How German Experts Understand and Comment on China's “Belt and Road” Initiative

ZHANG Lihua
Tsinghua University, Beijing, China

There are some positive and negative comments of the German experts from think tanks in terms of understanding and commenting on “The Belt and Road” Initiative (BRI). They analyzed the risks and difficulty of “The Belt and Road” projects and thus proposed some suggestions on avoiding risks involved in the implementation of “The Belt and Road”.

Keywords: the experts of German think tanks, “The Belt and Road” Initiative, comments

In 2013, after President Xi Jinping proposed “The Belt and Road” Initiative (BRI), the trade, investment, and engineering construction projects between China and European countries, especially Central and Eastern European countries, have quickly advanced and started to achieve results. “The Belt and Road” Initiative has gradually attracted the attention of European countries’ think tanks, and many articles or reports on “The Belt and Road” have been published ever since.

This paper mainly researches the articles and reports on “The Belt and Road” Initiative published by the experts of German think tanks from 2014 to 2018. Since Germany is one of the core members of European Union, “In 2016, Germany had become China’s largest outward foreign direct investment country in Europe, in 2017, China once again became the largest trading partner of Germany” (Qi, 2018). Studying German think tanks’ understanding and comments of “The Belt and Road” Initiative is of great significance, and it has important reference value for Chinese enterprises to carry out the implementation of “The Belt and Road” projects in Germany and other EU countries.

The author found 20 articles and reports on “The Belt and Road” published by seven German think tanks online resources from January 2014 to February 2018, extracted from the well-known German think tanks, such as Konrad Adenauer Stiftung, the German Development Institute, German Institute for International and Security Affairs (Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik, SWP), the Institute of World Economics at the University of Kiel, Mercator Institute for China Studies (MERICS), Schiller Institute, and website of the German Institute of Global and Area Studies (GIGA) Institute of Asian Studies. All these articles have been published after 2015, as two in 2015, two in 2016, five in 2017, and 11 in 2018, respectively. The tendency shows that the experts of German think tanks have been paying ascending attention to “The Belt and Road Initiative” (BRI) since 2015.

From the articles, reports, and interviews published and analyzed by the author, German experts had both positive and negative comments on “The Belt and Road” as well as in terms of their understanding. And indeed some experts also analyzed the risks and difficulties of BRI and proposed some suggestions on risk hedging.

ZHANG Lihua, Ph.D., Professor, Director of Research Center for China-Europe Relations, Tsinghua University, Beijing, China.
Positive Comments

The Strategic Concept of “The Belt and Road” is Conductive to Building a New World Peace Order

LaRouche, the founder of Schiller Institute, pointed out, when she was interviewed by many media outlets about China’s “Belt and Road”, that the New Silk Road would bring more civilization achievements to the mankind, together with modern technology and that it was the beginning of a new era of human development. In addition, the New Silk Road would bring a more humane trait to the present, while people would not use war to resolve conflicts any more, but achieve common goals through closer communication. The New Silk Road would be helpful to build a new order of world peace (Qi, 2018).

Schüler-Zhou from the GIGA Institute of Asian Studies believed that “The Belt and Road” Initiative was one of the new signs of globalization. Ever since 2013, China has been adhering to the concept of flexible economic integration with countries and regions, focusing on trade agreements. Countries will be connected more closely through expanding regional and global infrastructure, improving the acceleration of trade and investment flows. China is not only the defender of globalization, but it becomes gradually the creator of the new globalization (Schüler-Zhou, 2017).

Two German experts affirmed the positive implication of China’s BRI to a world peace order.

“The Belt and Road” Initiative is of Common Interests to the Countries Along the Road as well as to Europe

Sebastian Heilmann, Director of Mercator Institute for China Studies (MERICS) pointed out that regions covered by “The Belt and Road” Initiative were supposed to develop continuously in economy and participate in global exchanges, and no political stability should be realized through military representatives or through the provision of development assistance on a case-by-case basis. Either from the economic perspective or the secure politics one, “The Belt and Road” Initiative was the primary common interest of China, Germany, and Europe. He suggested that it should not only negatively record the diplomatic strategy announced by China or refuse reflexively, yet positively use the proposal made by China, making it a booster for the deeper cooperation of the two parties (Wu, 2015).

