http://atimes.com/2015/03/westward-ho-on-chinas-eurasia-bric-road/

Westward ho on China's Eurasia BRIC road

By Pepe Escobar, March 22, 2105

**"…it is imperative that no Eurasian challenger (to the U.S.)
emerges capable of dominating Eurasia
and thus also of challenging America"**

Zbigniew Brzezinski, The Grand Chessboard, 1997

What's in a name, rather an ideogram? Everything. A single Chinese character – jie (for "between") – graphically illustrates the key foreign policy initiative of the new Chinese dream.

In the upper part of the four-stroke character – which, symbolically, should be read as the roof of a house – the stroke on the left means the Silk Road Economic Belt, and the stroke on the right means the 21st century Maritime Silk Road. In the lower part, the stroke on the left means the China-Pakistan corridor, via Xinjiang province, and the stroke on the right, the China-Myanmar-Bangladesh-India corridor via Yunnan province.

Chinese culture feasts on myriad formulas, mottoes – and symbols. If many a Chinese scholar worries about how the Middle Kingdom's new intimation of soft power may be lost in translation, the character jie – pregnant with connectivity – is already the starting point to make 1.3 billion Chinese, plus the overseas Chinese diaspora, visualize the top twin axis – continental and naval – of the New Silk Road vision unveiled by President Xi Jinping, a concept also known as "One Road, One Belt".

In practical terms, it also helps that the New Silk Road will be boosted by a special, multi-billion-dollar Silk Road Fund and the new Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB), which, not by accident, has attracted the attention of European investors.

The New Silk Road, actually roads, symbolizes China's pivot to an old heartland: Eurasia. That implies a powerful China even more enriched by its environs, without losing its essence as a civilization-state. Call it a post-modern remix of the Tang, Sung and early Ming dynasties – as Beijing deftly and recently stressed via a superb exhibition in the National Museum of China consisting of rare early Silk Road pieces assembled from a range of regional museums.

If in the past, China had a unifying infrastructure enterprise like the Great Wall. In the future it will have a major project of unifying Eurasia via high-speed rail. When one considers the breadth of this vision, http://www.jamestown.org/single/?tx_ttnews%5Btt_news%5D=43626&tx_ttnews%5BbackPid%5D=7&cHash=943c3fb1d23aefca0021f99432e34917#.VQwBJCIl-fv depictions of Xi striving to be an equal of Mao Zedong and Deng Xiaoping sound so pedestrian.

Of course China's new drive may be interpreted as the stirrings of a new tributary system, ordered and centered in Beijing. At the same time, many in the U.S. are uncomfortable that the New Silk Road may be a geopolitical, “peaceful development”, “win-win” answer to the Obama administration’s Pentagon-driven pivoting to Asia.

Beijing has been quick to dismiss any notions of hegemony. It maintains this is http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/opinion/2015-03/10/content_19772350.htm no Marshall Plan. It’s undeniable that the Marshall Plan “covered only Western nations and excluded all countries and regions the West thought were ideologically close to the Soviet Union”. China, on the other hand, is focused on integrating “emerging economies” into a vast, pan-Eurasian trade/commerce network.

Achtung! Seidenstrasse! (Attention! Silk Road!)

It’s no wonder top nations in the beleaguered EU have gravitated to the AIIB – which will play a key role in the New Silk Road(s). A German geographer – Ferdinand von Richthofen – invented the Seidenstrasse (Silk Road) concept. Marco Polo forever linked Italy with the Silk Road. The EU is already China’s number one trade partner. And, once again symbolically, this happens to be the 40th year of China-EU relations. Watch the distinct possibility of an emerging Sino-European Fund that finances infrastructure and even green energy projects across an integrated Eurasia.

It’s as if the Angel of History – that striking image in a Paul Klee painting eulogized by philosopher Walter Benjamin – is now trying to tell us that a 21st century China-EU Seidenstrasse synergy is all but inevitable. And that, crucially, would have to include Russia, which is a vital part of the New Silk Road through an upcoming, Russia-China financed $280 billion high-speed rail upgrade of the Trans-Siberian railway. This is where the New Silk Road project and President Putin’s initial idea of a huge trade emporium from Lisbon to Vladivostok actually merge.

