

# Xi Jinping's Important Exposition on the Silk Road Spirit: Formation Logic, Connotation Implication and Promotion Path

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## Abstract

**General Secretary Xi Jinping's important discourse on the Silk Road spirit is an important part of Xi Jinping's Socialist Thought with Chinese Characteristics for the New Era. The thesis on the Silk Road spirit is proposed by General Secretary Xi Jinping, who profoundly grasps the overall layout of the Belt and Road Initiative and the common values of the people along the route, and has a deep theoretical origin and a strong practical foundation. The main elements of the Silk Road spirit include: peace and cooperation, openness and inclusiveness, mutual learning and mutual benefit. In the new era, we should promote the Silk Road spirit by telling a good Chinese story, enhancing international discourse, and doing practical work on the ground.**

## Keywords

**Silk Road spirit; Formation logic; Connotation implication; Promotion path.**

## 1. Introduction

In 2013, respectively in Kazakhstan and Indonesia, General Secretary Xi Jinping proposed the building of the Silk Road Economic Belt and the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road - collectively known as the Belt and Road Initiative. The Silk Road spirit proposed by General Secretary Xi Jinping based on the Belt and Road Initiative has attracted much attention. In 2014, General Secretary Xi Jinping, in his speech at the opening ceremony of the Sixth Ministerial Conference of the Sino-Arab Cooperation Forum, first outlined the connotation of the Silk Road spirit - promoting mutual appreciation of civilizations, respecting the choice of path, insisting on mutual benefit, and advocating dialogue and peace[1]. This is also the first time that China's top leaders have proposed and elaborated on the Silk Road spirit. In 2017, General Secretary Xi Jinping attended the opening ceremony of the Belt and Road International Cooperation Summit Forum and delivered a keynote speech, pointing out that "the ancient Silk Road stretched for thousands of miles and lasted for a thousand years, accumulating the Silk Road spirit of peace and cooperation, openness and inclusiveness, mutual learning and mutual benefit. This is the valuable heritage of human civilization[2]. In his speech, President Xi Jinping also elaborated on the four aspects of the Silk Road spirit. In 2021, the year of the centenary of the founding of the Communist Party of China, the Party Central Committee approved the first batch of great spirits to be included in the spiritual spectrum of the Communist Party of China, and the Silk Road spirit was listed[3]. From proposing the Belt and Road Initiative, to condensing and summarizing the Silk Road spirit, to incorporating the Silk Road spirit into the spiritual spectrum of the Chinese Communists, the Party Central Committee, with Comrade Xi Jinping as the core, has always stood at the forefront of the times and combined the new context and historical conditions to carry forward the Silk Road spirit in the inheritance.

In November 2021, at the third symposium on the building of the Belt and Road Initiative, General Secretary Xi Jinping emphasized that in the past eight years, under the strong leadership of the Party Central Committee, the construction of the Belt and Road has made solid and heavy achievements[4]. Based on the latest discussion on the Belt and Road Initiative and

the Silk Road spirit by General Secretary Xi Jinping, and based on the existing research results, this paper intends to further discuss the Silk Road spirit. This will deepen the study of the Silk Road spirit and the study of the spiritual genealogy of the Chinese Communists, as well as further promote the study of Xi Jinping's diplomatic thought.

## **2. The Logic of the Formation of General Secretary Xi Jinping's Important Exposition on the Silk Road Spirit**

### **2.1. Theoretical Origins**

#### **2.1.1. Marx's Understanding of the Laws of Human Social Development and the Manifestation of the Concept of "Real Community"**

Marx revealed that the development of human history follows the law of moving from isolation to close connection, and with the continuous development of productive forces, the depth and breadth of world interaction gradually expands, while the increasingly profound world interaction in turn affects the degree of development of productive forces in each country. Thus, the contradictory movements of productive forces and relations of production from within different regions and peoples are inevitably affected by the contradictory movements of productive forces and relations of production on a worldwide scale. On the basis of his grasp of the laws of human social development, Marx clearly pointed out that the future society is a harmonious society, a highly coordinated and unified "association of free men", and that the essence of man is a real community of men[5]. In a "real community", each person is an individual rather than a representative of a class, so that such a union is free from narrow class constraints and not only meets the requirements of all individuals for comprehensive development but also provides space and conditions for each member of the community to develop freely. Combining the basic principles of Marxism with the Belt and Road Initiative and condensing and summarizing the Silk Road spirit is the great vision of Chinese leaders based on reality and looking at the future, and is also the fruit of Marxism Chineseization.