Gao Tingting, the researcher from SWP Asia Research Group said that the introduction of “The Belt and Road Initiative” marked that the diplomacy of the new Chinese government was more confident and they were prepared to expand their influence to the Eurasian region. Germany and Europe must notice the economic potential of China in the Eurasian region. EU not only needed to develop a strategy different from that of the Eurasian region, but also needed to have a dialogue with China on the “economic Belt of the Silk Road”, particularly. She suggested Europe to establish a long-term special Sino-Europe “Belt and Road” dialogue mechanism. This dialogue mechanism would help in two ways: On one hand, it would make the communication in the big Eurasian region more convenient; on the other hand, China and Europe could find specific cooperation areas within the framework of the dialogue mechanism. The institutionalization degree of the relationship between China and Europe had already been high, and the Sino-Europe’s “Belt and Road” dialogue mechanism should have detailed and specific objectives. Both parties could mutually develop cooperation projects in the fields of infrastructure, agriculture, environmental protection and urbanization (Wu, 2015).

Bonn (2015), from German Development Institute, believed that “The Belt and Road” established a direct connection with the “Investment Plan for Europe” of Jean-Claude Juncker, President of the European
Commission since “The Belt and Road” planned to invest 315 billion Euros in Europe by 2017. The main reason of Beijing’s proposal of “The Belt and Road” was its own interest. However, this did not necessarily exclude the fact that it was in line with Europe’s interests. The concept of “The Belt and Road” was flexible and malleable and it might be an opportunity for Europe.

Peter Wolff, from the German Development Institute, believed that under the background of the slow-down or even the crisis of the global economic growth, China’s “The Belt and Road” Initiative aroused people’s great interest in the project. The strategic vision of strengthening trade and investment flows brought new vitality to new energy sources. From the development track of Asia, Europe, and other countries, it could be seen that the potential benefits of “The Belt and Road” was that it would strengthen the competitiveness of regional supply networks and reduce tariff, non-tariff, and transaction barriers, thereby reducing import investment and costs. Since there were new policies in both emerging markets and developing countries, China would turn to higher value-added activities to promote entrepreneurship and innovation and to maintain the growth of productivity. “The Belt and Road” Initiative was seen as a structural shift in policy from macro economy to economic policy (Wolff, 2015), as a result.

These German experts suggested that the implementation of BRI will benefit the economic development of the countries along the route, including China and European countries, and the BRI would have positive significances in the politics and security for China, Germany, and EU, too.

Negative Comments

The articles and reports published by German think tanks not only have positive comments on “The Belt and Road” Initiative, but also have many negative comments with doubts and concerns.

“The Belt and Road” Aims to Strengthen China’s Influence in the Eurasian Region and it Challenges European Values

Rudolf, researcher from Mercator Institute for China Studies believed that “The Belt and Road” Initiative was not simply about to link China and Europe, but to build a cross-regional infrastructure network that includes oil and gas pipelines, railways and deep-sea ports. This would be a long-term project and it would take at least a few decades to build. China had strengthened the shift of its political and economic ambitions overseas through this Initiative.

Peter Wolff deemed that the implementation of “The Belt and Road” in Europe and the access to German and other European markets of Chinese state-owned enterprises through “The Belt and Road” project would bring the will and ideology of the Chinese government to Europe, thus challenging the values and ideology of Germany and Europe. And these would cause negative impacts on the parliamentary democracy system in Germany and Europe. “The Belt and Road” showed that China was trying to expand its economic strength and political influence as soon as possible. This seemed appealing to China’s shift from the traditional non-intervention to its ambition - which was clearer and more confident, namely China seeks to shape the world (Wolff, 2017).

These two experts are not only worried that the implementation of the BRI in Europe will boost Chinese economic influence, but also it will spread China’s ideological values to Europe, forming challenges and threats to Europeans. Indeed, the construction of the BRI in Europe will certainly expand China’s presences in Europe, in terms of economic, political, and ideological dimensions. However, in the author’s opinion, these influences
may enhance the mutual understanding between China and European countries as well, as two sides could learn from each other and then BRI could benefit from the development of both China and Europe, especially since China and Europe have an excellent heritage in terms of their cultural values. The core values of freedom, democracy, the rule of law, and human rights in Europe have positively contributed to the contemporary world politics. China’s traditional values of harmony, peace, benevolence, integrity, and win-win cooperation also matter for world peace and development, particularly since China and the EU have many common aspirations and interests in the field of global governance.

