

The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) - and Health and beyond

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1. Introduction

The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) is a long term strategy announced by Xi Jinping, the President of China, to boost the region's economic development. The BRI aims to enhance trade, infrastructure and connectivity through building networks of railways, highways, bridges, airports, ports, oils and gas pipelines and fibre optics. The concept originated from China's ancient Silk Road that was once used to facilitate trade and cultural exchanges. The BRI aims to link China to Asia and Europe consisting of two important strategies: (1) the Silk Road Economic Belt – the land route connecting China with Central Asia, Eastern and Western Europe; and (2) the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road – the sea route connecting China to South East Asia, Africa and Central Asia.

The BRI involves over 60 countries and provides an opportunity for the global north to connect with the global south through an economic security platform. China has planned \$1 trillion investment, including the establishment of the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) to provide loans to the BRI countries including ASEAN countries.

The BRI is emerging as one of China's major vehicle for its increasing role in international engagement, with an important health dimension. Within it includes important health dimensions, for instance; international collaboration in several health issues, emergency response and medical assistance, science and technological advancement.

In August 2017 China organized the first biennial Belt and Road High Level Meeting on Health Cooperation towards Healthy Silk Road where more than 30 health ministers and leaders of multilateral agencies signed the Beijing Communiqué. The Communiqué highlighted the joint commitment to protect public health and strengthen people-to-people exchanges among BRI countries.

However, there have been a number of concerns related to the potential impacts of the BRI on health such as spread of infectious diseases due to increased people mobility; the geological, socio-economic and health impacts of large infrastructure projects; transboundary movement of hazardous materials; and regulation of occupational health and environmental standards.

BRI is therefore an initiative that expands beyond trade and investment. The opportunities and challenges faced prevail beyond its mere trading system. Hence, there is the crucial need to understand these positive and negative implications, mainly to maximize for greater opportunities while mitigating its negative impacts for the benefits of the society at large.

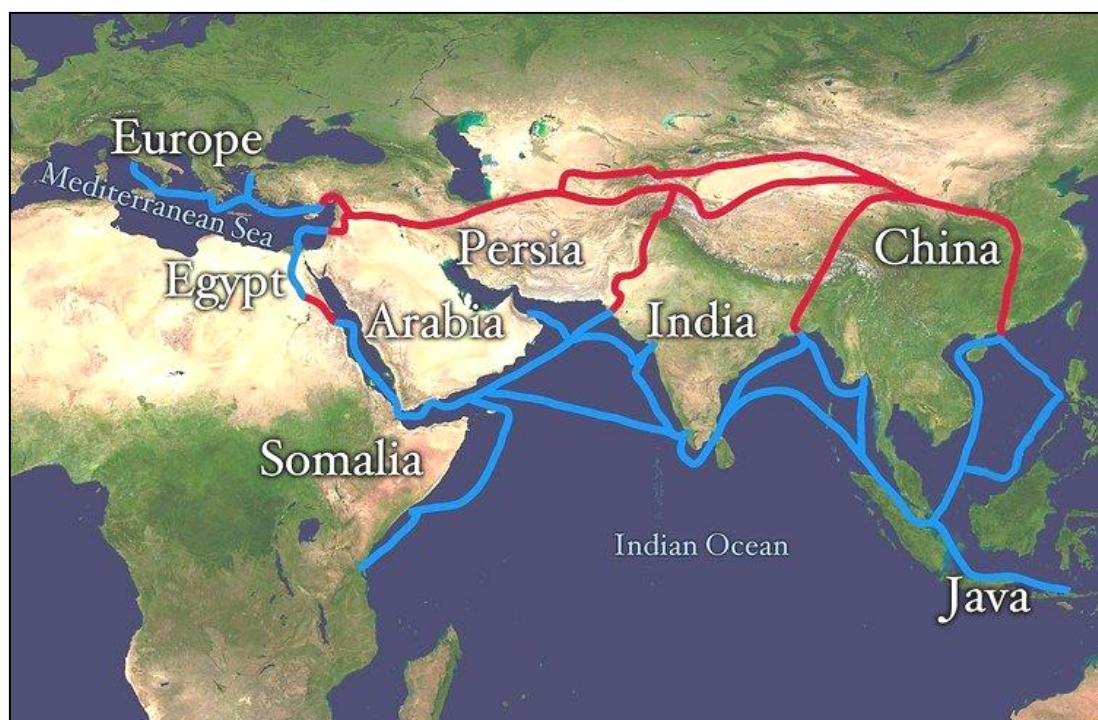
2. The Ancient Silk Road – history at a glance

In an ancient time, the Silk Road was a network of routes that linked between parts of the world and were used for trade and cultural purposes established during the Han Dynasty of China. The route was popularly used between 130 BCE and 1453 CE (1). Trade exchanges between the east and the west for several types of goods made the routes popular. The name Silk Road derived from the popularity of Chinese silk with the west, especially with Rome. The Silk Road routes stretched from China through India, Asia Minor, up throughout Mesopotamia, to Egypt, the African continent, Greece, Rome, and Britain.

