and friendship by enhancing mutual understanding and trust, and strengthening all-round exchanges.

In terms of cooperation, the B&R Initiative features mutual respect and trust, mutual benefit and win-win cooperation, and mutual learning between civilizations.

The initiative is a great undertaking that will benefit people around the world. Jointly building the "Belt and Road" is in the fundamental interests of the international community. Reflecting the common ideals and pursuit of human society, it is a positive endeavor to seek new models of international cooperation and global governance, and will inject new positive energy into world peace and development.

The aims of the B&R Initiative

The B&R Initiative is committed to upholding global free trade and an open world economy.

The connectivity projects of the B&R Initiative will help align and coordinate the development strategies of the countries along the route, tap the region's full market potential, promote investment and consumption, create demand and job opportunities, enhance people-to-people cultural exchanges and mutual learning between different civilizations, and enable them to understand, trust and respect each other and live in harmony, peace and prosperity.

The initiative aims to build a community of shared interests, common future and responsibility featuring mutual political trust, economic integration and cultural inclusiveness.

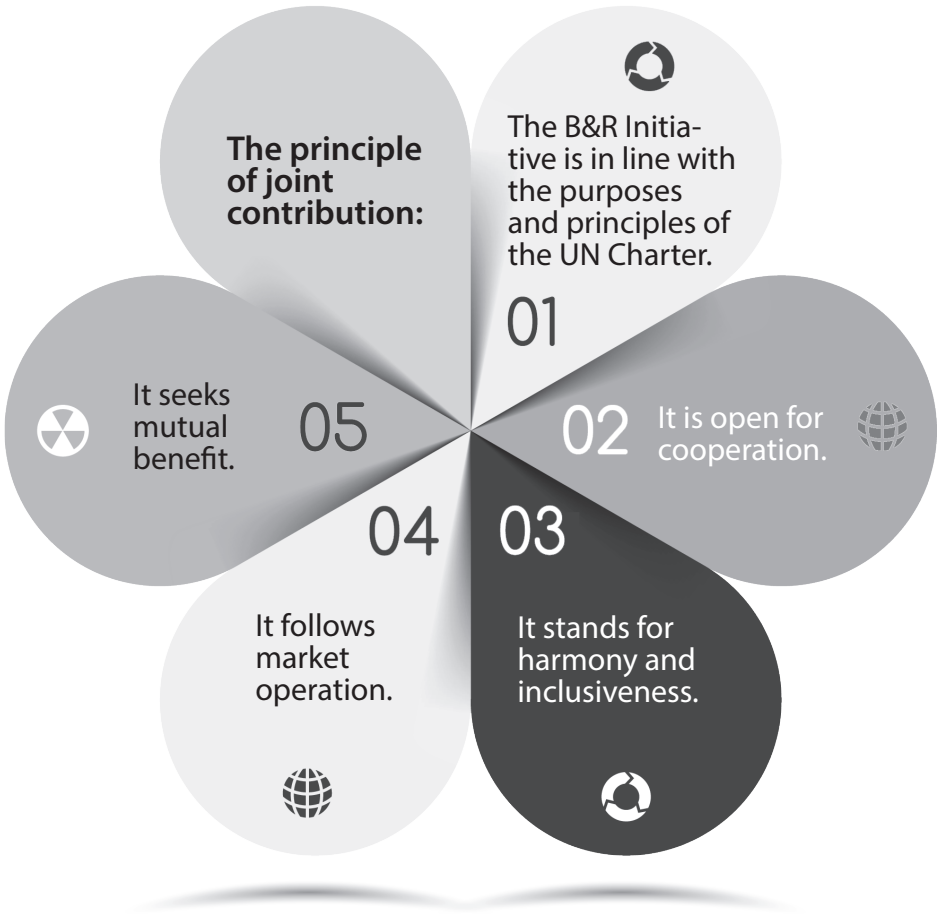
The goal of seeking mutual benefit and shared security: Countries along the "Belt and

Road" need to improve the region's infrastructure, and put in place a secure and efficient network of land, sea and air passages, lifting their connectivity to a higher level; further enhance trade and investment facilitation, establish a network of free trade areas of the highest standard, maintain closer economic ties, and deepen political trust; increase people-to-people cultural exchanges; encourage different civilizations to learn from each other and flourish together; and promote mutual understanding, peace and friendship among people of all countries.

