

# Studies on the Belt and Road Initiative and the China—Mongolia—Russia Culture Industry Corridor

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**Abstract:** Culture is the concentrated reflection of national spirit and civilization, and is an important part of foreign exchanges since ancient times. Under the guidance of the Belt and Road Initiative, with the goal of reviving the Prairie Silk Road and Culture Industry Corridor suited to the China—Mongolia—Russia Economic Corridor, in accordance with the requirements in the *China, Mongolia and Russia Tripartite Cooperation Medium-term Road Map* approved by the three countries, government organs, enterprises and social organizations should make appropriate plans to develop cultural tourism in advance, highlight its characteristics, build the brand, build investment and financing platforms, new media platforms and carry out large-project-driving strategies, so that the value of cultural resources along the Prairie Silk Road can be fully tapped and resources can be integrated for industrial and economic advantages. The interconnection of China's Belt and Road Initiative, Mongolia's Prairie Road and Russia's Eurasian Economic Union will help establish closer cooperation between the three countries and form an arena of culture competition in Northeast Asia. This is of great practical significance and has promising prospects.

**Keywords:** The Belt and Road Initiative, Prairie Silk Road, culture industry, China—Mongolia—Russia Culture Industry Corridor

The proposal and implementation of the Belt and Road Initiative push the revival of the Prairie Silk Road, and the construction of a China-Mongolia-Russia Economic Corridor to the forefront of national strategy and regional cooperation in Northeast Asia. At present, mutual trust and reciprocity between

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China, Mongolia and Russia have reached a new height and China's economy has entered a new normal at medium-high growth speed. However, in constructing China-Mongolia-Russia Economic Corridor, we are facing new opportunities as well as challenges<sup>[1]</sup> like long-term infrastructure construction and investment return cycles, single and unbalanced trade structures, large gaps in standards of tariffs, laws and technologies, and international and domestic political instability. Therefore, to promote the construction of China-Mongolia-Russia Economic Corridor, we should focus on economic cooperation as well as people-to-people exchanges, especially cooperation in the cultural industry, which will add humanistic charm and new impetus to the construction of the economic corridor and promote harmony and stability in Northeast Asia.

## 1. Integration of China-Mongolia-Russia Economic and Culture Industry Corridor and the Belt and Road Initiative and Its Significance

The term Silk Road was first proposed by Ferdinand von Richthofen, a German geologist, in his book *China: The results of my travels and the studies based thereon* in 1877. In fact, the Silk Road is not only a transport hub but also a historic and cultural symbol, which has an abstract and general symbolic meaning with rich connotations. It is both an international trade route connecting Asia, Europe, even Africa, and a communication channel for eastern and western civilizations.

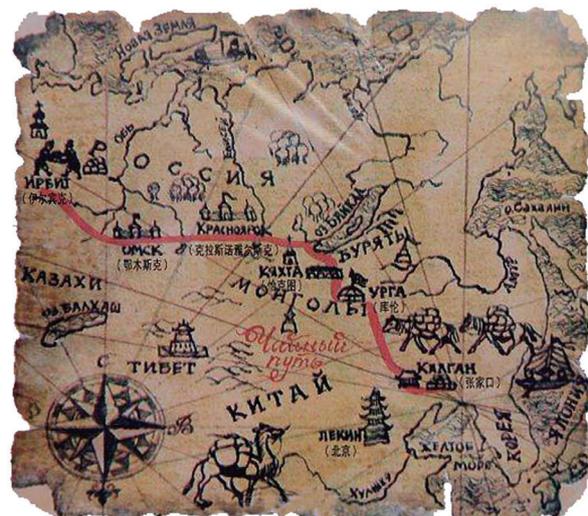
### 1.1 Zhang Ku Avenue Has the Same Historical Genes as the Traditional Silk Roads

During the long history of cultural exchanges between east and west, there were four Silk Roads: The first, which was the main Silk Road and is

normally referred to as the Silk Road, starts from Chang'an and Luoyang, capitals in the Han and Tang Dynasties, wanders through the Western Regions via the Hexi Corridor and extends as far as Western Asia and Europe; the second, the Prairie Silk Road, begins at Zhangjiakou in China and goes through Kulun (now Ulan Bator), Kiakhta, Moscow and reaches Europe, which is also known as Zhang Ku Avenue; the third, the Southern Silk Road, originates from Sichuan and Yunnan in China and reaches Southeast Asia and South Asia, which is historically known as Shu Hindu Road; the fourth is the Maritime Silk Road which starts from the southeast coast of China and reaches Southeast Asia, the Middle East and even the east coast of Africa.<sup>[2]</sup>

Research shows that two elements are indispensable in the formation of the Silk Road: A relatively stable demand for commodity exchange between countries and a relatively stable trade road in a certain period of time. There are two kinds of trade roads: One is naturally formed, as is said by Lu Xun, "Path comes into being only when thousands of people walk through." The other is the

*Zhang Ku Avenue has the same historical genes as the traditional Silk Roads.*



man-made road, which is generally led by official investment. The two kinds of roads are interrelated and interconvertible. The Silk Road has three major functions: trade and commerce, cultural transmission, and political channels.<sup>[3]</sup>

When we read the history of Zhang Ku Avenue, we find Zhang Ku Avenue has the same genes as the traditional Silk Road. Early in the Tang Dynasty, scattered commodity exchanges with the northern nomads began on Zhang Ku Avenue and continued until the Yuan Dynasty. It was a stable trade channel. The formation of this trade route owes much to the continuous improvement of the postal system in the Yuan, Ming and Qing Dynasties. Many infrastructure constructions made it possible for businessmen in the Central Plains to go into the desert. It also opened a more convenient path for the later Shanxi merchants to engage in foreign trade. Similar to the Silk Road which wanders through the Hexi Corridor and extends to Central Asia and Europe, Zhang Ku Avenue was a road for trade and cultural exchange as well as a political route that records war and peace between farming and nomadic people. It was a channel connecting Europe with Asia and its strong influence on the European capital market even attracted the attention of Karl Marx's.<sup>[4]</sup>In fact, Zhang Ku Avenue, flexible and burdened, integrated the functions of official roads and civil paths. In the vibrant wave of the global Industrial Revolution, it created a magnificent chapter in the history of China's foreign exchange in a most primitive way.