#### **2.1.2. Rich in Traditional Chinese Ethical Thought**

The idea of "harmony" has been advocated in China since ancient times, and "harmony is precious" is an important moral principle in the practice of social or national interaction. The thought of "harmony" has been commonly applied to many aspects of China's political, economic, cultural, social and ecological construction, and has become an important ethical thought in the governance of the Communist Party of China. The Belt and Road Initiative covers a wide range of areas, and due to the differences in various aspects such as the political system of each country, the choice of development path and the degree of development, conflicts and frictions are inevitable in the development process. "Do not do unto others as you would have them do unto you" is a Chinese household saying, which contains an important principle that our country values in moral cultivation in dealing with interpersonal relationships, namely the way of loyalty and forgiveness[6]. In the interactions between people and people, and between countries and countries, the inner experience and thoughts and feelings of the other party should be taken into account in order to achieve the goal of reaching out to oneself and others. It is also the starting point and destination of the Belt and Road Initiative. It is beneficial for all countries along the Silk Road to uphold the way of loyalty and forgiveness in dealing with each other and in national exchanges.

#### **2.1.3. Inheritance and Development of the Chinese Spirit**

The spirit of China is deeply rooted in the great journey of modern China's rejuvenation and has a strong national cohesion and cultural appeal, and is an important symbol of the soft power of Chinese society. If a country does not have a spirit to support it, it must have no soul and connotation. The national spirit and the spirit of the times "are interlinked and interact with

each other, and together they constitute the core content of the national spirit"[7]. As an important part of the spirit of the times, the Silk Road spirit is an inheritance and development of the Chinese spirit. The Silk Road spirit advocates that the Belt and Road Initiative should adhere to the principle of equality regardless of the size of countries, rich or poor, strong or weak. Economically, countries along the Belt and Road should be open and inclusive as well as mutually beneficial; politically, they should be peaceful and cooperative and respect each other; culturally, they should respect diversity and learn from each other. The Silk Road spirit, which is the core concept of the Belt and Road, will certainly accompany the entire historical process of the Belt and Road Initiative. The Silk Road spirit, which advocates peace-loving and common development, is an important content and embodiment of the Chinese national spirit, an inheritance and promotion of the national spirit, an enrichment and development of the national spirit, and an injection of new elements of the times into the great Chinese spirit.

## **2.2. Realistic Basis**

### **2.2.1. The Way to Respond to the Change of Global Governance System**

Today's world is full of many risks and challenges, and global problems of various forms are emerging, which have a huge negative impact on the survival and development of human society. With the deepening of globalization, countries around the world have formed an intertwined network of relationships, and a series of transnational issues have become more and more prominent in the context of globalization, which are difficult to solve by the power of one country alone. On the one hand, the existing global governance system is dominated by developed countries, so it is difficult for developing countries to reach consensus with these developed countries on issues of concern. On the other hand, the existing global governance system is fragmented because global governance needs to be coordinated[8]. In the face of endless global problems and global governance deficits, China has creatively put forward the Belt and Road Initiative, as well as summarizes the Silk Road spirit, injects vitality into global governance and contributes to the construction of a just and orderly global governance system.

### **2.2.2. The Purpose and Mission of China's Peace Diplomacy**

Since the recent times, China has struggled against the capitalist powers for nearly a century to achieve national independence and people's liberation, so the people of all ethnic groups under the leadership of the Communist Party of China are more aware of the hard-won nature of peace and the importance of peace to national development and world stability. In the early days of the founding of the People's Republic of China, the Chinese government put forward the "Five Principles of Peaceful Co-existence", which was accepted by many countries and became a common guideline for international relations. Since the reform and opening up, China has been upholding the concept of "peaceful development", and its development speed and construction achievements in the past 40 years have been remarkable to the world, which were made possible by the hard work of the Chinese people and their peaceful co-existence with the people of the world. From the Belt and Road Initiative to the Silk Road spirit, China's efforts to create a more peaceful environment are in line with the world's historical development. The Silk Road spirit seeks to build a more peaceful world, which is not only in line with the interests of the Chinese people, but also in line with the overall interests of human society.

### **2.2.3. The Inherent Requirements of the Belt and Road Initiative**

The Belt and Road Initiative runs through the Eurasian continent, connecting the Asia-Pacific economic circle in the east and the European economic circle in the west, covering many political, economic, diplomatic and security fields[9]. Through large-scale economic cooperation, the Belt and Road Initiative can achieve regional economic prosperity and development, as well as spread the Chinese civilization and values to all corners of the world. The implementation of the Belt and Road Initiative fully reflects the necessity and closeness of

the connection. But everything will undergo its own changes and transformations when it reaches a certain stage of development in history. The development of the Belt and Road from ancient times to the present, with the changing times, there have been prosperity and troughs. The building of the Belt and Road in the new era requires the value guidance of the Silk Road spirit. Based on peaceful cooperation, the countries along the Silk Road can enhance mutual trust through economic and cultural cooperation and exchange. In the long run, it will help expand the recognition of the Belt and Road Initiative internationally and bring stability and sustainability to the subsequent development. It will not only enable the construction of the Silk Road to achieve long-term development, but also enable the Silk Road spirit to be passed on.