The aim of the B&R Initiative is to build a community of shared interests for win-win cooperation. (Wang Yi)

General principles

Wide consultation, joint contribution and shared benefits.



Contributors

Countries involved in the B&R Initiative are based on, but not limited to those along the ancient Silk Road. All countries, as well as international and regional organizations, are welcome to participate, so achievements made through joint contribution will benefit wider areas.

Contents

The B&R Initiative is aimed at promoting the orderly and free flow of economic factors, highly efficient allocation of resources and deep integration of markets; encouraging countries along the route to achieve coordination of economic policies and carry out broader and more in-depth regional cooperation of higher standard; and jointly creating an open, inclusive and balanced regional economic cooperation structure benefitting all.

The B&R Initiative aims to promote the connectivity of countries on the Asian, European and African continents and their adjacent seas, establish and strengthen partnerships among the countries along the route, set up all-dimensional, multi-tiered and composite connectivity networks, and realize diversified, independent, balanced and sustainable development in these countries.

The "Belt and Road" run through the continents of Asia, Europe and Africa, connecting the vibrant East Asia economic circle at one end and the 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 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.

On land, the initiative will focus on jointly building a new Eurasian Land Bridge and developing China-Mongolia-Russia, China-Central Asia-West Asia and China-Indochina Peninsula economic corridors by taking advantage of international transport routes, relying on core cities along the route and using key economic industrial parks as cooperation platforms. At sea, the initiative will focus on jointly building smooth, secure and efficient transport routes connecting major sea ports along the way. The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor and the Bangladesh-China-India-Myanmar Economic Corridor are closely related to the B&R Initiative, and therefore require closer cooperation and greater progress.

The mainstream of the B&R Initiative is economic cooperation and people-to-people

cultural exchanges; priority is given to the connectivity and trade and investment facilitation. (Wang Yi)

Cooperation priorities

Countries along the "Belt and Road" have their own resource advantages and their economies are mutually complementary. Therefore, there is a great potential and space for cooperation. They should promote policy coordination, facilities connectivity, unimpeded trade, financial integration and people-to-people bonds as their five major goals, and strengthen cooperation in the following key areas: Enhancing policy coordination as an important guarantee for implementing the initiative; facilities connectivity as a priority in implementing the initiative; investment and trade cooperation as a major task in building the "Belt and Road;" financial integration as an important underpinning for the initiative; people-to-people bonds that provide public support for implementing the initiative.

Major measures

Efforts should be made to integrate the development strategies of the countries along the "Belt and Road."

China will take full advantage of the existing bilateral and multilateral cooperation mechanisms to push forward the building of the "Belt and Road" and to further promote regional cooperation. First, we should strengthen bilateral cooperation, and promote comprehensive development of bilateral relations through multi-level and multi-channel communications and consultation. Second, we should enhance the role of multilateral cooperation mechanisms. Third, we should continue to encourage the constructive role of some platforms including international forums and exhibitions at regional and sub-regional levels hosted by countries along the route.

The joint development of the "Belt and Road" should mainly be conducted through policy communication and coordination of objectives. It is a pluralistic and open process of cooperation which can be highly flexible and does not seek conformity.

The joint development of the "Belt and Road" should be conducted step by step through equal consultation. (Wang Yi)

Core keywords: "common" and "modernization"

The above contents contain around 1,500 words, and, on first examination, it seems

difficult to summarize what the B&R Initiative is all about in one sentence. Based on a further analysis, however, the author finds that two keywords are most important.

One is the word "common." Firstly, the word "common" appears many times. During the keynote speech delivered by President Xi at the 2015 annual conference of the Boao Forum for Asia, the word is mentioned 29 times, "community" 14 times, "common development" 6 times and "win-win" 8 times. In the document "Vision and Actions on Jointly Building Silk Road Economic Belt and 21st-Century Maritime Silk Road" jointly issued by the National Development and Reform Commission, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the Ministry of Commerce, the word "common" appears 25 times, "jointly building" 22 times and "shared benefits" 3 times. Secondly, the word "cooperation," implying a "common" approach, appears many times too. During the keynote Boao Forum speech by President Xi, the word "cooperation" is mentioned 34 times; in the document "Vision and Actions on Jointly Building Silk Road Economic Belt and 21st-Century Maritime Silk Road," it appears 136 times. So, from the perspective of text analysis alone, "common" is one of the core keywords for the B&R Initiative.