## 1.2 Status of the Prairie Silk Road in the Belt and Road Initiative

As one of the most typical components of the Silk Road in history, Zhang Ku Avenue highlights the vitality, inclusiveness and influence of Chinese civilization and heralded the significance of modern economic and cultural cooperation between China, Mongolia and Russia. The core area of the ancient

Zhang Ku Avenue lies in the vast prairies along the border of China and Mongolia. Nowadays, China, Mongolia and Russia all try to further broaden and deepen regional strategic cooperation based on traditional land transportation, and thus promote regional cooperation and development in the three countries as well as Northeast Asia.

### 1.2.1. History and Reality: The Construction of a Comprehensive Strategic Partnership between China, Mongolia and Russia.

Friendly cooperation between China, Mongolia and Russia enjoys a long history. In terms of both geopolitical and cultural factors, the friendly cooperation between the three countries conforms to the historical traditions, the interest of each side and the current world trends. Right after the founding of new China, Mongolia and the Soviet Union established formal diplomatic relations with China in 1949, being the first group of countries to do so. After the end of the cold war, with complete adjustment of Mongolia and Russia's foreign policy, relations between China, Mongolia and Russia achieved normalization and smooth development at the beginning of the 1990s. Since the coming of the new century, China-Mongolia relations have made steady progress in a positive direction. In 2003, China and Mongolia announced the establishment of a good-neighbor partnership of mutual trust. In 2011, the two countries announced the establishment of a strategic partnership. In 2013, China and Mongolia signed *Outline for Medium-and Long-Term Development of China-Mongolia Strategic Partnership*. In May 2014, China and Russia signed the *Joint Statement on New Stage of Comprehensive Strategic Partnership between the People's Republic of China and the Russian Federation*. In August 2014, during President Xi Jinping's visit to Mongolia, presidents of the two countries jointly signed and issued the *Joint Declaration on Establishment and Development of Comprehensive Strategic Partnership*

*between the People's Republic of China and Mongolia.* The issuance of these documents marks a new step in the development of strategic cooperation between China, Mongolia and Russia in an all-round way.

From the reality of the relations between the three countries, China, Mongolia and Russia have expanded the areas and levels of cooperation in line with their respective real interests. Since 1999, China has become Mongolia's largest trading partner and investor, and Russia's second largest trading partner following the EU. Commodities that are exported from Mongolia and Russia to China focus on energy, minerals, livestock, timber, metal and other raw materials and manufactured products, while commodities imported from China to Mongolia and Russia are mostly food and beverage, clothing, tobacco and alcohol, chemical and related industrial products and mechanical equipment. There is a strong economic complementarity between the three sides. In geopolitics, China, Mongolia and Russia are important neighbors, and the tripartite cooperation and development is conducive to the geopolitical stability of Northeast Asia. In culture, the three countries have similar historical and cultural genes. Since the end of the cold war, they have achieved mutual respect for cultural differences, reached the consensus of harmony without uniformity, and laid a solid foundation for the further development of heritage protection and cultural industry cooperation.

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The tripartite cooperation of China, Mongolia and Russia is conducive to the establishment of a multilateral cooperation mechanism in Northeast Asia. In 2014, the presidents of China and Russia paid an official visit to Mongolia, and they agreed that the establishment of a transit transport corridor would promote economic cooperation among the countries in the Asia-Pacific Region and create equality and mutual benefits in areas like trade, investment, transportation, agriculture, culture and

tourism. On July 9, 2015, the President of the Russia, V.Putin, the President of Mongolia, Ts.Elbgedorj, and the President of the People's Republic of China, Xi Jinping, met and approved the *China, Mongolia and Russia Tripartite Cooperation Medium-term Road Map*. They announced that, "They would take the development of the traditional friendly and mutually beneficial relations between the three countries as one of the strategic directions of their own foreign policy, and would further expand all-round cooperation based on the principles of mutual respect, equality and mutual assistance, good neighborliness and non-interference in each other's internal affairs." All these moves create a favorable environment for the revitalization of the Prairie Silk Road Economic Zone and the establishment of a multilateral economic, cultural and security cooperation mechanism in Northeast Asia.

1.2.2. Integration and Development: Interconnection of the Belt and Road Initiative, Mongolia's Prairie Road and Russia's Eurasian Economic Union

With the establishment of the comprehensive strategic partnership between China and Mongolia and the comprehensive strategic cooperation partnership between China and Russia, in November 2014, Mongolia, with its geographical advantage between China and Russia, proposed the Prairie Road program to revitalize its economy through enhancing transit transport and trade with Russia and China. And Russia believes that its Eurasian Economic Union can be connected with China's Silk Road Economic Belt.

In 2015, the three presidents met and signed the *China, Mongolia and Russia Tripartite Cooperation Medium-term Road Map*, which was a major decision made by the three countries facing the weakness of global economic recovery and domestic economic transformation in the post-financial crisis era. Historically, Zhang Ku Avenue, namely the

Prairie Silk Road, is the most suitable land transport channel between East and West, the formation of which is closely related to its natural geographical environment. The historical inevitability shows its unique advantages in today's the Belt and Road Initiative. The historical value and practical significance of the Prairie Silk Road is recognized by China, Mongolia and Russia, and the three countries intend to strengthen cooperation so that it can play a more important role in the trilateral economic cooperation and cultural exchanges in the future.