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The northern Mesopotamian region (present-day Iran) became China's closest partner in trade, as part of the Parthian Empire, initiating important cultural exchanges. Paper, which had been invented by the Chinese during the Han Dynasty, and gunpowder, also a Chinese invention, had a much greater impact on culture than did silk. The rich spices of the east, also, contributed more than the fashion which grew up from the silk industry. Even so, by the time of the Roman Emperor Augustus (r.27 BCE – 14 CE) trade between China and the west was firmly established and silk was the most sought-after commodity in Egypt, Greece, and, especially, in Rome.

Figure 1 Map of the Silk Road Routes



Source: <https://www.ancient.eu/image/8327/>

According to Mark 2018(1), *“the greatest value of the Silk Road was the exchange of culture, art, religion, philosophy, technology, language, science, architecture, and every other element of civilization was exchanged along these routes, carried with the commercial goods the merchants traded from country to country”*.

After the closure of the Silk Road, the Age of Discovery (1453-1660 CE) began, when the European explorers taking to the sea and charting new water routes to replace over-land trade. The Age of Discovery would impact cultures around the world as European influenced western culture and religion and, at the same time, these other nations influenced European culture. It was the beginning of worldwide connection and the beginning of the global community.

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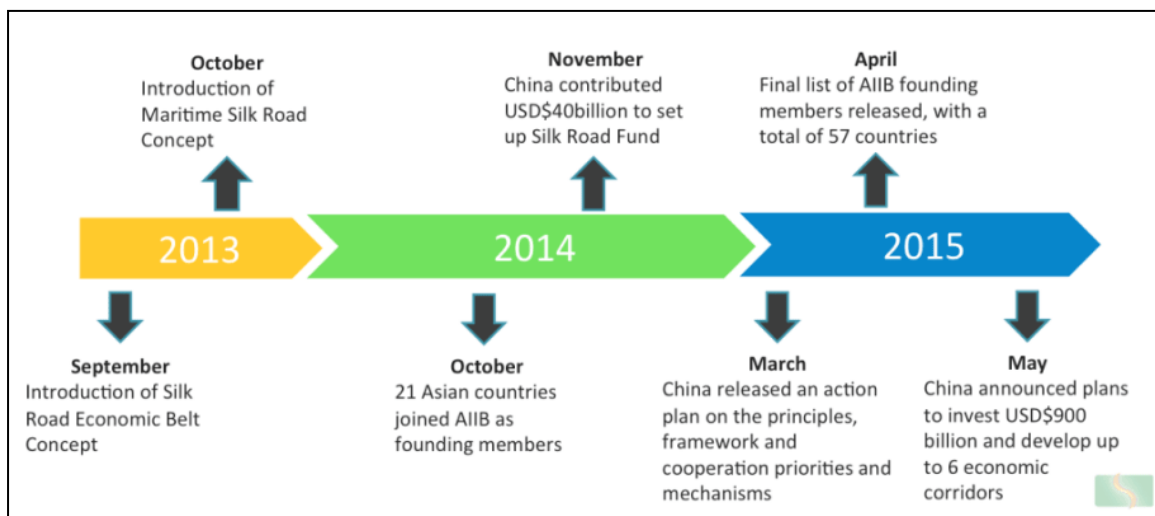
It can be noted that the Ancient Silk Road had great impact on the development of world civilization, through connecting people in different regions along the routes. It is difficult to imagine the world without it, today.

3. The New Silk Road – The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI)

3.1 What is the BRI?

The concept of the policy has been introduced since September 2013. Later, President Xi Jinping of China announced the initiative to jointly build the Silk Road Economic Belt and the 21st-Century Maritime Silk Road during his visit to Central Asia and Southeast Asia in September and October of 2013. The government believes that the building of the Belt and Road can help promote the economic prosperity of the countries along the Belt and Road and regional economic cooperation, strengthen exchanges and mutual learning between different civilizations, and promote world peace and development. The major development of the Belt and Road is shown in Figure 1 and the chronological events in Table 1.