The other word is "modernization." Unlike the word "common" that appears directly, there is no direct use of "modernization" in the two documents mentioned above. However, the author has come to the conclusion that in essence "modernization" is also one of the core keywords of the B&R Initiative. The main reasons are: firstly, the word "development" is similar in meaning to "modernization," and that appears many times in the two documents. During President Xi's speech, for example, it is mentioned 56 times; in the document "Vision and Actions on Jointly Building Silk Road Economic Belt and 21st-Century Maritime Silk Road," it appears 35 times. Secondly, a careful analysis of the main contents of the B&R Initiative in the official documents shows that it's appropriate to summarize them with the word "modernization" or "development."

Therefore, the author believes that "common" and "modernization" are the core keywords of the B&R Initiative. Then, is there a term like "collaborative modernization?" What's it like? Those are the questions the author has been recently thinking about. Here, the author puts forward his initial answers for your comment.

What is “collaborative modernization”?

Let's first look at modernization as a term used in the past and its related theories. We choose some of the most influential theories as the focus of analysis, namely, the classical modernization theory, dependency theory, world system theory, ecological modernization theory and sustainable development theory.

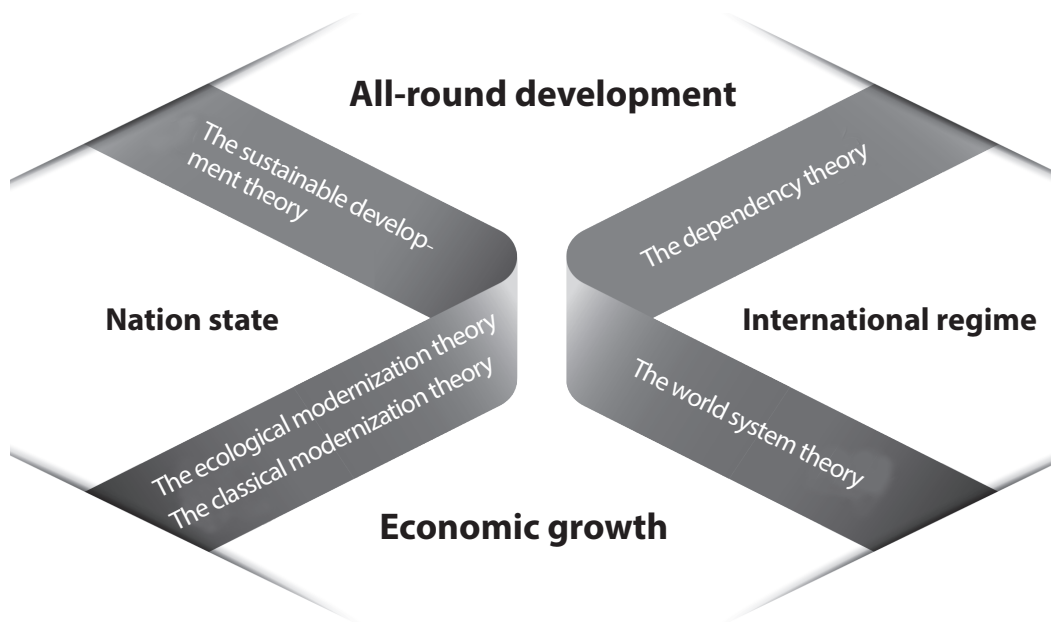
In order to briefly clarify them, we have designed a standard of classification, that is, the existing modernization theories can be classified in two categories -- nation state/international regime and economic growth/all-round development. The first category describes the main body of modernization, namely, who is in the process of modernization? Is it nation-state-oriented or international-regime-oriented? Nation-state-centered orientation means focusing on a nation state's internal development to promote its own interests; an international-regime-centered orientation refers to focusing on the common development of a number of countries in an international regime based on shared interests. The second category describes the goals of modernization, namely, why do we carry out modernization? Does it focus on economic growth or all-round development? All-round development includes not only development in the economic, political, cultural and social sectors, but coordinated development between human society and their ecological environment.

A preliminary collation and analysis of the above modernization theories shows that, firstly, the classical modernization theory is nation-state-oriented and focuses on economic growth; second, the dependency theory and world system theory are international-regime-oriented and also focus on economic growth; third, the ecological modernization theory and sustainable development theory focus on all-round development (mainly referring to the coordinated development of the economy and ecological environment), but are still nation-state-oriented, as illustrated below.