### 1.2.3. Sharing and Docking: Interflow of the Belt and Road Initiative, Mongolia's Prairie Road and Russia's Eurasian Economic Union

Many breakthroughs will be made in transport infrastructure construction. Cross-border transport is a must and driving force for bilateral economic and trade exchanges. Both China and Mongolia take cross-border infrastructure, especially traffic interconnection as breakthroughs of strategic development, and expect to further extend cross-border traffic systems through the construction of highways and electrical lines. In order to better play the role of Mongolia's land transport transfer station in the cooperation between the three countries, the three railway ministries in China, Mongolia and Russia reached a consensus through consultation and confirmed cooperation in railway transit transport: To improve the existing railway transport capacity, to set up tripartite transportation logistics companies, and actively upgrade the transport capacity of the railway which starts from Ulan-Ude, capital of the Republic of Buryat of the Russian federation, through Sukhbaatar in the east of Mongolia and Erenhot in Inner Mongolia of China and ultimately to Tianjin Port.

The complementarity of economy and trade areas is a vital point to strengthen cooperation. Although there is a big gap in the economic structure

and volume between China, Mongolia and Russia, they are complementary. First, the import and export cooperation of light industrial products is an important complementary area in trilateral cooperation. Light industry in Mongolia and Russia is not well-developed and they need to import a lot of daily necessities, but Mongolia and Russia boast large quantities of timber, coal and other resources, which are lacking and greatly needed for China's rapid economic growth. Second, China's abundant labor resources can make up for the labor shortage in the Far East of Mongolia and Russia, so there is also huge space for cooperation in labor output. Finally, cooperation will be expanded in areas like tourism and culture. Since Mongolia became a tourist destination country for Chinese citizens in 2006, China has become Mongolia's largest tourist source country and largest tourist destination country. In November 2014, the first China-Mongolia-Russia Tourism Joint Meeting was held in Hohhot. The three sides discussed China's Silk Road Economic Belt, Russia's Eurasian Railway and Mongolia's Prairie Road and decided to jointly promote the connection of archaeology and travel routes along the Prairie Silk Road in China, Mongolia and Russia.<sup>[6]</sup>

The promotion of folk cultural exchanges and cooperation is an important content of the strategic connection between the three countries. In 1994, the *Sino-Mongolian Cultural Cooperation Agreement* was signed and then cultural exchanges between the two countries became increasingly close. In 2006 and 2007, Year of Russian Tourism in China and Year of Chinese Tourism in Russia were held. In 2011, *Implementation Plan for Education Exchanges and Cooperation in 2011-2016 between the Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China and the Ministry of Education, Culture, and Science of Mongolia* was signed, marking the formation of a mechanism for education and culture exchanges and the deepening of language exchanges.

To strengthen cooperation in investment and finance from the fulcrum of the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) and The Silk Road Fund is an important support for the Belt and Road Initiative. The reason for the establishment of the AIIB is to address infrastructure needs in Asia, so it will greatly promote the interconnection of the China-Mongolia-Russia Economic Corridors and enhance China's cooperation with other Asian countries and regions.

## 2. Strategic Significance of the China—Mongolia—Russia Culture Industry Corridor

The China-Mongolia-Russia Culture Industry Corridor and Economic Corridor are equally important. An organic combination of the two will add new humanistic connotations and a driving force to the Economic Corridor and even the Belt and Road Initiative. Therefore, the China-Mongolia-Russia Culture Industry Corridor has profound significance and a promising future.

### 2.1 Providing a New Export Strategy and Humanistic Atmosphere for the Cooperation between China, Mongolia and Russia in Northeast Asia

Historically, the ancient Silk Road was the only route connecting China with Europe, but it was blocked when the Byzantine empire was established across Asia, Africa and Europe. It was not until the completion of the Eurasian Land Bridge in modern times that Europe and Asia were linked again. Since then, the traditional Silk Road has been replaced by the highly efficient railway.

Since the founding of new China, our trade with Far East of Russian and Europe mainly relies on the first and Second Eurasian Land Bridge. And the dependence on exports in the northeast and northwest makes the opening up of the central

and western regions like Hebei, Shanxi and Inner Mongolia lag behind. Geographically, the Prairie Silk Road is the most convenient channel linking the Bohai economic circle, central China and the coastal areas with Mongolia and Far East of Russian. Therefore, the new export strategy takes advantage of railways and highways to extend the Prairie Silk Road to Tianjin, Shandong and Liaoning and form a route connecting the Far East of Russian, UlamBhutto, Erenhot, Zhangjiakou, Beijing, and Tianjin. It coincides with the Coordinated Development Strategy of Beijing, Tianjin and Hebei, Rise of Central China Plan and the Maritime Silk Road. The connection between the Silk Road and the Maritime Silk Road, and the connection between the first and second Eurasian Continental Bridges form a new channel of economic and trade cooperation between China and the European Continent. The new channel will greatly promote economic and cultural trade cooperation between China, Mongolia, and Russia and give a strong impetus to the development of the Silk Road Economic Belt.

### 2.2 Tightening the Cultural and Emotional Connections between the Three Countries and Building a Safe and Harmonious International Environment in Northeast Asia

Different from the traditional Silk Road, the Southern Silk Road and the Maritime Silk Road, the Prairie Silk Road, addressing Tibetan Buddhism as the main emotional bonds, without interference from terrorism, separatism and extremism, has more advantage in international security. The construction of China-Mongolia-Russia Economic and Culture Industry Corridor based on the Prairie Silk Road can not only promote the in-depth strategic cooperation between China, Mongolia, and Russia in such areas as energy, trade, technology and military, but also enhance the emotional communication between the three countries through cultural exchanges and development of cultural industries, strengthen

political mutual trust and strategic cooperation partnerships, and help China and Russia make joint efforts to fight against terrorism in Xinjiang and Central Asia so as to nurture more stable cultural ties and safe and harmonious international environment in Northeast Asia.