Figure 1 Major development of the Belt and Road Initiative in 2013-2015



Source: <http://www.silkroadresearch.org/development-timeline/>

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Table 1 Chronology of events for Belt and Road Initiative

Timeline	Event
Sep. 7, 2013	President Xi Jinping proposed building the Silk Road Economic Belt in his speech delivered at Nazarbayev University in Kazakhstan.
Oct. 3, 2013	President Xi Jinping proposed building the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road in his speech at the Indonesian parliament.
Dec 2013	President Xi Jinping called for strengthening infrastructure connectivity in the process of implementing the Belt and Road Initiative.
Feb. 6, 2014	President Xi Jinping and Russian President Vladimir Putin reached consensus on the construction of the Belt and Road, as well as its connection with Russia's Euro-Asia Railways.
May 19, 2014	The logistics terminal jointly built by China and Kazakhstan went into operation in the port of Lianyungang in east China. It was the first tangible platform under the framework of the Silk Road Economic Belt.
Nov. 4, 2014	President Xi Jinping stressed the need to accelerate the development of the Silk Road Economic Belt and the 21st-Century Maritime Silk Road during the eighth meeting of the Central Leading Group on Financial and Economic Affairs.
Nov. 8, 2014	President Xi Jinping announced that China would contribute US\$40 billion to set up the Silk Road Fund. He proposed five suggestions on the implementation of the Belt and Road Initiative.
Dec 2014	The Central Economic Work Conference was held in Beijing, highlighting the implementation of three strategies, namely, the Belt and Road Initiative, the Beijing-Tianjin-Hebei coordinated development and the Yangtze River economic belt.
Feb. 1, 2015	Vice Premier Zhang Gaoli called for a solid start of the Belt and Road Initiative at a meeting in Beijing.
March 5, 2015	Premier Li Keqiang called for advancing the Belt and Road Initiative, and promoting the development of the Bangladesh-China-India-Myanmar Economic Corridor and the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor.

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Timeline	Event
March 28, 2015	In his keynote speech at the Boao Forum for Asia Annual Conference, President Xi Jinping said the implementation of the Belt and Road Initiative followed the principles of wide consultation, joint contribution and shared benefits.
June 29, 2015	The signing ceremony of the Articles of Agreement of the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank was held in Beijing. Representatives from 57 prospective founding members of the bank attended the ceremony.
July 9, 2015	The 7th BRICS summit was held to promote integrated market, communication and connectivity and cultural exchanges.
Sep 11, 2015	The United Nations Maritime-Continental Silk Road Cities Alliance was established. Chinese city Quanzhou and other cities were the first batch of founding members.
Nov. 17, 2015	The Belt and Road Initiative appeared for the first time in Macao SAR Chief Executive's Policy Address.
April 18, 2016	The Belt and Road Media Cooperation Union was established in Beijing. The "Silk Road TV" cross-border broadcasting network was also launched.
June 22, 2016	President Xi Jinping delivered a speech titled "Jointly Compose a New and Splendid Chapter of the Silk Road" at the Legislative Chamber of the Supreme Assembly of Uzbekistan in Tashkent.
July 17, 2016	The 11th Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) concluded in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia. Connectivity, pragmatic cooperation and "China Plan" were the highlights.
Aug. 17, 2016	President Xi Jinping attended a symposium on the Belt and Road Initiative, calling for the steady advance of the initiative to benefit people along the routes.
Sep. 3, 2016	President Xi Jinping said during the Business 20 (B20) summit that the Belt and Road Initiative is to share China's development opportunities with countries along the route and achieve common prosperity.
Oct. 14, 2016	President Xi Jinping said the Belt and Road Initiative provides new opportunities for win-win cooperation between China and

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Timeline	Event
	Bangladesh in his signed article carried by a Bangladeshi newspaper.
Jan 13, 2017	Vision And Actions On Jointly Building Silk Road Economic Belt And 21st-Century Maritime Silk Road
Mar 17, 2017	Belt and Road Initiative put into UN Security Council resolution
Mar 21, 2017	Belt and Road portal goes online
May 14, 2017	Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation
July 24, 2017	Asian Financial Cooperation Association inaugurated

Sources: Zhang Lulu 2017 (2), Belt and Road Portal (3)

The BRI encompasses land routes or Silk Road Economic Belt (the “Belt”) and maritime routes or the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road (the “Road”). It aims to connect Asia, Europe and Africa along five routes. The Silk Road Economic Belt is envisioned as three routes (4):

- (1) linking China to Europe through Central Asia and Russia;
- (2) connecting China with the Middle East through Central Asia; and
- (3) bringing together China and Southeast Asia, South Asia and the Indian Ocean.