What is “collaborative modernization”?



It logically follows that modernization, which is international-regime-oriented and aims at all-round development, is called "collaborative modernization." It has the following basic features:



Goal orientation: for the common interests of humankind

Professor Cai Tuo has pointed out that, "in the world today, no matter which state or nation is involved, they cannot get rid of the influence or constraints of global issues. Any state or nation that disregards the common interests of humankind in global issues will not only do harm to itself, but also bring disaster to the whole human race." That is to say, there exist common interests of humankind and they are involved in global issues. Hence, common interests of humankind are manifestations of global interests. In the colonial era, the world powers sought to promote their own national interests rather than seeking benefits for all. Even worse, they tended to realize their own national interests at the sacrifice of those related to other countries. In the industrial civilization era, countries pursued a modernization process that only served national interests. The dependency theory and world system theory have made an in-depth and thorough analysis on this aspect.

In order to realize the common interests of humankind, collaborative modernization must adhere to the concept and principle of sustainable development. Countries participating in collaborative modernization must consider it as a specific way to implement the strategy of sustainable development. Why does the UN-advocated sustainable development strategy make little progress? The lack of specific ways might be a reason.

In order to realize the common interests of humankind, countries carrying out modernization can neither place the interests of enterprises/organizations above national interests, nor put national interests above global interests. They need to pursue consistency in national and global interests, and enterprises/organizations vis-a-vis national interests. They should try to realize their own national interests through contributions to the interests of enterprises/organizations, and achieve global interests through a contribution of national interests.

Players: international community

Who will promote collaborative modernization? Certainly not the nation state, but rather an international community comprising volunteering nation states; not the international regime itself, but an international community formed by nation states among which international regimes come into being.

We know that the formation of nation states was a major step in the history of humankind. Nation states have made great contributions to the progress of human society; however, as the players of modernization, they naturally put their own national interests first, sometimes even at the sacrifice of the interests of other countries. In the world today, there exist a number of global issues created in part by nation-state-oriented modernization pattern. What's more, facing such global issues, it's difficult for nation states to put forward effective solutions. A good example is the sustainable development theory proposed and advocated by the United Nations and other international organizations.

The settlement of global issues and the realization of the common interests of humankind objectively demand the player should be an international community rather than any specific nation state. The so-called international community refers to one created by volunteering nation states that consider they share common interests and one possessing an extensive and in-depth cooperation mechanism. An international community first comes into being among those countries with common interests. Driven by common interests, they carry out extensive and in-depth cooperation and further form a community of interests. Then, during the process of realizing their common interests, they build a community of responsibilities. Finally, based on the community of interests and responsibilities, a community of shared future comes into being.

Nation states are the prerequisite of the traditional modernization pattern. However, they cannot effectively create an international community without carrying out international cooperation for common development and prosperity. Actually, an international

community and its collaborative modernization reinforce and promote each other. The formation of an international community sees the participation of an increasing number of member countries, an extended scope and a higher degree of cooperation, and manifestations of achievements in cooperation, which are also the results of collaborative modernization. The formation, development and upgrading of an international community depend on the width and depth of collaborative modernization; its effective promotion also depends on the level and potential for building an international community.

Core principle: win-win cooperation

Cooperation means each partner offers resources and cooperates to work on something or finish some task together. Win-win results indicate that the partners can benefit corresponding to their resource input and efforts. The prerequisite of win-win results is achieving the anticipated benefits through cooperation; the essence of win-win results is the equality rule, that is, the partners benefit corresponding to what resources and efforts they contribute.

Cooperation is the basis of win-win results, while the latter is not necessarily the result of the first. Win-win cooperation is sustainable cooperation. It is cooperation in the real sense. Cooperation featuring a single winner or an imbalance in gains is "exploitation" in the name of "cooperation." It is classical opportunistic/utilitarian behavior.

As the core principle of collaborative modernization, win-win cooperation has the following main contents:

First, in order to realize the common interests of humankind, the players of modernization must carry out win-win cooperation.

Second, win-win cooperation is not limited to member countries of an international community. It also includes win-win cooperation between the international community or its members and the countries not belonging to it, and even that between humankind and nature.

Third, cooperation does not contradict competition, as long as the latter can promote cooperation, i.e. cooperation-oriented competition. In the classical modernization theory, competition prevails. Even though there exists cooperation, it is aimed at competition.