### 2.3 Forming New Growth Point for Trilateral Economic and Trade Cooperation by Coordinating with Mongolia's Revitalizing the Economy and Russia's Developing the Far East

The China-Mongolia-Russia Economic and Culture Industry Corridor connects the Beijing-Tianjin-Hebei Region, the Bohai Sea region, Shanxi and Inner Mongolia with Mongolia and Russia and forms a new opening and developing frontier. It will coordinate with Mongolia's Prairie Road and Russia's Far East strategy and is conducive for the three countries to play their respective advantages and optimize their economic structure and regional layout. And it will form new growth points for the China-Mongolia-Russia Economic Corridor through the development of cultural industry, add new meaning and impetus for economic and trade cooperation between the three countries, and reverse the long-term economic and trade cooperation pattern which focuses mainly on energy, timber and other primary products and food, light industry, machinery and other industrial products. It is in line with the national interests of the three countries and is conducive to achieving mutual benefits

## 3. Analysis of the Development Opportunities and Challenges Faced by the China—Mongolia—Russia Economic and Culture Industry Corridor

As the *China, Mongolia and Russia Tripartite Cooperation Medium-term Road Map* has been signed, and with the center of the world's economy

transferring from the Atlantic coast to the Asia Pacific Regions, the time for the three countries to co-construct the Economic Corridor has become increasingly mature. A consensus has been reached and the project is under implementation. Exchanges and cooperation in culture, education, science and technology have been put on the agenda. In recent years, various bilateral and multilateral activities in cultural media, education, science and technology have been held among the three countries, creating a good atmosphere for the construction of the China-Mongolia-Russia Culture Industry Corridor. However, as the ancient Prairie Silk Road has been in decline for nearly a hundred years, the revitalization work is faced with challenges like sparse population along the route, inadequacy of cultural heritage protection, lack of transnational talents and weak infrastructure, and problems like how to develop cultural industry with regional features through scientific and effective project planning and resource integration, and what proper orientation the three countries should have in the international cooperation.

### 3.1 Opportunities in the Construction of the China-Mongolia-Russia Culture Industry Corridor

#### 3.1.1 Collaborative Development of the Beijing-Tianjin-Hebei Region: A New Opportunity for Combination of the Maritime Silk Road and the Prairie Silk Road

Xi Jinping proposed to promote collaborative development of the Beijing-Tianjin-Hebei Region as he presided over a meeting on the development of Hebei in Beidaihe in August 2013. The region has a large population and developed economy and is located in the connection zone of the Maritime Silk Road and the Prairie Silk Road. With the issuance of the *Collaborative Development Plan for the Beijing-Tianjin-Hebei Region*, we will take construction of city groups in this region as the carrier, optimization of the regional division of labor and industrial layout

as the key, spatial planning of resource elements as the main line, long-term institutional mechanism as the starting point, and upgrade of industrial structure and optimization of innovation-driven development as the focus of cooperation to make efforts to achieve complementary advantages, positive interactions and win-win development. It is conducive to promoting the development of the Bohai Rim and inland economic transformation. It will become an economic growth pole connecting the Maritime Silk Road and the Prairie Silk Road and will provide new impetus for revitalization of the Prairie Silk Road.

Zhangjiakou city, as the starting point of Zhang Ku Avenue, is the hub of traffic, trade and cultural exchanges between the Beijing-Tianjin-Hebei Region and the Prairie Silk Road. In accordance with the general requirements of *Collaborative Development of the Beijing-Tianjin-Hebei Region*, Zhangjiakou city is making greater efforts to protect the environment, highlight cultural characteristics and innovate the developing model to build a green barrier and leisure base for the Collaborative Development of the Beijing-Tianjin-Hebei Region. It will play an important role as a platform and node city for interconnection and communications for the Beijing-Tianjin-Hebei Region and the Prairie Silk Road.

### 3.1.2 The Belt and Road Initiative: A New Opportunity for Revival of the Prairie Silk Road Economic Belt

On March 28, 2015, the National Development and Reform Commission, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the Ministry of Commerce jointly issued *Vision and Actions on Jointly Building the Silk Road Economic Belt and the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road*. Attention has been paid to 18 provinces and autonomous regions, among which 6 provinces are in Northwest of China, including Xinjiang, Shaanxi, Gansu, Ningxia, Qinghai and Inner Mongolia. It proposed that Inner Mongolia should play its

geographical advantage of connecting Mongolia with Russia in the construction of The Belt and Road Initiative. To get through the channel for coal transport and China-Europe goods and materials transport as soon as possible, the Hohhot Railway Bureau plans to build new railway mileage of 1,332 km this year, accounting for 1/6 of the national new railway mileage. Meanwhile, Inner Mongolia's first new high-speed rail (passenger dedicated line) from Zhangjiakou to Hohhot has started, connecting with the Beijing-Zhangjiakou Railway Passenger Dedicated Line. It is an important channel linking inland China with Mongolia and Russia in The Belt and Road Initiative.

Hebei, as a coastal province, has significantly lower competitiveness than Liaoning, Tianjin and Shandong in the Bohai Economic Rim due to lack of coastline and port construction. Although Hebei province is not included in the plan of the Belt and Road Initiative, Zhangjiakou city in Hebei Province is the node connecting the Beijing-Tianjin-Hebei Region, Inner Mongolia, Mongolia and Russia. The role can not be ignored and it has a favorable development prospect.