“The Belt and Road” Aims to Solve China’s Own Economic Issues

The article of Patrick Bessler (n.d.) published on the website of Konrad Adenauer Stiftung pointed out that “The Belt and Road” project was to solve China’s own economic issues, for example, and that the excess capacity of enterprises, energy problems, and the development of backward areas. “The Belt and Road” is a way for China to reduce or compensate for the excess capacity of some state-owned enterprises for the last few years of its economic boom. The excess capacity problem occurred before the 2008-2009 global financial crisis. The Chinese government subsidized these industries more than before. Its purpose was to compensate for the demand glides of Western countries. At that time, China invested at most 500 billion dollars on public infrastructure such as railways and expressways through the economic stimulus plan. The competition among local governments was also a factor for the expanding of excess capacity. Through fiscal subsidies, local governments tried to construct industries with excess capacity that had been built and would be beneficial to increase the local economic growth. Presently, the unused capacity of Chinese steel industry is twice than that of the American steel production. Other industries such as iron, cement, aluminum, glass, coal, shipbuilding, and solar panels have similar problems. Reported by International Center for Trade and Sustainable Development (ICTSD), the excess capacity of some industries even exceeded 30%. The domestic demands could hardly absorb the surplus. Due to the performance decline of several core purchasing countries, the international demand did not ease the situation neither. Reducing excess capacity would mean to cut down from a large number of persons employed. This is politically and socially costly for China, especially when the state is in the midst of an economic transition. During the period when the economic growth declined, Beijing hoped to remedy through investment in external infrastructure with Chinese materials and labor. However, it was doubtful whether “The Belt and Road” project could achieve that purpose. The unilateral export of large heavy materials for heavy industries could be complicated and not very profitable. Peter Hefele (2017) believed that energy was the center of China’s “The Belt and Road” policy. It had strategic significance for China to ensure a safe and reliable external energy supply for the Chinese market. The political influence of energy investment far exceeded the capability of any legal system. Chinese investment projects included exemptions from national energy/resource laws, which might create political resistance in each countries, making future projects a source of security threats. China and other partners must make great efforts to understand the complex interactions between investment and political, economic, and social dynamics. International energy institutions should try to improve the international regulatory framework further to become a platform that solves conflicts positively. China had pushed its “Belt and Road” plan to the great opportunity of economic development and wealth growth. However, investment in infrastructure might not always guarantee the economic and social progress. Central Asian countries must seriously study the opportunities and potential risks of the domestic and cross-border conflicts related to the exploitation of natural resources. The
interests of Russia and major EU countries should also be considered to avoid as increasing geographical strategic conflicts arise.

These German experts believe that the main purpose of BRI is to solve the overcapacity problem of steel industry and energy demand in China, and thus the BRI construction only serves China’s own economic interest. In fact, without BRI, China can also tackle the problem of steel overcapacity and energy problems by expanding international trade and cooperation in infrastructure with developing countries. The purpose of BRI is to achieve mutual benefit and win-win results through promoting economic, trade and cultural exchanges between China, Asian and European countries by opening of transport routes in Eurasia. The common prosperity of participating countries is the ultimate goal of BRI. There is a saying in China: “You are good, he is good, everyone is good, I can be good”. This is one of the classic ideas of Chinese cultural tradition.

“The Belt and Road” Projects may Represent Competitive Threats to Germany

Patrick Bessler (n.d.) pointed out that nowadays, China was not a country under the rule of law. “The Belt and Road” project was non-transparent, private, operating irregularly or even not according to rules, which might pose a competitive threat to German resources, markets, talents, and employment. Compared with Western countries, China was always indifferent to international conventions, local population and environmental protection. That was also the reason that the implementation of China’s projects were more successful on the African continent and in countries or in regions with weak rule of law. China’s projects had been resisted in some countries because they did not always take into account the full needs of local stakeholders. For example, most of the projects abroad of Chinese enterprises employed Chinese labor rather than the local one. In addition, project failure, corruption and environmental pollution occurred frequently in the cooperation between China and foreign countries was also of concern.