Fourth, win-win results can be achieved on the premise that the partners therein are allowed to win first. It's usually considered to be unrealistic and difficult to achieve win-win results, since all the cooperative sides wish to be the first to harvest the benefit. Therefore,

initiators of cooperation and partners therein with more resource input must let other partners win first. Only in this way can all cooperative sides finally achieve win-win results.

Fifth, win-win cooperation needs corresponding cultural support. The world's modernization process originating from Europe is largely a history of competition, which is closely related to the culture of individual rationalism in Western society. Today, we emphasize that win-win cooperation is the core principle of collaborative modernization, which needs to be based on the culture of relationship rationalism. Eastern culture, especially the Chinese culture, will make greater contribution in this regard.

Strategic focus: ecology, population and international cooperation

The classical modernization theory focuses on economy and politics, involves society and culture, and doesn't take ecology, population or international cooperation into consideration at all; the dependency theory and world system theory emphasize economy and international exchanges, and seldom consider other fields; the ecological modernization theory highlights ecology and economy; the sustainable development theory focuses on economy, society and ecology.

Determined by its goals and the attributes of its player, the strategic focus of collaborative modernization includes the ecological environment, population factors and international cooperation. Here, it does not ignore economic, political, social and cultural factors, but takes them as contents of international cooperation.

Modernization in the field of ecological environment requires inheritance and development of the ecological modernization theory on the one hand. We should effectively implement the strategy of sustainable development and take collaborative modernization as the specific path to carry out the strategy. On the other hand, we should strengthen international cooperation in ecological environment protection. Although much progress and some achievements have been made, they are far from reaching the desired goal.

Population factors and modernization: in the comparison between the modernization of Western Europe and East Asia, Professor Luo Rongqu argues they differ in time sequence of population growth and the beginning of modernization, that is, modernization started before high population growth in Western European countries while the contrary was the case in East Asian countries. Mr. Kang Rongping has pointed out (2006) that population base is an important factor to determine the pattern of modernization or which path is to be chosen. From the point of the world's modernization process, when this started in Western European countries in the 18th century, each country had tens of millions of peo-

What is “collaborative modernization”?

ple; when modernization started in countries including the United States, Japan and China in the 19th century, each had hundreds of millions of people; when China and India came to modernize in the late 20th century, both had more than one billion people. The classical modernization theory applies to countries with hundreds of millions of people, but is completely unsuitable for those with more than one billion. The modernization pattern of Europe and America promoted by the classical modernization theory depends on a large consumption of non-renewable resources. For example, the United States accounts for six percent of the world's population, but consumes a third of global resources. To follow this route is impractical for developing countries with huge populations individually or collectively - they cannot follow the old pattern of modernization adopted by Europe and America, but must open up a new road.

With international cooperation as the major means, collaborative modernization has different guiding principles from traditional modernization. First, international economic cooperation: countries seek common development and prosperity and drive the international economic order towards a fairer and more reasonable direction, rather than caring only for their own development without regard to others, or even sacrificing the interests of others. Second, international political cooperation: countries have mutual respect for their political systems and jointly cope with global issues. They don't impose their own political ideas and systems on others or shirk responsibility when dealing with global issues. Third, international social cooperation: International non-governmental organizations (INGOs) play a positive role in promoting the formation and development of global civil society and building a harmonious society around the world. Countries are not allowed to interfere in others' internal affairs or overthrow other governments through INGO activities. Fourth, international cultural cooperation: Countries show respect for cultural diversity and promote exchanges and mutual learning among various civilizations. Countries are not allowed to emphasize the superiority of their own culture and belittle or even destroy other civilizations.

In conclusion, by "collaborative modernization," we mean the modernization promoted by international communities of different types and levels. These communities, composed of several countries, aim to realize the common interests of humankind at various levels. With win-win cooperation as the core principle, collaborative modernization gives full consideration to factors of population and ecological environment and seeks sustainable development of human society through international cooperation.