The 21st Century Maritime Silk Road, focuses on using Chinese coastal ports to:

- (4) link China with Europe through the South China Sea and Indian Ocean; and
- (5) connect China with the South Pacific Ocean through the South China Sea.

With these five routes, the Belt and Road will take advantage of international transport routes as well as core cities and key ports to further strengthen collaboration and build six international economic co-operation corridors (the New Eurasia Land Bridge, China-Mongolia-Russia, China-Central Asia-West Asia, China-Indochina Peninsula, China-Pakistan, and Bangladesh-China-India-Myanmar).

In addition, BRI aims at improving trade relationships in the region primarily through infrastructure investments, with the loans estimated at \$8 trillion for infrastructure in 68 countries, covering around 65 percent of the world population and \$21 trillion of GDP (5, 6).

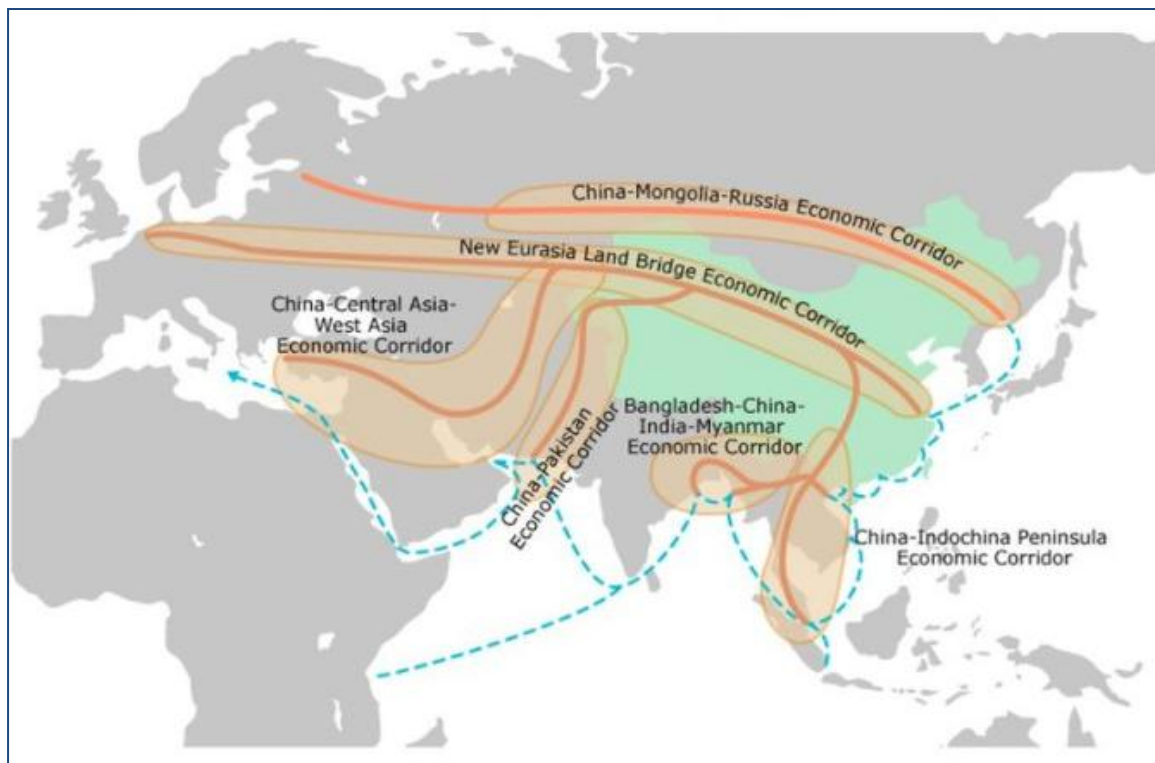
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Figure 2 Map of the Silk Road Economic Belt (land) and 21st Century Maritime Silk Road (sea)



Source: The Economist

Figure 3 Six economic corridors under the Belt and Road Initiative



Source: HKTDC Research 2018

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The Chinese government, by the National Development and Reform Commission, published the Vision and Actions on Jointly Building Silk Road Economic Belt and 21st-Century Maritime Silk Road in 2015 to promote the implementation of the Initiative (7). As mentioned under this document, The Belt and Road Initiative is *“a way for win-win cooperation that promotes common development and prosperity and a road towards peace and friendship by enhancing mutual understanding and trust, and strengthening all-round exchanges. The Chinese government advocates peace and cooperation, openness and inclusiveness, mutual learning and mutual benefit. It promotes practical cooperation in all fields, and works to build a community of shared interests, destiny and responsibility featuring mutual political trust, economic integration and cultural inclusiveness”*.

