

Promoting Northeast Asian Regional Infrastructure Construction via “One Belt, One Road”

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While visiting Central and Southeast Asian countries in September and October 2013, President Xi Jinping raised in succession strategic concepts for jointly constructing the “Silk Road Economic Belt” and “21st-Century Maritime Silk Road”. The raising of these concepts greatly drew the attention of international society, and the nations concerned voiced positive agreement. In March 2015 China officially announced the “Vision and Actions on Jointly Building the Silk Road Economic Belt and 21st-Century Maritime Silk Road”.

Viewed from the perspective of the situation for China’s economic development, the development of the central and western areas and the inland regions as against that of the coastal regions is extremely unbalanced. By way of the “One Belt, One Road” concept they will strengthen the reciprocal traffic between China’s interior western region and each country, promote the trade and economic development of the western region, and not only enable the balancing of development between the east and the west, but through the strengthening of intraregional infrastructure construction and the interplay of each nation’s economic trade they will advance coordination of the development initiatives of each nation, promote reciprocal investment, and thereby strengthen the cultural understanding of each nation, promote human exchange, and enable support of a cultural and economic exchange platform for friendly relations among the peoples of all the countries. At the same time, within each nation’s process for economic cooperation and interchange, they will support efforts for global economic development, provide an engine, and extend China’s influence in the global economy.

There is a close relationship between the Northeast Asian region and “One Belt, One Road”, and the prospect of first-rate cooperation is widening. In the Northeast Asian region there are not only developed countries such as Japan and the ROK, but also developing countries such as China and Mongolia. In addition, the Northeast Asian region is one extremely abundant in energy resources, and via the strengthening of cooperation among the nations it is possible for them to mutually complement their advantageous points. Currently, each country has adopted a relatively positive attitude toward “One Belt, One Road”, and are hoping for a coordination of the relevant nations’ strategies and the “One Belt, One Road” strategy. For example, there is the “Eurasia Initiative” raised by the ROK, the “Steppe Road” raised by Mongolia, Russia’s “Eurasian Economic Union”, and the China–Mongolia–Russia Economic Corridor which is being emphasized, among others; the Japanese government and firms are also paying attention to the “One Belt, One Road” concept. Furthermore, the nations of Northeast Asia are currently actively promoting regional economic cooperation. For example, the ROK has already signed an FTA with China, China, Japan and the ROK are proceeding with FTA negotiations, and Mongolia and Japan have signed an EPA, and it cannot be ignored that in this region they are creating the conditions for the cooperation of each nation. Consequently, the space for cooperation in the Northeast Asian region will have a great extent in the future.

In terms of the current situation, for the Northeast Asian region it is possible to strengthen cooperation in the area of infrastructure. First, via the establishment of a cooperative mechanism for reciprocal traffic, they will promote the coordination of like business actors and the cooperation of enterprises. Second, they

will create a three-dimensional transportation network, expedite the construction of major routes for road and rail in the border areas and for multimodal transportation, and construct a complete air network. Third, they will construct major energy routes, speedily advance the construction of oil and gas pipelines, and open up the construction of cross-border electricity networks. Fourth, they will construct high-speed lines for information, and advancing the spread of the internet, will make information exchange yet easier and the cost yet lower.

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