From an international perspective, after more than two years of preparation, the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) initiated by China, has been formally established and provides favorable investment terms for the development of the China-Mongolia-Russia Culture Industry Corridor. The founding members of the AIIB amounted to 57, including Mongolia and Russia, with total share capital of 100 billion US dollars. The operation of AIIB will accelerate the pace of infrastructure construction in Asia and provide a convenient channel for investment and financing for China, Mongolia and Russia in terms of cultural resources development, infrastructure and cultural exchanges.

### 3.1.3 The Winter Olympics Will Be Jointly Held

### in Beijing and Zhangjiakou: A Catalyst for Revival of the Prairie Silk Road

Zhangjiakou and Beijing are pushed by The Winter Olympics to the forefront of the national strategy. Faced with the current adjustment of economy structure and the pressure of digesting excess capacity, hosting the Winter Olympics will accelerate the collaborative development of ecological and cultural tourism and green industries among the Beijing-Tianjin-Hebei Region and the surrounding areas, bring more supporting policies, market resources, and development prospects to this area, greatly improve the cultural and sports facilities, and promote the development of regional integration to a new level, thus catalyzing the revival of the Prairie Silk Road. As the hosts of The Winter Olympics, Beijing and Zhangjiakou have gotten the attention from the world and attracted a great quantity of domestic and foreign capital. It is of great significance for the development of Zhangjiakou, Hebei, Shanxi, Inner Mongolia and other related areas along the China-Mongolia-Russia Culture Industry Corridor. During the National People's Political Congress and Chinese people's Political Consultative Conference in 2015, Deputy Party Secretary and Mayor of Zhangjiakou, Hou Liang, revealed that the Winter Olympics is

of great benefit to Zhangjiakou's opening-up and investment promotion. More than 200 projects with investment funds of over one billion yuan have been signed and investors are domestic leading enterprises. At present, Zhangjiakou has suspended new investment projects and only some targeted new projects will be accepted when the overall plan for the Olympics is announced.<sup>[7]</sup> Great-leap-forward types of infrastructure construction will inevitably have a negative impact on the local ecological environment. The absorption of investment should be in the premise of protecting the ecological environment. Only in this way can we achieve green development.

### 3.2 Problems and Challenges in the Construction of the China-Mongolia-Russia Culture Industry Corridor

Joint efforts of the three countries' are required to construct the China-Mongolia-Russia Culture Industry Corridor. Efforts should be made in co-construction and sharing in areas like regulation arrangements, resources development, investment and cooperation. However, although they have the will of cooperation and development, and despite the rich, distinctive and potential cultural and related resources along the Corridor, the three countries still have to face many problems and challenges in the

*The Winter Olympics will be jointly held in Beijing and Zhangjiakou.*



construction of the Corridor due to some historical and realistic factors.

### 3.2.1 The Large Gap in Resource and Level of Development among the Three Countries Is the Constraint on Development of Cultural Markets

A cultural industry is established when an economic society develops to a certain stage. The formation of large markets needs a certain economic base and consuming population. However, there is a large gap in resources and levels of development among the three countries. Because of unbalanced economic structure, the influence of international financial crisis and western sanctions, Russia faced a grim situation of negative economic growth and high inflation in 2015, so it is difficult for Russia to play its due role in the China-Mongolia-Russia Culture Industry Corridor. Owing to its heavy dependence on mineral resources, and the sharp fall of commodity prices in recent years, Mongolia has also fallen into a trough in their economy. In general, despite the rich resources, Mongolia and Russia are faced with economic downturns, financial difficulties and slow development of culture industry, which is in sharp contrast with China's medium-high speed economic growth, full fiscal, foreign exchange accumulation and rapid culture industry development. Except for the large population and consumer market in the Beijing-Tianjin-Hebei Region, the vast regions along the route from China's Inner Mongolia to Mongolia and the Russian Far East are sparsely populated and the market is limited. Thus it can be seen that if China cannot rely on its own comparative advantage, problems in the construction of the China-Mongolia-Russia Culture Industry Corridor like investment and market demands are difficult to solve and it is impossible to achieve a high starting point and sustainable development.

### 3.2.2 Urgent Need for the Protection of the Seriously-Damaged Cultural Heritage

The development of cultural industry can not be separated from historic traditions and the cultural heritage. Cultural heritage protection is a government behavior and can not rely on the market. With the rapid advance of urbanization, the cultural industry has become the focus for cities along the Prairie Silk Road. However, as time passes, many important monuments along the road have become dilapidated, even facing the danger of disappearing. At present, protection of cultural monuments in the three countries is not satisfactory. In Russia, many cultural monuments are not protected and cultural heritage damage is serious. Relevant information shows that 30% of cultural monuments in Russia are in critical condition. According to experts, as many as 200 cultural monuments permanently disappear in Russia every year. In 2011, the then President Medvedev said that in the recent 10 years, Russia had lost about 2,500 monuments, many of which were destroyed and damaged and some were illegally occupied. Many cultural monuments in vast and sparsely-populated Mongolia are exposed to wind and sand and are faced with extinction.<sup>[8]</sup> In recent years, China has made greater efforts to protect its cultural heritage. The Yuan Capital Site in Inner Mongolia has been conserved and restored. The government of Zhangjiakou has carried out repairing and protecting Jimingyi, the ancient city wall in Xuanhua, the ancient city of Weixian County, and the Baozili ancient block. Heritage conservation needs a lot of money and scientific means and methods. Zhangjiakou, Ulanqabu, Xilin Gol Meng are rich in cultural resources. Because of lack of scientific planning and capital investment, some cultural sites, Kaiyang Castle for example, have become dilapidated while other cultural heritage sites are facing the problem of over-commercializing. We must pay special attention to this.