Essence of the B&R Initiative: "Collaborative Modernization"

Through analysis of the official documents about the B&R Initiative, we find two core keywords: "common" and "modernization;" through logical analysis of modernization theories, we propose a new concept: "collaborative modernization." According to the official documents about the B&R Initiative and the main ideas and contents of "collaborative modernization," we believe the essence of the B&R Initiative is "collaborative modernization." It can at least be illustrated from the following five aspects:

Goal: realizing common interests

The classical modernization theory is nation-state-oriented and considers a country's own development and the maximization of its interests as the highest goal. The B&R Initiative breaks through this limitation and clearly puts forward the aim for "common interests." For example, "the initiative is aimed at expanding the common interests of Asian countries," "will bring real benefits for these regions and countries," "is a way for win-win cooperation that promotes common development and prosperity," "is a great undertaking that will benefit people around the world. Jointly building the 'Belt and Road' is in the fundamental interests of the world community and reflects the common ideals and pursuit of human societies," and etc.

The highest goal of "collaborative modernization" is to realize the common interests of humankind. It can be gradually achieved only after the highest goal is decomposed into targets in different fields and various geographical areas, forming a target system. The common interests of various geographical areas include: the common interests of Asia, the common interests of Eurasia, the common interests of Asia, Europe and Africa, and the common interests of the world; the common interests in different fields include those related to economy, the society, culture, security, and so on.

We believe that the existence of "common interests" is the objective foundation for

the B&R Initiative, the recognition of "common interests" is the key to turn the vision into action, and the realization of "common interests" is the ultimate goal.

The main players: community composed of a number of countries

The world's modernization process has once witnessed colonialism, imperialism and hegemony. Their core is "inequality," that is, only to consider the realization of a country's own interests without regard to others' and even at the sacrifice of others' interests. What leads to this kind of "inequality" lies in the theory of nation-state-oriented classical modernization.

The official documents about the B&R Initiative have made it clear that they are the common undertaking of China and its Asian neighbors. The initiative is not closed but open and inclusive; it does not constitute a solo performed by China, but rather a chorus of all the countries along the route. The countries concerned are based on, but not limited to the route of the ancient Silk Road. All countries, as well as international and regional organizations, are welcome to participate, so achievements made through joint contribution will benefit wider areas and more participants.

It indicates that the players engaged in building the "Belt and Road" is not China or some other country, but can be all countries in the world. That is to say, a community composed of more than one country is the main player, which is completely consistent with "collaborative modernization."

Which countries can form a community? It depends on their understanding and recognition of "common interests." As long as the countries reach consensus on their "common interests" in some connectivity project or some field of international cooperation, they can form a community that is the very player in building the "Belt and Road."

Therefore, it seems that the process of building the "Belt and Road" and the formation of communities of common interests of different types and levels are two sides of the same coin. Construction of the "Belt and Road" needs to be promoted by various communities of common interests, while the formation and expansion of various communities of common interests and the increase in their number is the very process of building the "Belt and Road."

Principles: "wide consultation, joint contribution and shared benefits" and "win-win cooperation"

The principle of the classical modernization theory is to win in competition. In order

to realize modernization, all countries rush to compete with each other; in order to gain victory for themselves and their allies, some countries don't even hesitate to resort to force and launch wars to maintain their own interests. In European history, big powers constantly started wars to fight for colonies that culminated in two world wars in the 20th century. These disasters caused by the competition in modernization seriously damaged the progress and development of human society.

The official documents about the B&R Initiative have clearly put forward the principles of "wide consultation, joint contribution and shared benefits," that is, jointly formulating guidelines and policies through consultation, jointly promoting project construction and jointly sharing construction achievements. It completely abandons the traditional principle of gaining victory in competition and the zero-sum mentality featuring a single winner. That is the very detailed manifestation and implementation of the core principle of "win-win cooperation" in "collaborative modernization," that is, realizing the common interests of all participants.

Chinese government documents about the B&R Initiative also illustrate the principle of joint contribution in detail: The initiative is in line with the purposes and principles of the UN Charter, open for cooperation, harmonious and inclusive. The initiative follows market operation and seeks mutual benefit. However, there is no detailed discussion in official documents on the principles of "wide consultation and shared benefits".

Contents: Connectivity is the mainstream

Industrialization is the mainstream of classical modernization. There are even some scholars who believe that modernization refers to industrialization.

The official documents about the B&R Initiative break through the traditional logic that modernization is industrialization. As for the contents of modernization, they focus on the importance of connectivity, including policy coordination, facilities connectivity, unimpeded trade, financial integration and people-to-people bonds.