Cooperation priorities cover the areas of policy coordination, facility connectivity, trade and investment cooperation, and financial integration¹.

3.2 Trade and investment

The initiative also provides an opportunity for the global north to connect with the global south through the economic security platform. It has boosted trade and investment. For example, trade between China and countries along the OBOR routes constitutes a quarter of China’s total trade value, exceeding US\$ 1 trillion in 2015 which exceeded Chinese exports to the US and the European Union (8).

The Chinese government has established the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) to provide loans to the BRI countries including ASEAN countries. This is additional financial institution in addition to the major ones such as the Asian Development Bank, the World Bank which indicates China’s intention for stimulating more investment. Notably, China’s overseas direct investment (ODI) especially whole or majority-ownership mergers and acquisitions rose more significantly in the BRI countries, particularly in countries along the continental route (9).

Thailand is situated in a strategic location and linked to the Maritime Silk Road. The government has responded to the BRI by accelerating the development of the Eastern Economic Corridor (EEC) which will connect to the East-West Corridor and thus connect to China.

¹ More details of the Vision and Actions document can be found at http://en.ndrc.gov.cn/newsrelease/201503/t20150330_669367.html

Figure 4 Trade routes under the Belt and Road Initiative



Source: Wall Street Journal

3.3 Its ambition beyond trade and investment

It is expected that connecting all of BRI countries together, China is hoping to become the gatekeeper for a new platform international trade cooperation and integration. The Belt and Road Initiative has other important objectives beyond trade and economic growth. Connecting through the economic corridors as illustrated below, the BRI countries will see more social and cultural links, financial cooperation, and a merger of policy goals and objectives (10).

4. The Belt and Road Initiative as a tool for global health

The Belt and Road Initiative has increasingly emerged as China's major vehicle for international engagement, with important health dimensions. A few papers written by Chinese academics provide information on the BRI and global health based on the Chinese aspect. We review these papers and found important role of the Belt and Road Initiative in many aspects of global health and health challenges.

The Chinese Government has strengthened its international collaboration by several means. The Chinese President signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the World Health Organization (WHO) in January 2017 on strengthening international health regulation and promoted health security. In addition, the 17 bilateral MOU were signed with the Silk Road countries and international agencies covering many areas of health security, maternal

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and child health, health policy, health systems, hospital management, human resources, medical research and traditional medicine.

4.1 Towards Universal Health Coverage (UHC) and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

The Belt and Road Initiative contains the fundamentals to achieve UHC. The Chinese government plans to launch four networks on - public health, policy research, hospital alliance, and health industry – to promote continuous exchange in the search for cooperative opportunities under the broader goal of advancing the SDGs. Belt and Road health policy research network will also work towards the SDGs

UNAIDS and the National Health and Family Planning Commission of China adopted a memorandum of understanding that enhances cooperation on the implementation of the Belt and Road initiative and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and aims to enhance the effectiveness of the global response to the AIDS epidemic. Both parties agreed to use the Belt and Road initiative as a catalyst and accelerator for the Sustainable Development Goals and achieving the global Fast-Track targets by 2020, including reducing new HIV infections and AIDS-related deaths to fewer than 500,000 globally and eliminating HIV-related stigma and discrimination. The five-year agreement includes an annual US\$ 1 million contribution to UNAIDS (11).

4.2 Health protection

In August 2017 China launched the first biennial global conference of health on the Belt and Road where more than 30 health ministers and leaders of multilateral agencies signed the Beijing Communiqué which aims at protecting public health and strengthening people-to-people exchanges among countries under the initiative (12).

Figure 5 Leaders who signed the Beijing Communiqué in August 2017



Source: www.news.cn

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The Beijing Communiqué focuses on several measures of collaboration, for instances,

- Establishment of The Belt and Road Health Policy Research Network, collaboration to achieve the health-related goals in the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development
- Monitoring, prevention and control, and response to major infectious diseases, cooperation in public health emergency response, and in strengthening the core capabilities as required in “International Health Regulations (2005)”
- China will implement maternal and child and reproductive health projects in the Belt and Road nations, promote appropriate technology in Pediatrics, Obstetrics and Gynecology, enhance the national maternal and child healthcare and treatment service capabilities to improve the national health level of women and children
- Strengthen the interaction of health human resources
- Support the “2014 - 2023 Traditional Medicine Strategy” published by the WHO in 2013 as well as the Resolutions on traditional medicine approved by the 62nd and 67th World Health Assembly.
- Encourage cooperation between medical research institutions, establish Belt and Road Hospital Alliance, and carry out joint research to make technological breakthrough in the fields of advanced medical technology, major disease prevention and control, vaccine research and development and clinical research
- Form Belt and Road Health Industry Sustainable Development Alliance to support the development of health services trade, medical and health care tourism and explore the cooperation on Belt and Road nations' mutual recognition on drug and device access standards;
- China will continue to dispatch foreign aid medical team to Belt and Road nations, carry out appropriate hospital cooperation, through the “Brightness Journey of Free Cataract Surgeries” and “Journey of Smile---Free Cleft-palate Surgeries”, etc.
- Strengthen communication and coordination for China and Belt and Road countries in international organizations such as the WHO and UNAIDS, and support the WHO in playing an important role in global health governance