### 3.2.3 Great Difficulties in Resource Integration



*the ancient city wall in Xuanhua*

and Branding due to Scattered Resources and Lack of Planning

Cultural resource development is a process of protection, inheritance and branding. Resource integration tends to form 1 + 1 > 2 force and fission effect. China-Mongolia-Russia Culture Industry Corridor is rich in cultural resources, such as prairie culture, Great Wall culture, Tibetan Buddhist Culture, ice and snow culture and wine culture, all with the potential value of being promoted to the world. The Three Ancestors Cultures (Three ancestors refers to Yellow Empire, Yan Empire and Chi You.), folk culture, hot spring culture, and post station culture have formed a preliminary regional influence and market foundation. Overall, the cultural resources along the China-Mongolia-Russia Culture Industry Corridor present characteristics with rich connotations, distinctive levels and diverse morphology, which offer great potential for

future exploitation. But the cultural resources and cultural industry along the Corridor are completely fragmented and scattered throughout various countries and administrative regions. The lack of overall image positioning and policies of joint development and protection leads to each country and region going its own way when promoting cultural tourism. It is difficult to form a band to create competitive products and brands. Both the market-oriented operation mechanism and supporting service capabilities need to be improved. Take the ice and snow culture industry as an example. Chongli's skiing leisure industry has taken shape because of its extensive ice and snow resources. Its customers, mostly from developed areas like Beijing, are high-end consumers with certain social status and influence and are important consumers of cultural tourism. However, many ski resorts at present are faced with problems like lack of cultural

elements with regional characteristics, insufficient combination and integration with cultural creativity, tourism and leisure industries, lack of cooperation vision for jointly branding and plans to extend to the north of Shanxi, Inner Mongolia, Mongolia and Russia. At the same time, as Zhang Ku Avenue and the Prairie Silk Road have been deserted for a long time, few people are aware of this area, except for those who live in the cities along the road. Therefore, we are still facing many problems and challenges in integrating resources, reviving and building the brand of the Prairie Silk Road, and the timely construction of the China-Mongolia-Russia Culture Industry Corridor.

#### 3.2.4 Shortage of Talents in Industrial Development and Creative Management

Talents full of creative ideas and management abilities are the core resources of industrial development. The China-Mongolia-Russia Culture Industry Corridor is a cross-cultural and large-scale cultural industry project. Its practitioners must have a good command of arts, economics, management, history and other disciplines and should be familiar with the economy, culture, history, nationalities and languages of the related countries.

There are great differences in economic and social development between China, Mongolia and Russia, and Mongolia's modern economic development is lagging behind in particular. Their understanding of cultural industry is still at the conceptual level and the development of their cultural industry is still in the initial stage due to shortage of talents in cultural management, creation, science and technology, research and development, communications and marketing. There are few high-level universities in the cities along the corridor, so it cannot meet the needs of personnel training. Besides, both the quality and quantity of the current practitioners cannot fully adapt to the changes in the development of cultural industry. Talent shortage

has become a bottleneck restricting the development of the China-Mongolia-Russia Cultural Industry Corridor. In addition, there are many high-level intangible cultural heritage resources along the road. Successors of intangible cultural heritage undertake the mission of display and dissemination on the one hand, and the cultural mission of inheritance and innovation on the other hand. In the era of modern communications, many young people think little of intangible cultural heritage, and these traditional arts are facing severe tests in inheritance and innovation due to shortage of inheritors.

#### 3.2.5 Poor Cultural Tourism Infrastructure and Insufficient Service Industry in the Surrounding Areas

Eating, living, travel, touring, shopping and entertainment are six major elements in the development of cultural tourism, and the main consumption links of leisure experience. Compared to other world-famous tourist cities, the tourist cities along the Corridor lag far behind. In terms of local foods, Zhangjiakou cuisine, Mongolian dishes and Russia's western foods are unique dishes in China, Mongolia and Russia, but these dishes have not yet formed their own local characteristics and brands, and very few people know about Zhangjiakou cuisine. In terms of traffic, interaction network systems of aviation, railways and highways have not formed and there are no bus lines to the major tourist attractions, no tourist hubs, no souvenirs with local characteristics. Urban cultural and entertainment venues and projects are relatively scarce. Since Zhangjiakou successfully bid for the Olympics, the problem of insufficient tourist reception capacity began to appear. Places like Chongli County and Weixian County cannot meet the basic needs of accommodations for tourists in the tourist season, which has seriously hampered the healthy development of the local tourism industry. The service industry, design and packaging industry are

also lagging. Financial policies regarding cultural industries are incomplete and incubator space for cultural creativity and platforms for investment and financing are underdeveloped. Due to lack of funds, many good ideas and projects are difficult to implement. It is difficult for many good scripts, works of art, and other cultural goods to gain access to markets due to the lack of intermediary service agencies, supply and demand information.

#### 4. Thoughts and Suggestions on Promoting the China-Mongolia-Russia Culture Industry Corridor

Historically, the Prairie Silk Road made indelible contributions to the economic and cultural exchanges between China, Mongolia and Russia. How time flies! With today's globalization of world economy, when revitalizing the Prairie Silk Road and constructing the China-Mongolia-Russia Culture Industry Corridor, we should emulate our ancestors' pioneering spirit and keep pace with the times to endow the Silk Road with new cultural value. We should adhere to the Five Development Concepts; innovation, coordination, green development, opening up and sharing. And work toward the goal of building a cultural Prairie Silk Road, a beautiful Prairie Silk Road, and a harmonious Prairie Silk Road following the requirements in *China, Mongolia and Russia Tripartite Cooperation Medium-term Road Map* to develop cultural tourism in advance, highlight its characteristics, build the brand, build investment and financing platforms and new media platforms and carry out large-project driving strategies with the joint efforts of government, enterprises, and social organizations. In the initial stage, China should rely on its own advantages in capital, resources and talents to strengthen planning and policy coordination between the three countries to create a favorable policy environment and

investment environment, improve infrastructure construction, cultivate multinational talents with creative ideas and management capabilities, play a greater role in project planning and atmosphere creating, and actively promote the development of the China-Mongolia-Russia Culture Industry Corridor from a high starting point, add cultural charm and internal force for the construction of the Economic Corridor and harmonious and stable development in Northeast Asia.