"Collaborative modernization" is modernization promoted by more than one countries to realize their common interests. It objectively requires the community composed of several countries to achieve connectivity. "Collaborative modernization" is also modernization suited to the era when globalization and IT application are being continuously deepened. That provides strong material and technical support for meeting the demands of connectivity.

Therefore, connectivity is not only the mainstream of the building of the "Belt and Road," but the main content of "collaborative modernization."

Measures: International cooperation is the core

Classical modernization is largely achieved through competition or even wars. This means is corresponding to the Christian civilization of the West. By the early 20th century, only countries in Europe and North America had realized modernization. (Japan is an exception.) By the 1970s-80s, the Four Asian Tigers, as a whole, had achieved modernization. Their success was partly attributed to international cooperation.

Official documents about the B&R Initiative put great emphasis on "cooperation." The word "cooperation" appears 136 times, and more importantly, "cooperation" is not only the base but also the core. In order to realize common interests, we must cooperate; in order to form a community, we must cooperate; in order to jointly build the "Belt and Road" through consultation to meet the interests of all, we must cooperate; in order to achieve connectivity, still we must cooperate. It's entirely fair to say that without cooperation, there will be no "the Belt and Road Initiative."

Integrating the development strategies of the countries along the route is a major measure to build the "Belt and Road." What are the development strategies? They refer to the national strategies with modernization as the goal and content. How to integrate them? An "interface" needs to be identified! That "interface" is "collaborative modernization."

In essence, "collaborative modernization" is "cooperation modernization."

Appendix

The Charhar Institute

AN INVITATION LETTER ON CONDUCTING COLLABORATIVE RESEARCH ON THE “BELT AND ROAD” INITIATIVE - COLLABORATIVE MODERNIZATION

To whom it may concern,

The “Belt and Road” initiative proposed by the Chinese government recognizes the necessity of strengthening mutually beneficial cooperation between China, Eurasia and Africa, as well as other regions and countries. The initiative is an active exploration of new models for international cooperation and global governance and is believed to be a grand plan that will benefit millions of people across the globe.

As a non-governmental think tank specializing in diplomacy, foreign policy and international relations in China, The Charhar Institute has invited Chinese experts and scholars to carry out fundamental theoretical studies on the “Belt and Road” initiative over the past year. We have come up with a new concept, or theory called *Collaborative modernization*, which is as an essential characteristic underpinning the “Belt and Road” plan, whereas the “Belt and Road” initiative is an innovative way to achieve collaborative modernization.

Collaborative modernization refers to an international cooperation model where shared benefits are a common goal and modernization is promoted. The core principle of this model is the pursuit of common interests and mutually beneficially results through international cooperation.

Features of “Belt and Road” – Collaborative Modernization

Goal: Achieving common interests or targets

Main body: International community formed by a number of countries

Principle: “The Three Commons” and mutually beneficial

Content: In the political field: mutual respect and trust; In the economic field: inter-connection and inter-communication; In the cultural field: exchanges and learning from each other

Method: International cooperation as the core approach

We wish to collaborate with think tanks or research institutions around the world to conduct Collaborative research on the “Belt and Road” – Collaborative Modernization theory. Some preliminary proposals are thus put forth as:

1. **Studying The Charhar Institute’s research report, “*Collaborative modernization: the essence of ‘Belt and Road’ Initiative,*”** and agreeing with the main viewpoints of the work while showing definite interest in the theory’s collaborative research

2. **Holding discussions on the research design plan to reach consensus**

The plan, proposed by The Charhar Institute, includes the following main points:

(1) Research topic: *Research by China-(country)* (the “country” refers to the nationality of the collaborative think tank);

(2) General structure of the report

- The modernization process of China and the country concerned (a brief review, problem analysis and characteristic comparison on the modernization process of China and the country concerned);

- The interaction between China and the country concerned during the process of global modernization, including the two countries’ achievements in cooperation, the main existing problems, in addition to how likely they are to cooperate in the future;

- China’s “Belt and Road” initiative (purpose, content and meaning, etc.);

- The country’s international cooperation initiative, plan and policy (purpose, content and meaning, etc.);

- Future expectations: The Collaborative modernization of China and the country concerned (To integrate China's "Belt and Road" initiative and the country's international cooperation initiative, plan and policy. To put forward strategies and policy recommendations for international cooperation based on the two countries' interaction on modernization and the guidance of the "Collaborative modernization" theory);