More details of the Beijing Communiqué are presented in Annex 1.

4.3 Emergency response and medical assistance

The Belt and Road Initiative provides a common platform to improve the capability of handling regional public health emergencies through epidemic information sharing, exchange of preventive and interventional methods, and training health professionals.

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China has committed to provide medical assistance and emergency medical aid to Belt and Road partners, and to carry out regional cooperation and coordination in maternal and child health, disability rehabilitation, and management of major infectious diseases, including HIV, tuberculosis, and malaria.

China has adopted a project approach to its international health aid programme by donating drugs and equipment, providing medical aid teams, training health personnel, and building health facilities that can be transferred to local authorities.

4.4 Science and technology

China agreed to increase regional cooperation in science and technology through establishing joint laboratories or research centres, international technology transfer, and knowledge translation centres.

The analysis by Tang, Lee and Chen (12) illustrates that China's Belt and Road Initiative, Ebola response, development assistance for health, and new investment funds are complementary and reinforcing, with China shaping a unique global engagement impacting powerfully on the contours of global health.

4.5 Chinese medicine

This focuses on insitutionalisation of Chinese medicine to be a key part of health care. Countries which approved Chinese medicine as medicine in their health service system are geographically distributed along the Belt and Road. New structure for cooperation in the traditional pharmaceutical field will be developed by 2020.

5. The health challenges under the BRI

There have been a number of concerns on the challenges may be faced as the consequence of the BRI, for examples,

5.1 Tobacco trade

There may be opportunity for marketing and exporting of Chinese tobacco products along the New Silk Road (13) . As China's tobacco industry has been striking for going global, it is believed that the Belt and Road Initiative will benefit China's tobacco industry as it will be conducive to building an interest-sharing value chain, improving the distribution of tobacco resources in China. The BRI will also promote the development of new channels to realize export-oriented growth and systemic transformation (14).

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5.2 Infectious diseases

Murphy 2018 (15) expressed a number of concerns on spreading of infectious diseases influenced by the Initiative:

- Global spread of infectious diseases as people mobility will be increased while they do not have immunity to diseases from different geographical areas. The transfer of disease can create new disease reservoirs
- The geological impact of large infrastructure projects that could help mosquitoes, bats and other vector colonise new areas.

5.3 Environmental impacts

- Export of hazardous materials
- Regulation of occupational health and environmental standards

6. BRI and population health and health systems

6.1 Health status of people in the BRI countries

Before realizing the effect of BRI on health of the people in the BRI countries, it is fundamental to understand the current health status in these countries. A comparative study of health status between 12 countries in the BRI in 2016(16) found varied health status among people in these countries. The 12 countries include China, India, Russia, Iran, Belarus, Pakistan, Tajikistan, Mongolia, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Afghanistan. Some countries such as China, Iran, presented relatively better health status, whereas India, Tajikistan, Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Mongolia presented relatively poorer health statuses. These are reflected in the life expectancy at birth and the mortality rates as illustrated in Table 1 and Table 2. The varied health status is the consequence of differences in lifestyles, health infrastructure, access to care services, allocation of health resources, and so on. The Authors recommended that these countries should collaborate and learn from other countries to improve their healthcare system and health status.

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Table 1 Life expectancy of countries along the BRI

Country	Life expectancy at birth			Life expectancy at age 60			Healthy life expectancy at birth
	Both sexes	Male	Female	Both sexes	Male	Female	
China	75	74	77	19	18	21	68
India	66	64	68	17	16	18	57
Russia	69	63	75	17	14	20	61
Iran	74	72	76	20	19	20	64
Belarus	72	67	78	19	15	21	64
Pakistan	65	64	66	17	17	18	56
Tajikistan	68	67	69	17	17	17	60
Mongolia	67	64	72	16	14	18	60
Uzbekistan	69	67	72	17	16	18	61
Kazakhstan	68	63	72	16	13	18	60
Kyrgyzstan	69	66	73	17	15	19	61
Afghanistan	60	58	61	16	15	17	49
Global	70	68	73	20	18	21	62