This expert expressed his concern about BRI in Europe from the perspectives of the rule of law, labor, and environmental protection. This view is representative among German and other European scholars. However, China is continuing to strengthen the rule of law. As the rule of law in China is under development, Chinese companies that carry out BRI projects in EU countries more and more comply with EU law and the laws of the host countries. With regard to the labor and environment protection issues, in recent years, Chinese companies in Europe have changed their behaviors substantially to adapt to the European law and environment protection regulation, like hiring more local workforce and adopting more environment friendly practices in operation.

China Tries to Push the Internationalization of Its Currency Through “The Belt and Road”

Some German experts deemed that another core motive for China’s implementation of “The Belt and Road” Initiative was its desire to realize the internationalization of its currency, the Ren Min Bi (RMB). So far, although the RMB had already become the fourth largest currency in the world, compared with USD and Euro, as an international payment mean, RMB only played a minor role. That was because, among all the payment in the world, USD took a proportion of 45%, Euro 29%, GBP 9%, while RMB about 2.8%, ranking fourth. China wanted a change in this, and the Chinese government had been promoting the internationalization of RMB through various channels. In 2010, Russia and China jointly announced their wish to use their respective currencies for bilateral trade. In 2012, China and Argentina signed a currency swap agreement worth of about 5.5 billion dollars. China also signed an agreement with Turkey worth of 1.6 billion dollars. The infrastructure investment of Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) was also a step for the internationalization of RMB. China was able to achieve further results in this respect in November 2015, and the International Monetary
Fund decided to include the Chinese RMB in the fund’s basket of reserve currencies to identify it as one of the world’s major currencies, at least in the symbolic sense.

These experts also have certain concerns about the internationalization of the Chinese currency Renminbi. However, with the development of China’s economy, the internationalization of Renminbi has become an irresistible trend. This is the result of mutually beneficial trade cooperation between China and other countries. Although the US financial groups are not willing to see this, such mutually beneficial cooperation approach is difficult to obstruct.

**Risks and Suggestions on “The Belt and Road” Project**

Some articles published by German think tanks analyzed the difficulties and risks for the implementation of “The Belt and Road” project.

**Difficulties and Risks of “The Belt and Road” Project**

**Trade barriers and transaction costs.** Peter Wolff (2015), researcher from the German Development Institute, pointed out that the implementation of “The Belt and Road” project would face many difficulties, for example, infrastructure, financial markets, trade facilitation, trade barriers, and limited regional cooperation. The most significant impact of customs activities is the time and cost increased from moving across the border, which might cover up the adverse impact of other agencies, and operators in raising border transaction costs. A major challenge might be to unify standards. When establishing cross-border transport connections, such as rail transport, a unified standard is required, which might take several years. And the unified standards would be discussed for a long time prior to finally be determined.

**Problems of sources of funds.** Peter Wolff (2015) pointed out that in the next few years, “The Belt and Road” projects might be of 240 billion dollars in total. Where does the source of fund of such a big investment come from? The solutions to the financing challenge could only be public and private financing, and domestic and international financing, faced complicated national conditions and specific projects. Regional and cross-border projects faced special challenges. Due to the complicated and various financial systems of each country, the fund issue was concerning. A challenging task was to pass the tax coordination, transaction regulation, and credit rating. However, co-financing was limited by various conditions. The large-scale infrastructure investment envisaged in “The Belt and Road” plan might have a big impact on financial markets. “The Belt and Road” Initiative might stimulate China’s financial reforms and encourage policymakers to further open national capital markets to global players, which might lead to more mobile and diversified bond markets and be helpful to improve capital allocation. However, the investment of some eligible countries had reached the debt limit. The high debt of China due to its rapid expanding of infrastructure investment was a warning sign. Private investment might not flow into countries that faced debt crises. Restrictions on debt financing might become a binding force for the investment of “The Belt and Road” project. National risks might be the highest than private investors considered. Another problem was the high development cost of the project. A large amount of additional preparatory projects should be funded in a short to medium term. However, there was no source of funds for the development of the funded projects. It was scarce to have funds through public funding or government grants. The development of countries along “The Belt and Road” was limited and their backward governance conditions hindered the development of infrastructure construction, trade and investment.
Patrick Bessler (n.d.) believed that the infrastructure construction projects of “The Belt and Road” required a large amount of funds. And during the implementation process, the conditions in lack of funds might occur. However, it was difficult for China to solve the problem unilaterally. And the funds of AIIB were limited, too. The grand and abstract wish of “The Belt and Road” might be given up halfway due to lack of funds, no profit, and huge financial risks. According to the report of China-Britain Business Council, the infrastructure conditions of countries along “The Belt and Road” were lower than the global average. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) said that only seven countries in the 64 countries involved in “The Belt and Road” were listed as the economically developed countries. PWCC estimated that by 2020, “The Belt and Road” needed to invest five trillion dollars in transport infrastructure. The Asian Development Bank (ADB) estimated that only in the Asian-Pacific region, there would be an annual deficit of 800 billion dollars in the infrastructure investment.