(3) Research team

The Charhar Institute and the country's think tank build each other's own research team, which should include experts and scholars in the fields of modernization theory, diplomacy and international relations, as well as international cooperation;

(4) Collaborative approaches

Phase I: The two sides carry out research according to the agreed-upon research design plan and finish the research report draft;

Phase II: Holding seminars for comprehensive and in-depth discussions and exchanging views on the research report draft, achieving consensus on the revisions and improvement of the report, and designating someone to edit the revised report;

Phase III: Completing the editing of the revised report; collecting opinions from all members and finalizing the report;

Phase IV: Holding news conferences in China and the country concerned (the news conference in China will be in Chinese and English and the news conference in the country concerned will be in the country's own language and English). The organizers should vigorously publicize the research report;

(5) Responsibility for expenses

Each team is responsible for its own expenses, including the cost of gathering and organizing materials, expert service fees, travelling expenses, printing and binding costs, and administrative management;

The news conference organizer should cover any reception costs (including food, transportation and accommodations) and any staff costs from the collaborating team; the collaborating team is responsible for its own international flight expenses;

3. Execute the agreed-upon research design plan

Please kindly consider the above suggestions.

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THE CHARHAR INSTITUTE

The Charhar Institute was established in October 2009 with non-governmental funding as an independent think tank with no affiliation to any party. The founder of the Institute is Dr. Han Fangming, Vice Director of the Foreign Affairs Committee under the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, the country's top political advisory body. The Institute is headquartered at the Charhar Farm in Shangyi County, Hebei Province, and has an office in Beijing.

With its aim to be “forward-thinking, influential and collaborative,” Charhar is committed to becoming a non-governmental think tank of global influence in the fields of public diplomacy and peace studies.

Vision

When it was established, the Charhar Institute put forward the vision to become a globally influential and prestigious think tank specialized in diplomacy and international relations in the ensuing decade. It laid out two five-year plans in this regard:

Phase I (from 2010 to 2014): Be an early promotor of public diplomacy in China and become a global institution specializing in public diplomacy;

Phase II (from 2015 to 2020): Become an influential and prestigious think tank specializing in diplomacy and international relations.

Positioning

The Charhar Institute takes public diplomacy and peace issues regarding China and the surrounding countries as its main research domain. Its case analyses, investigations and archive studies provide forward-looking and innovative theories and allow the international community to hear voices from China's non-governmental sector.

Core products

- *Public Diplomacy Quarterly* (a public publication)

The first issue was published in 2010 and its regular publication has carried on successively for 23 issues.

- *Charhar Newsletter* (an internal electronic publication)

The first issue was published in 2011, and has been published at irregular intervals for 77 issues.

- *Charhar Report* (a public research report)

Eight reports have been issued.

- *Charhar Book Series on Public Diplomacy and Charhar Book Series on Diplomacy and International Relations*

Eight academic books have been published.

Brand activities

- **The Charhar Public Diplomacy Annual Conference**

The first conference was held in 2010, with five additional conferences held since.

- **The Charhar Roundtable Meeting**

The first meeting was held in 2011, with 34 such meetings held since.

- **International Forum on Public Diplomacy**

The first forum was held in 2012, with four additional forums held since.

- **The Charhar Peace Dialogue**

The first dialogue was held in 2013, with three such dialogues held since.

- **Local Government – University Forum on Public Diplomacy**

The first forum was held in 2014, with two such forums held since.

- **The Charhar Lecture**

It was established in 2015 and 27 lectures have so far been held.

Co-hosting activities, such as **the National Academic Forum for PhD Students in International Politics and International Relations** (four times); **the Sub-Forum on International Exchanges, the Jeju Forum** (four times); and the **International Seminar on Peace Studies**.

Research team

The Charhar Institute employs 28 senior researchers and 66 researchers.

Research centers: **Conflict and Reconciliation Research Center**

(Director: Han Fangming)

City Diplomacy Research Center (Director: Xiong Wei)

Korean Peninsula and Peace Research Center (Director: Zhang Zhongyi)

Organizational structure

International Consultant Committee (Honorary President: Zhao Qizheng and 14 committee members)

Public Diplomacy Quarterly Editorial Department (Director: Ke Yinbin, Vice Director: Zhao Kejin and Zhai Kun)

Secretariat (Secretary-General: Ke Yinbin, Vice Secretary-General: Zhang Guobin, Zhou Hucheng and 5 staff members)

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