### **3. The Main Content of General Secretary Xi Jinping's important Exposition on the Silk Road Spirit**

#### **3.1. Peace and Cooperation**

The ancient Silk Road is a road of peace and cooperation created by the Chinese people and the people of the countries along the Silk Road. When Zhang Qian made a mission to the West, he used camels and goodwill; when Zheng He made seven trips to the West, he relied on treasure ships and friendship[10]. People along the Silk Road used goodwill and friendship to build a bridge of peace and cooperation between different peoples. The Chinese people have been a peace-loving nation since ancient times, whether it is the "harmony and difference" proposed by ancient sages or the "peaceful cooperation" advocated by the trend of the times, all reflecting the idea and concept of "harmony". The concept of "harmony" has already seeped into the bloodline of the Chinese nation and the Chinese people. Therefore, it is inevitable to advocate peaceful cooperation, and since the Chinese people and the people along the Silk Road share the common goal of pursuing social welfare, the concept of peaceful cooperation also injects positive energy into the peaceful development of the world.

#### **3.2. Openness and Inclusiveness**

Openness and inclusiveness are the most significant features of the Silk Road spirit and the guarantee of achieving the convergence of diversity. The Silk Road spans the birthplaces of four major human civilizations and includes different cultural forms such as Buddhism, Hinduism, Christianity, Islam and Confucianism. In this kind of interaction with different cultural forms, various civilization forms appreciate and tolerate each other, in order to write a magnificent chapter of openness and tolerance among different civilizations together. In the process of the Belt and Road Initiative, China and other countries, nationalities and races with significant differences in politics, ethnicity, culture and religion have abandoned all kinds of differences, insisted on seeking common ground while reserving differences, openness and inclusiveness, and finally achieved common development. History has repeatedly proven that sticking to the status quo inevitably leads to decline and conflict. Only by respecting each other, tolerating each other, transcending differences in systems and development levels, and adhering to the concept of openness and inclusiveness can we achieve long-term development.

#### **3.3. Mutual Learning**

Marxist materialistic dialectics tells us that things in the objective world are in a variety of contradictions, and there are contradictions in everything and at all times[11]. The world situation is changing rapidly, and in order to stand at the forefront of the times, it is not enough to rely on our own ability alone. We need to learn from the successful political reform and fruitful economic development experience of other countries, as well as excellent culture and advanced technology to make up for our own development deficiencies. Under the Belt and Road Initiative, countries along the route can also absorb, learn and study the new ideas,

thoughts and strategies of China's effective governance. As one of the cores of the Silk Road spirit, the idea of mutual learning also proves that China wants to join hands with the rest of the world to create a harmonious social environment for coexistence and to work for the development, transformation and governance of countries around the world for the benefit of the human homeland.

### **3.4. Mutual Benefit**

The Silk Road trade is based on the mutual needs of the countries and nationalities along the route to communicate with each other in their production and living practices, and it is because of this need that people cross the mountains and seas to carry out commercial trade and promote the mutual benefit of the common development and progress of all countries and peoples. The Belt and Road Initiative is not only a strategic concept proposed by China for its own development, but also the common interests of the countries along the route, which will ultimately benefit all countries along the route and along the coast. China has introduced many supporting policies and measures around the Belt and Road Initiative to turn the vision into reality. These measures and initiatives demonstrate the Belt and Road should be jointly built through consultation to meet the interests of all, showing that the Belt and Road is a bridge to achieve a win-win situation for all countries along the route, reflecting the idea of mutual benefit and the idea of "taking into account the interests of the world"[12].

## **4. How To Promote the Silk Road Spirit in the New Era**

### **4.1. Tell a Good Chinese Story**

The spirit of the Silk Road unites the excellent Chinese traditional culture, therefore, in inheriting and promoting the spirit of the Silk Road should activate its cultural genes. In the new context of the times, to promote the Silk Road spirit, we must tell the Chinese story well. It is necessary to infect and impress people with the positive energy brought by the Silk Road spirit for thousands of years, as well as to cultivate the sentiment and aesthetics of the people. We should inherit the red classics of the Silk Road, promote the culture of the Silk Road, create the Silk Road classics of the new era, enrich people's good life, and get close to people's production and life in a popular and easy-to-understand way. In the face of the Silk Road heritage, we should deepen our thinking and enhance our consciousness of protection; in the face of the heritage that cannot be reproduced, we still need to think deeply and learn lessons. It is necessary to extract the content of the Silk Road story with universal value, for the attention of contemporary society and for modern humanity to share.