Peter Wolff (2017) pointed out that the difficult situation of increased defaults in China’s financial sectors meant that both state-owned enterprises and banks were more worried about new risks. Due to the excessive financial expansion of the country, these expected loan defaults must be retained in new projects. In recent months, with the help of the short-term emergency loan from Chinese state-owned banks, the credit default threat of Pakistan was avoided. In a word, the incubation period of these infrastructure construction projects were long, the cost and the mid-term maintenance cost were high, making it difficult to calculate the future returns. Local infrastructure projects often were not qualified for the loan granting, and the low return rate was another economic risk.

Political risks. Patrick Bessler (n.d.) pointed out the implementation of “The Belt and Road” project would face many political risks. Some countries in West Asia and North Africa faced local wars and riots, political turbulence, and social instability for example, the threats from military groups of Afghan Taliban, terrorist attacks etc. Chinese enterprises had also been victims of such incidents many times before. In November 2015, three employees from China Railway International Group were attacked by terrorists at the Radisson Blu Hotel in Bamako, the capital of Mali. Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region, which has a great significance to “The Belt and Road”, also faced attacks from separatist forces for Xinjiang’s independence, and Beijing had to deal with the issue of those separatists. It was reported that in 2014, the director of China Mining Association, admitted that up to 2013 more than 80% of all China’s supporting mining projects abroad suffered economic damage. According to the analysis of European Commission-External Relations, the opposition and competitors within China were growing, which might cause unhealthy development.

Suggestions on Avoiding Risks

After analyzing the difficulties and risks for the implementation of “The Belt and Road” project, experts from German think tanks put forward suggestions to overcome the difficulties and avoid risks.

Establish reasonable governance mechanisms. Some experts said that various platforms and partnerships had to be established to realize “The Belt and Road” Initiative and reasonable governance mechanisms must be established. Policy reform had to be carried out for the improvement of infrastructure in the countries that hoped to get benefits. Financing institution platforms were needed to be established and common standards for the improvement of the financing of the project development and governance of social environment needed to be formulated. Therefore, China’s “The Belt and Road” Initiative needed a more “multilateral” mechanism, which included the cooperation mechanism between private enterprises, and national
and local governments. The multilateral mechanism of “The Belt and Road” Initiative needed to expand the scope participated by the government and private enterprises. The participation of local enterprises was an important value chain for infrastructure investment and cross-border development. Supranational governance system in appropriate forms should be established. As a new tool to introduce private capital for infrastructure investment, banks should adopt innovative methods to develop capital market and make use of comparative advantages to make complementary development.

Making reasonable methods and standards. Some experts suggested that a large amount of study time must be invested to make reasonable methods and standards; to study the investment sustainability and the way of sustainable growth. For example, what is a cleaner transportation mode? How to implement low carbon urbanization? How does the new technology reflect departmental strategy and create cross-border value chains? “The Belt and Road” Initiative should deal with these issues in an open, transparent, and comprehensive manner. In case “The Belt and Road” Initiative becomes the standard rule for the sustainable growth for Asia and other regions and countries beyond, the sustainability of the ambitious “2030 Agenda” would be greatly enhanced.