In parallel, the 21st century Maritime Silk Road will deepen the already frantic trade interaction between China and Southeast Asia by sea. Fujian province – which faces Taiwan – will play a key role. Xi, crucially, spent many years of his life in Fujian. And Hong Kong, not by accident, also http://www.scmp.com/comment/insight-opinion/article/1732946/chinas-silk-road-fund-alternative-route-riches wants to be part of the action.

All these developments are driven by China being finally ready to become a massive net exporter of capital and the top source of credit for the Global South. In a few months, Beijing will launch the http://www.reuters.com/article/2015/03/09/us-china-yuan-payments-exclusive-idUSKBN0M50BV20150309 China International Payment System (CIPS), bound to turbo-charge the yuan as a key global currency for all types of trade. There’s the AIIB. And if that was not enough, there’s still the New Development Bank, launched by the BRICs to compete with the World Bank, and run from Shanghai.

It can be argued that the success of the entire Silk Road hinges on how Beijing will handle restive, Uyghur-populated Xinjiang – which should be seen as one of key nodes of Eurasia. This is a subplot – fraught with insecurity, to say the least – that should be followed in detail for the rest of the decade. What’s certain is that most of Asia will feel the tremendous pull of China’s Eurasian drive.

And Eurasia – contrary to perennial Brzezinski wishful thinking – will likely take the form of a geopolitical challenge: A de facto China-Russia strategic partnership that manifests itself in various facets of the New Silk Road that also bolsters the strength of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO).

By then, both Iran and Pakistan will be SCO members. The close relations between what was ancient Persia and China span two millennia – and now they are viewed by Beijing as a matter of national security. Pakistan is an essential node of the Maritime Silk Road, especially when one considers the Indian Ocean port of Gwadar, which in a few years may double as a key transit point of the IP or Iran-Pakistan gas pipeline. It may also be the starting point of yet another major Chinese Pipelineistan gambit parallel to the Karakorum highway, delivering gas to Xinjiang.

Beijing values both Iran and Pakistan – the intersection of Southwest Asia and South Asia – as fundamentally strategic nodes of the New Silk Road. This allows China to project trade/commerce power not only in the Indian Ocean but the Persian Gulf.

Got vision, will travel

Washington's alarm at these developments betrays the glaring absence of an enticing made -in-the-USA vision to woo pan-Eurasian public opinion – apart from a hazy military pivoting posture mixed with relentless NATO expansion, **and the TTIP "free trade" corporate racket, also known across Asia as "NATO on trade".**

The counter punch to the above could be already coming via the BRICs; the SCO; the non-stop http://rt.com/news/238857-china-russia-mature-partnership/ strengthtening of the China-Russia strategic partnership. There's also the expansion of the Eurasian Union (Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Russia – with Kyrgyzstan soon acceding, followed by Tajikistan). In the Middle East, Syria is seriously studying the possibility, and a trade agreement with Egypt has already been clinched. In Southeast Asia, a pact with Vietnam will be a done deal by the end of 2015.

Russia and China's "secret" agenda in helping to clinch an Iran-P5+1 nuclear deal paves the way for Tehran to be admitted to the SCO as a full member. Expect, as early as 2016, an SCO alignment that unites at least 60% of Eurasia, with a population of 3.5 billion people and a wealth of oil and gas that more than matches the Gulf Cooperation Council states.

So the real story is not how China will http://www.wsj.com/articles/the-coming-chinese-crack-up-1425659198 collapse, as peddled by David Shambaugh, the so-called second top China expert in the U.S. (who's the first? Henry Kissinger?) This is a line that's been soundly debunked by many sources. http://nationalinterest.org/feature/sorry-america-china-not-going-collapse-12389 http://www.counterpunch.org/2015/03/17/twilight-of-the-chinese-communist-party/

The real story, which a revived Asia Times will be covering in detail in upcoming years, is how the myriad aspects of the New Silk Road will be configuring a new Eurasian dream. Have vision, will travel. Bon voyage.

Pepe Escobar's latest book is: http://www.amazon.com/Empire-Chaos-Roving-Eye-Collection-ebook/dp/B00OYVYD3G/ref=sr_1_1?s=digital-text&ie=UTF8&qid=1423800890&sr=1-1&keywords=empire+of+chaos

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