Source: Yan et al 2016

Table 2 The mortality rates in countries along the BRI

Country	Neonatal mortality rate	Infant mortality rate	Under-five mortality rate	Maternal mortality ratio	Adult mortality rate	
					Male	Female
China	9	12	14	32	106	79
India	31	44	56	190	242	160
Russia	6	9	10	24	339	127
Iran	11	15	18	23	156	84
Belarus	3	4	5	1	287	98
Pakistan	42	69	86	170	190	157
Tajikistan	23	49	58	44	178	154
Mongolia	10	23	28	68	314	150
Uzbekistan	14	34	40	36	211	131
Kazakhstan	10	17	19	26	324	147
Kyrgyzstan	14	24	27	75	275	131
Afghanistan	36	71	99	400	294	242
Global	21	35	48	210	187	124

Source: Yan et al 2016

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6.2 Recommendations for advancing health

There have been several recommendations proposed to China to accomplish the population health through the Belt and Road Initiative(13, 17).

- Set a high standard for workers' health and safety, supporting the well-being of both local workers in partner countries and China's own workers who work under the Belt and Road projects
- Explicitly prioritize clean energy and environmental protection in infrastructure projects, avoiding new investment in fossil fuels
- Make significant investments in health systems, particularly primary health care, in partner countries, particularly in primary care which will support achieving universal health coverage
- Belt and Road must not become a vehicle for exporting tobacco products
- Health and human rights impact assessments for planned infrastructure projects to understand anticipated effects on health, the environment, and human rights and then modify the projects accordingly; the impact assessments should be conducted with inclusive participation, independent oversight, and mechanisms for redress, ensuring accountability

7. The way forward

The Belt and Road Initiative has several aspects related to health and health systems. Inevitably, Thailand is part of this mega development. In terms of health, there are a number of issues that need to be researched in order to identify effective interventions, innovation, or policy recommendations to take the benefit of the BRI to improve health systems. Inter-agency and inter-country collaboration for research on BRI and health innovation is essential.

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Annex 1

Beijing Communiqué of The Belt and Road Health Cooperation & Health Silk Road

1. To further deepen and innovate on The Belt and Road health exchange and cooperation, to build the Health Silk Road and to drive forward the mutual development of relevant countries' health service, and to implement health-related consensus in the Joint Communiqué of The Belt and Road International Cooperation Forum Roundtable Summit, Health Ministers and senior officials from the health sector in China and other participating countries, as well as representatives from World Health Organization (WHO), The Joint United Nations Program on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunization (GAVI), and Global Fund attended the Belt and Road High Level Meeting on Health Cooperation towards Health Silk Road in Beijing, China on August 18th 2017.

Cooperation Background

2. Recalling that China has established a solid foundation of cooperation between the relevant Belt and Road countries, bilateral cooperation has made great progress and formed strong relations of common interests and profound friendship;

3. Recognizing that exchange and cooperation in health is an important component of The Belt and Road Initiative and plays a vital role in the development of relations between China and Belt and Road related countries, enriching bilateral and multilateral cooperation, deepening the friendship between people and constructing a closer community of common destiny;

4. We acknowledge that health is the core of development, a prerequisite and result of development, and an effective index in the measurement of sustainable development. The development and maintenance of the vitality of Belt and Road countries' national health systems and pushing forward the health cooperation between Belt and Road countries is not only conducive to improving people's health, but will also contribute to promoting economic development;

5. We have observed that, economic globalization, urbanization and the aging of the population have brought continuous health challenges with an increasing burden of disease. The uncertainty of the global economy has had a huge impact on universal health coverage, and the way to strengthen the health system is arduous and long. Health investments have far-reaching implications for reducing poverty, spurring economic development and promoting global security. Prioritizing health development and safe-guarding health funding should be our collective call. To achieve universal outreach and impact our populations, countries need to formally incorporate training, remuneration and integration of Community Health workers into national health systems;

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6. We emphasize that the threat posed by infectious diseases cannot be ignored. The West African Ebola hemorrhagic fever epidemic, Middle East respiratory syndrome outbreak and the Zika virus epidemic sounded the alarms to governments of the world over and over again. Emerging and reemerging infectious disease outbreaks become a potential major public security issue to the Belt and Road countries and their significant impact on the health of citizens and social economic development have call for great attention from the governments.

7. We note that maternal and child as well as broader reproductive health is critical to the harmony of the family and the sustainable development of society. It is of great importance to enhance the sustainable development of society by improving maternal, and child and broader reproductive health in Belt and Road countries.