Rolf J. Langhammer (n.d.) believed that Germany should put the cross-border infrastructure investment on the G20 agenda and provide its expertise to explicitly consider the sustainable development in three aspects (ecology, social economy, and finance). The contribution of Germany to the cross-border infrastructure construction agenda of the G20 would be all the expertise it had provided in the public and private fields to ensure that the cross-border infrastructure investment projects launched by China meet the latest standards of sustainable development of the ecology, social economy, and finance and support the international financial market to accept these standards. These standards would also include transparency targets to cope with the risks of corruption in the construction industry in all countries. In addition, Germany might use the rich experience of the cross-border investment projects in the EU and Greater Europe to solve the challenge of the dissymmetric distribution of benefits among partner countries. China-Germany cooperation could not only balance the two goals of economic transition and sustainable development, but also support the multilateral agenda on carbon emission reduction formally concluded at the Paris 2015 UN Climate Change Conference COP 21: CMP11.

Implementing multilateral financing. Peter Wolff put forward the “multilateral” suggestions for the financing of “The Belt and Road”. He believed that “The Belt and Road” was not only a single project, but composed of many projects, including cross-border transportation, communication, and energy network, and it should not be planned and realized by individual countries alone. The multilateral financing meant three things:

Firstly, a sustainable infrastructure knowledge platform should be established to help weak countries absorb the latest knowledge on energy, transport, and communication networks from the perspective of economic, social, and ecological sustainable development and incorporate them into their development plans. In the 21st century, intelligent resources and conservation-conscious solutions were needed by the world to achieve the sustainable development goals. So far, in the selection and planning of “The Belt and Road” projects, the knowledge had not been systematically considered. Secondly, the common standard of project bidding and funding: Transparency and fair competition should be promoted during the bidding process, especially to make the local companies to participate in the project construction and operation. The implementation of the project might be slowed down by the participation of local economy and civil society; however, it was of great significance to the sustainable development and the development of local economy. The competitions among financial institutions (multilateral and national development banks, export financing
institutions, and private financing institutions) should be standardized by the financing standards and the debt sustainability of each country should be considered. Thirdly, regional integration and connectivity strategies in other countries should be linked with the multilateral platform. India, Japan, South Korea, Iran, and especially the EU were all pursuing cross-border and cross-regional integration strategies and investment plans (Wolff, 2017).

**Conclusion**

According to the articles and research reports on “The Belt and Road” published by German think tanks, there are positive comments as well as negative ones. Experts have analyzed the difficulties and risks for the implementation of “The Belt and Road” projects from aspects such as trade barriers, transaction costs, source of funds, and political risks, and put forward suggestions on avoiding risks, which are of significant reference and value for the Chinese government to fully consider the difficulties during the promotion of “The Belt and Road”.

German experts are deeply suspicious of and vigilant in regards to China’s promotion of “The Belt and Road” Initiative. In the author’s opinion, the reasons for their doubts and vigilance are mainly as the following:

First, German experts have a deep prejudice against China’s social and political system and ideology. They believe that China is not a country under the rule of law, nor a Western-style democracy. There are still many human rights issues in China. The expansion of “The Belt and Road” projects may bring China’s highly centralized political system and ideology to countries along the road and the European region, thus impacting the European parliamentary democracy, ideology, and core values. Therefore, they have sharp wariness of China’s implementation of “The Belt and Road” project.

Second, some German experts are influenced by the “China Threat Theory” and they lack trust in China. They believe that China’s promotion of “The Belt and Road” project is for its own political interests and geographical strategies, for its own economic interests, and to expand its influence. They are worried that in case China’s “The Belt and Road” project enters Europe, it will seize German markets in Europe and form a competition against Germany, thus affecting the industrial production and sales of products of Germany etc.

Third, some German experts have a deep prejudice against China’s state-owned enterprises. They believe that China’s state-owned enterprises are tools to carry out the will of the state, and they are willing to lose money and pay economic costs in order to achieve the country’s political goals and realize China’s national interests. China’s state-owned enterprises get various subsidies and loans from the country and their debts are assumed by the state, and they are not the subjects that actually act according to the principles of market economy. They undertake the construction projects of “The Belt and Road” with a strong political purpose. These German experts have strong doubts against China’s state-owned enterprises.