The spiritual wealth created by generations of Silk Road people is a valuable treasure of our country and has great significance. To learn and promote the spirit of the Silk Road, we must respect historical facts, tell the Chinese story, summarize the scientific connotation of the Silk Road spirit reflecting different historical periods, and excavate from the story the spirit that has a guiding effect on then, now and in the future, so that it can become a permanent historical and spiritual treasure of the Chinese nation. Under the new historical conditions, to inherit and carry forward the Silk Road spirit, it is necessary to pay attention to the main body of college students, to guide and lead them to establish a scientific world view, outlook on life and values, to establish correct ideals and beliefs, and to contribute to the Belt and Road Initiative and the promotion of the Silk Road spirit.

### **4.2. Enhance the International Discourse**

The inheritance and promotion of the Silk Road spirit likewise requires the strengthening of narrative capacity in the overseas sphere, most notably to enhance China's discourse. The first thing that should be done is to improve foreign people's recognition of Chinese culture and to analyze their psychological and cultural background in the process of foreign cultural

communication, instead of blindly pursuing foreign communication in terms of communication area and audience coverage. Secondly, in order to achieve the "reversal" of the discourse, it is not only necessary to "bring in" but also to "go out" actively. We should re-examine China's cultural resources, extract local concepts and theoretical categories that can speak the spirit of the Silk Road, form a unique Chinese Silk Road cultural language system, and boldly go out to fundamentally reverse the parasitic status of cultural discourse and make it possible to counterbalance the Silk Road cultural discourse. It is important to have an understanding of the ways and means of spreading the Silk Road spirit to the outside world and the audience for spreading it, and to form an effective communication.

China's Internet industry has grown at a rapid pace in recent years, leading the world in specific areas. Many countries along the Belt and Road are developing countries with Internet, and China can take advantage of this advantage to form a driving force for these regions. We can make full use of the Internet, smart phones and other new media to encourage a group of competitive enterprises to participate in the development of cultural and creative industries in the Silk Road countries[13], and through the presentation of art works, vividly reflect the docking of China's capital assistance, technical assistance and local development needs, as well as the changes in the lives of local people.

### 4.3. Do Practical Work on the Ground

China has been physically seeking to share the development of countries along the Silk Road since President Xi Jinping proposed the Belt and Road Initiative. Promoting the Silk Road spirit requires the CPC to do practical work on the ground. The Communist Party of China must constantly improve the Party's construction, improve the Party's level of governance, consider the new situation and new problems, and correctly handle the opportunities and challenges on pursuing the Belt and Road Initiative. To promote the Silk Road spirit, we need to strengthen the organic unity of government guidance and subject participation. The Silk Road trade has a diverse group of participants and a variety of trade patterns. Only the organic combination of the government and the participants can stimulate the lasting power to the Belt and Road Initiative. Only when the Belt and Road is built better and the people of the countries and regions along the route live happier can the practical significance of the Silk Road spirit be manifested. To promote the spirit of the Silk Road, China should set an example and play a "normative force" to further win the trust and respect of the countries along the Silk Road. To make the Belt and Road Initiative go farther and to make the Silk Road spirit pass on from generation to generation, China must always be down-to-earth and work hard, grasp development opportunities, and let the Silk Road spirit take on new strength under the new conditions of the times.

## 5. Conclusion

The Silk Road spirit is the crystallization of Chinese wisdom and the innovation of traditional Chinese culture in the new era. Promoting the Silk Road spirit plays an inestimable role in the implementation of the Belt and Road Initiative and even in the construction of the community of human destiny. From the opening of the ancient Silk Road to the implementation and construction of the contemporary Belt and Road Initiative, it is inseparable from the heritage and protection of generations of Silk Road people. The Belt and Road Initiative is a protracted, heavy and arduous undertaking, and we must persistently pursue the Belt and Road Initiative and pass on it. The Silk Road spirit is also a great facilitator for building a community of human destiny, and the principle of "discussing, building and sharing together" allows the Silk Road spirit to flourish in practice. In the new era, we should be guided by General Secretary Xi Jinping's important statement on the Silk Road spirit, recognize the important spiritual leadership of the Silk Road spirit for the Belt and Road Initiative from a strategic and global

perspective, and engage in peaceful dialogue with Silk Road countries in respecting differences, so as to promote the construction of a community of human destiny with mutual benefits of Silk Road countries.

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