4.1 Planning and Leading: Seizing Development Opportunities and Making Plans for the China-Mongolia-Russia Culture Industry Corridor

Going through China, Mongolia and Russia, the Corridor is a veritable concept stock and potential share under the background of the Belt and the Road Initiative. At the same time, Beijing and Zhangjiakou are jointly preparing for the 2022 Winter Olympic Games, and the *Collaborative Development Plan for Beijing-Tianjin-Hebei Region* has been issued. All these favorable policies usher in a golden period for development. To take full advantage of the opportunities, we should first make plans and actively seek policy support and project docking among the three countries. We should promote the rapid development of the China-Mongolia-Russia Culture Industry Corridor from a high starting point and avoid blind and extensive mode of development. Although each of the three countries should make plans for the development of culture industry, it is recommended that *Plans for the China-Mongolia-Russia Culture Industry Corridor* should be jointly made by the three countries as soon as possible to make clear the role of each country and each region, optimize the industrial layout according to their own cultural resources, and plan future development ideas from the strategic level. Through value assessment and potential evaluation of cultural resources, we can figure out the industrial categories to be developed, promoted and fostered

in order to form a distinctive and arranged industrial development pattern, and avoid homogeneous cut-throat competition.

#### 4.2 Cultural Tourism in Advance: Creating Atmosphere for the Cultural Industry Corridor

In the initial construction stage of the China-Mongolia-Russia Culture Industry Corridor, the reasons for adopting the strategy of Cultural Tourism in Advance are as follows. First, cultural tourism enjoys the advantage of less investment and quick returns. Second, cultural tourism can promote more face-to-face emotional exchanges between people from the three countries and enhance mutual understanding, people-to-people bonds and create atmosphere for the corridor. In November 2014, the first China-Mongolia-Russia Tourism Joint Meeting was held in Hohhot city. It was determined that the countries involved should make special plans and annual action plans based on boosting connections of archaeological and tourist routes along the China-Mongolia-Russia Prairie Silk Road, to guide the tourism market, especially China's ecological tourism, self-driving tours and business travel, and promote the rapid development of cultural tourism in China, Mongolia and Russia. We should improve the tourism infrastructure, take railways and highways as the main shaft to accelerate the construction of city tourist hubs, and open two-way tourist trains and coaches between railway stations, airports, cities and famous attractions in the tourist season. We should build traffic sign recognition system covering the main urban areas, state roads and main attractions to provide convenient instructions for self-driving tourists. We should standardize service quality of catering and hotel, actively introduce fast hotels to encourage the construction of suburban scenic farmhouses and ecologic hotels to improve tourism reception capacity. We should encourage large cultural industry and investment groups at home and abroad to enter and give full play to the

leading role of large projects.

#### 4.3 Highlighting the Characteristics: Development and Integration of Prairie Culture, Mongolian Culture and Tibetan Buddhist Culture

In the long history of civilization, nomads like the Xiongnu, Rouran, Xianbei, Turk, Tangut, Tuoba, Khitan, and Mongolian have been living in the vast grassland areas of East Asia. Mongolians unified this region and converted to Tibetan Buddhism and then formed the characteristic folk culture with Mongolians as the main body with prairie culture and Tibetan Buddhist culture its core, with respect for ecology, openness and inclusiveness, honesty and faith as the main values. To build the China-Mongolia-Russia Culture Industry Corridor, we should both emphasize the prairie cultural traditions and highlight these characteristics. Through measures like careful study and arrangement, planning and guiding, policy promotion, creative transformation, platform building, tourist route connection, and media promotion, we can excavate cultural forms suitable for contemporary values, integrate Mongolian folk culture, prairie culture, and Tibetan Buddhist culture, which are scattered throughout China's Inner Mongolia and Hebei, Mongolia and Buryat Republic of Russia, and promote an organic integration with prairie commerce and trade culture and ice and snow culture. These actions can highlight the characteristics of resources and development focus on the one hand, and are in line with the concerns of the three governments and people on the other. We should promote the formation of cultural exchange patterns and consumer markets with Mongolians as the main body and the broad participation of all ethnic groups.

#### 4.4 Co-constructing and Sharing: Focus on Development of Characteristic Cultural Industries Oriented by Benefits for People

As cultural ties between the three countries, the

China-Mongolia-Russia Culture Industry Corridor is in line with the interests of the three countries and also connects the feelings and well-being of the people of the three countries. Guided by the principles of co-construction and sharing, people-to-people bonds, we should focus on the development of cultural industries oriented by benefits for people, share benefits of cultural industries with the people along the Corridor, enhance their sense of gain and win wide public support for its smooth development. First, according to these developing ideas, we should adhere to the value orientation of benefits for people in planning industry development and focus on the development of special cultural industries which are popular and interactive by means of government support, public finance and social participation. Second, we should start projects like handicrafts with Mongolian and other ethnic characteristics, performances, foods, sports, festival activities and agriculture and animal husbandry, tourism and leisure. We should, based on the strategy of Cultural Tourism in Advance, build a number of livelihood projects like local standardized farmhouses, prairie (family) hotels with less investment and quick returns and strive in 3 to 5 years. Third, under the support of government planning, taxation and financial policies, the three countries should jointly hold cultural and artistic activities themed prairie Silk Road, Tibetan Buddhist art, and Mongolian folk culture, promote literary and artistic creation in the Silk Road and ethnic culture traditions, hold art festivals and exhibitions, commemorative activities themed in the Sino-Mongolian anti-Japanese Martyrs Memorial Forest, and share the fruits of cultural friendship, and promote trilateral multi-channel cultural exchanges.