8. We recognize that the application of traditional medicine has a long history in the Belt and Road countries. It is an important carrier of fine traditional culture and a key part of our health care. It has played an important role in promoting mutual learning among civilizations and maintaining people's health which should be further institutionalised and strengthened..

9. We recognize that carrying out all-round, multi-level and high-standard research and development in medical science and technology can greatly promote the innovation and translation of medical research. We also commit to work together to establish The Belt and Road Health Policy Research Network and to achieve the health-related goals in the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (SDGs). Strengthening medical science and technology development and health industry cooperation will help to meet the multi-level, diversified needs in health, and improve national health quality.

Cooperation Objectives

10. We maintain to strengthen the Belt and Road Health Cooperation Initiative, establish closer partnerships, and promote North-South cooperation, South-South cooperation and tri-partite cooperation.

11. We are committed to expanding health and related people-to-people exchanges, safeguarding health security, promoting health development, strengthening cooperation on health related innovation to improve people's health and well-being, enhancing social cohesion and inclusiveness.

12. We encourage governments, international and regional organizations, the private sector, civil societies and the general public to participate in such cooperation to build solid friendships, mutual understanding and trust.

Cooperation Principles

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13. We uphold the spirit of peace, cooperation, openness, inclusiveness, transparency, equality, mutual learning, mutual benefit and mutual respect in strengthening cooperation on the basis of extensive consultation, joint efforts, shared benefits, the rule of law and equal opportunities for all.

Cooperation Measures

14. We adopt an open attitude, based on the principles of exchange, mutual learning and mutual benefits, to reach the following consensuses:

(1) Work together to establish The Belt and Road Health Policy Research Network and achieve the health-related goals in the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development;

(2) Push forward the Belt and Road nations in the monitoring, prevention and control, and response to major infectious diseases, in the coordination and cooperation in public health emergency response, and in strengthening the core capabilities as required in “International Health Regulations (2005)” and in the establishment of Belt and Road Public Health Cooperation Network so as to jointly meet the challenges;

(3) China will implement maternal and child and reproductive health projects in the Belt and Road nations, promote appropriate technology in Pediatrics, Obstetrics and Gynecology, enhance the national maternal and child healthcare and treatment service capabilities to improve the national health level of women and children;

(4) Strengthen the interaction of health human resources. Attach importance to the exchange of personnel, through the exchange of health and medical experts, organizing various health professional and technical training courses and seminars to enhance the exchange of experience and personnel training.

(5) Support the “2014 - 2023 Traditional Medicine Strategy” published by the WHO in 2013 as well as the Resolutions on traditional medicine approved by the 62nd and 67th World Health Assembly. Deepen the exchanges and cooperation between China and Belt and Road nations’ governmental departments and non-governmental organizations. Promote policies, knowledge, technology, R & D and personnel exchange according to the laws and regulations on traditional medicine of the various countries;

(6) Encourage cooperation between medical research institutions, establish Belt and Road Hospital Alliance, and carry out joint research to make technological breakthrough in the fields of advanced medical technology, major disease prevention and control, vaccine research and development and clinical research;

(7) Form Belt and Road Health Industry Sustainable Development Alliance to support the development of health services trade, medical and health care tourism and explore

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the cooperation on Belt and Road nations' mutual recognition on drug and device access standards;

(8) China will continue to dispatch foreign aid medical team to Belt and Road nations, carry out appropriate hospital cooperation, through the “Brightness Journey of Free Cataract Surgeries” and “Journey of Smile---Free Cleft-palate Surgeries”, etc. short-term clinics, medicines and medical device donations to provide health aid to Belt and Road countries;

(9) Strengthen communication and coordination for China and Belt and Road countries in international organizations such as the WHO and UNAIDS, and support the WHO in playing an important role in global health governance and its reform process. China will continue to support WHO, UNAIDS, the Global Fund and GAVI to implement their work in related fields.

Our Vision for the Future

15. Our joint endeavor on the Belt and Road health cooperation, forging a Health Silk Road will provide new opportunities and impetus for international cooperation, serve as a model for other cooperation platforms such as BRICS and the G20 and help to promote an open and inclusive globalization that is beneficial to all.

16. We reiterate that promoting peace and mutually beneficial cooperation is our common responsibility; improving the people's health quality is our common goal; creating a community with a shared health future for mankind is our common aspiration.

17. We congratulate China on successfully hosting the Belt and Road High Level Meeting on Health Cooperation towards Health Silk Road, and wish Belt and Road health cooperation make greater achievements and success.