These experts have some misunderstanding about China’s state-owned enterprise system. In fact, after more than 30 years of reform, China’s state-owned enterprises have been decoupled from the government and become independent legal entities that operate autonomously and are responsible for their own profits and losses. Although in the field of public services, state-owned enterprises have received state financial subsidies, in general, China’s state-owned enterprises are independent and market oriented. Their investment and projects in Europe are operated in accordance with the rules of the market economy and achieve mutual benefit, cooperation, and win-win results.

The social and political systems and ideologies of China are quite different from those of Germany and
other European countries, so it can be understood that German experts have a sense of precaution and distrust towards China. Indeed, the construction of the “Belt and Road” in Europe will certainly expand China’s influence in Europe, including economic, political, and ideological influences. But these influences maybe enhance mutual understanding between China and European countries, and would learn from each other and benefit from the development of China and Europe, because China and Europe both have excellent cultural values. The core values of freedom, democracy, the rule of law, and human rights in Europe have made positive contributions in the contemporary world. China’s values of harmony, peace, benevolence, integrity, and win-win cooperation also have had a positive significance for maintaining world peace and development. China and the EU have many common aspirations and interests in the field of global governance. Experts and the public from both China and Germany should communicate more extensively in the cultural and ideological fields, and learn the social systems and ideologies of one another in the spirit of “harmony in diversity” and “inclusiveness with compatibility”.

“The Belt and Road” Initiative has profound ideological and cultural roots. The “harmony in diversity, harmony generates and sameness stops, and harmonious coexistence” initiated by the core values of traditional Chinese culture, such as harmony, benevolence, righteousness, propriety, wisdom, and honesty, are fully demonstrated by “The Belt and Road” Initiative. And the “policy communication, road connectivity, free trade, currency circulation, and people-to-people ties” will generate a tremendous cooperation pattern of the development momentum for surrounding areas, thus realizing the “extensive consultation, joint contribution and win-win” of countries along the road.

Nowadays, the thinking model of individualist, philosophy of struggle, “jungle law”, power politics, and zero-sum game should be abandoned in the international relations. All countries should coexist peacefully with the principles of mutual respect, and equality and mutual benefits. The initiatives of “The Belt and Road” and the concept of “building a community with a shared future for mankind” proposed by China reflect mankind’s desire for a new world of peace and harmony. With the implementation of “The Belt and Road” Initiative, an increasing number of people will know its intrinsic value and positive significance.

References
Bessler, P. (n.d.). China’s “New Silk Road”: Focus on Central Asia. Conrad Adenauer Foundation. Retrieved from http://www.kas.de/wf/en/33.43841/
Bonn. (2015, November 9). A new Silk Road—China’s soft power. Institute of German Development. Retrieved from http://www.die-gdi.de/en/the-current-column/article/a-new-silk-road-chinas-soft-power/
Hefele, P. (2017, February 27). The regulation of energy investments along the “Belt and Road”. International Conference on International Energy Law. Retrieved from http://www.kas.de/wf/en/33.48043
Langhammer, R. J. (n.d.). Chinese-German G20 cooperation for sustainable infrastructure investment. Institute of World Economics, University of Kiel, Germany. Retrieved from http://www.global-economic-symposium.org/about-the-ges/council-for-global-problem-solving/recommendations/chinese-german-g20-cooperation-for-sustainable-infrastructure-investment/chinese-german-g20-cooperation-for-sustainable-infrastructure
Qi, X. (2018, July 12). German development report blue book (2018), based in Europe, looking at the world. Xinmin Evening News.
Schüler-Zhou, Y. (2017, July 10). Warum Xi Jinping die globalisierung verteidigt. German Daily Mirror. Retrieved from http://www.tagesspiegel.de/themen/china-2014/der-chinesische-traum-warum-xi-jinping-die-globalisierung-verteidigt/19980932.html
Wolff, P. (2015, November 9). China’s “Belt and Road” Initiative: Challenges and opportunities. Institute of German
Wolff, P. (2017, May 15). Is China’s Silk Road initiative at a dead end? Institute of German Development. Retrieved from http://www.die-gdi.de/en/publications/mitarbeiter-sonstige/article/chinas-belt-and-road-initiative-challenges-and-opportunities/

Wu, J. (2015, May 20). German think tanks positively affirm the “Belt and Road Initiative”. Economic Daily.