#### 4.5 International Vision: Strengthening Cultural Exchanges and Creating an International Brand

With the expansion of economic globalization, people are more tolerant to heterogeneous culture,

and continuously improve their understanding and interest in learning to enhance spiritual life. Promoting in-depth cooperation between China, Mongolia and Russia is the inevitable trend of future development of multilateral relations in Northeast Asia. To strengthen cultural exchanges and enhance cooperation and sharing, we need to further expand the international vision, promote in-depth excavation of the history, culture, and common resources in the three countries, and strengthen cultural and education exchanges and cooperation. We should focus on creating an international brand for the prairie Silk Road, build brand strategy systems, promote the construction of the China-Mongolia-Russia Cultural Industry Corridor, increase awareness, enhance cohesion and centripetal force, establish good images for the cities around, and promote brand building for the related enterprises. Based on the first cooperation between China and Mongolia in the field of cultural relics protection in 2007, in which the Chinese government contributed 6,000,000 yuan for the renovation of the Bogd Khan Palace Museum in Mongolia, the three countries should jointly establish a cultural relics protection and restoration fund to promote trilateral cooperation and exchanges in this field. Meanwhile, we need to encourage multi-level and diversified exchanges and cooperation in the aspect of exchange students, cultural investigation and business travel to promote cultural exchanges and brand building support. Enterprises should be considered as the subjects in international cooperation. We need to further enhance Mongolia's Nadamu Fair, and Snow Culture Festivals, Zhangbei Prairie Music Festival, Wei County Folk Festivals and other influential festivals and exhibitions, and extend these festivals to Mongolia and Russia, and hold a China-Mongolia-Russia Nadamu Fair, International Art Festivals, Lake Baikal International Lake Forums, Cultural Industry International Forums

to strengthen exchanges and cooperation between the prairie culture and the snowculture with Europe, North America, South America, Australia and other regions to make it more international, competitive and influential.

#### 4.6 Building Investment and Financing Platforms: Diversifying Funding Channels for the Development of the Cultural Industry

Since finance is the blood of modern economic development, without financial support, the construction of the China-Mongolia-Russia Culture Industry Corridor from a high starting point is merely a daydream. To innovate the mechanism of culture and financial systems, we should make comprehensive use of indirect finance like public finance investment, bank credit, and trust plans, cultural industry investment funds, private investment and funds from Hong Kong, Macao and Taiwan and other foreign funds to promote investment diversification and vitalize the development of the industry. In the initial stage, thanks to the Belt and the Road Initiative, we can grasp the policy opportunities to found an Investment Fund for the China-Mongolia-Russia Culture Industry Corridor relying on China's capital advantage, and carry out culture and financial cooperation with banks, and encourage local financial institutions along the line to establish professional institutions to serve the cultural industry and launch credit products and services for the development of the cultural industry. Through the establishment of the cultural industry investment and financing platform, we can increase direct and indirect financing for cultural enterprises. At the same time, we should actively seek support from AIIB and the Silk Road Fund to support heritage protection projects, integrate and enhance a number of cultural industry livelihood projects with market prospects, influential film, television projects and media platform projects.

#### 4.7 Talent Support: Introducing and Training Creative Talents and Take Advantage of the Market

Training, selecting and employing high-quality talents in cultural industries are needed urgently for the construction of the China-Mongolia-Russia Culture Industry Corridor from a high starting point. In order to solve the problem of talent shortage in the three countries, we should actively make talent-demand plans for industrial development, train professionals in tourism services, radio and television, literature and art, cultural industry research, creative planning, marketing, investment and financing, especially creative planning talents, compound talents and international talents who are good at operation and management. We should set up a talent training fund and actively explore cooperation between universities in the Beijing-Tianjin-Hebei Region, Mongolia and Russia, sponsor some universities with mature research on creative industries, select outstanding students to take part in the government-funded training to attract high-quality talents to participate in the construction of the Cultural Industry Corridor. Under proper circumstances, we should establish a China-Mongolia-Russia Culture Industry Corridor Association to actively undertake the government commissioned personnel training, cultural research, project planning, cultural exchanges, project promotion, industry self-regulation, and market supervision and play the positive role of market mechanism in the selection and use of personnel.

#### 4.8 Constructing Communications Networks: Playing the Role of New Media, Innovating the Promoting and Marketing Model of Product

In the information age, modern media plays an important role in the China-Mongolia-Russia Culture Industry Corridor. We need to build stereo transmission networks with official websites and e-commerce platforms, new media as the main carrier, combine with major project planning and

implementation of international brand building, use new media as marketing channels to integrate the relevant high-quality resources, publish and disseminate information about the construction of the Cultural Corridor, promote brand products through the Internet, Weibo and WeChat in the form of pictures, text and video, online and offline. We need to innovate cultural content and product marketing models, make high quality feature films on rich cultural heritage and cultural charm, hold thematic cultural activities, such as photography competitions, sports events, exhibitions, festivals and activities, to enhance the influence and exposure of

the cultural corridor, creating international brands.

For a long time, diverse cultural factors along the Prairie Silk Road in the north of China have mixed together and formed a hybrid culture.<sup>[9]</sup> The culture along the China-Mongolia-Russia Culture Industry Corridor is characterized by extroversion, diversification and commercialization, has a rich connotation. It is believed that with the strategic rise of the Silk Road Economic Belt, its market vitality and industrial development impetus will break through the barrier of history and reality and reproduce the splendor.

(Translator: Wu Lingwei; Editor: Xiong Xianwei)

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