

Geo-cultural strategy for Eurasia

A Paradigm for the New Silk Road

Emre Kovacs and Murray Hunter

In September 2013, Chinese President Xi Jinping proposed that China and Central Asia collaborate to build a *Silk Road Economic Belt*, which would comprise all countries within the Eurasian region. According to Eurasian expert and China Daily columnist Liang Qiang, such a corridor would be the [World's longest economic belt, with the most potential for development](#), and a strategic base of energy resources in the 21st century.

Liang Qiang further noted: “The Chinese government can strive for the vision of establishing the Silk Road Economic Belt by making further efforts to build mutual trust and overcome doubts, such as making clear the difference between China’s vision and those of Russia and the US, and stressing development and cooperation without economic integration, and by taking into consideration the different concerns of different countries and actively seeking converging economic interests with regional countries.”

In the 2014 [Report on the Work of the Government](#), Premier Li Keqiang reaffirmed that China will intensify on its planning and building of a *Silk Road Economic Belt* and a 21st century maritime Silk Road.

[Chinese State Councilor Yang Jiechi just recently stated](#) publicly that mutual cultural understanding will be paramount and fundamental to making the Silk Road development initiative work for all.

The authors believe that, just as important as the economic considerations and aspects of a new Silk Road concept, is the formulation of a geo-cultural framework for the Silk Road. This is based upon the assumption that with better mutual understanding and appreciation of each other’s art and culture, an environment of trust will overcome any underlying deep rooted historical and modern prejudices, doubts, suspicions, misunderstandings arising from cultural differences which would otherwise make the common ground of the Silk Road slippery and unpredictable.

Thus one of the major barriers to implementing the Silk Road Economic Belt will be overcoming the long embedded divisions and prejudices, some justified and others unjustified, and fears of Chinese economic and demographic domination, as China reemerges as the major influential power in the region.

This requires serious discussion about what type of programs should accompany Silk Road development itself, where new policy approaches will be necessary to overcome the barriers discussed above.

At the wake of this new Eurasian economic initiative, a new paradigm is needed to solve the problems created by fast development, and the shift of economic balance towards Asia.

There is a great historical example here, a proven Asian paradigm which was successful in promoting many diverse cultures with a mutually shared prosperity, where the peoples of the region prospered. This paradigm is the culture and economy of the ancient Silk Road.

Today the ancient Silk Road is being rebuilt in the form of a transcontinental network of bullet trains, oil and gas pipelines, highways, telecommunication lines and satellites, trade agreements and scientific cooperation. But the silk road economic belt also needs a cultural soul.

The authors propose the creation of a *Silk Road Cultural Belt* which should be focused on the nations and cultures of countries comprising the Silk Road region. The programs should focus on the developing the indigenous cultures of those nations which once have all been connected through the Silk Road, both on land and on the seaway.

In this regard, one must bear in mind that the ancient Silk Road was not only a road for commodity exchange. The burgeoning economy along the Silk Road was made possible by the mutual appreciation of each other's culture and artifacts. Cultural understanding and interaction was the very base which sustained and enhanced the trade and economies within the Silk Road Belt and acted as a unifying force for Asia. The ancient Silk Road was the road of commodities, but it was as much as the road of ideas, art, cultures, spiritual teachings, scholarly knowledge, medicine and gastronomy.

A new scholarly understanding of the different cultures, their intricate connection and often shared roots, will bring the nations of Eurasia closer to each other.

A new, heartfelt and sincere artistic expression nurtured by the rich cultural inspiration of the Silk Road traditions will make the precious knowledge and experience of many generations available for modern thought and action. The scholars and the artists with vision will together surely find many keys and focal points to map out the road towards an enhanced Asian cultural understanding, and mutual prosperity.

Everything that exists and created by humans has to exist first in the mind to become an idea and thought, which can be followed by action and accomplishment. Scholarship and art can conceive, create and communicate ideas and thoughts for actions and accomplishments. [Imagination](#) is the key to innovation.

Eurasian nations, we believe, will, in this way, come to recognize what is common, everlasting and beautiful within each culture of the vast Eurasian continent.

The paramount goal should be for the different cultures to be inspired by each

other to find and cultivate their common roots and values, to appreciate each other's specialties and differences..

It is envisioned that as a result, understanding and relationships will deepen between the participating people and their nations. The Eurasian Cultural Belt should become the focal point and radiating source of a new Eurasian consciousness for the reemerging New Silk Road which we believe will be a key factor in the twenty-first century coexistence.

If we want to have the blessings and opportunities that will come with a renewed Eurasian consciousness, we need to rebuild this Eurasian consciousness on solid ground, cemented by art, scholarship and culture. Surely, economics and politics will follow.

While the people of the world are often divided by political and economic interests, the authors believe that it would be possible for people to communicate more effectively with one another and to form a true brotherhood through culture exchange and mutual appreciation.

Music, dance, the fine arts, fashion and gastronomy have a strong attraction for people, and can often be easily shared and appreciated. In other words, culture can bring people together.

It is also important that through culture people can often come to know one another. The soul of a people, their innermost nature, is expressed in their fine art, music, dance and gastronomy.

It is the opinion of the authors that scholarship, art and economy go hand in hand, that they are interdependent and are able to either nurture or destroy each other. Regarded as a whole, they need to be brought into harmony. Otherwise, destructive forces can emerge to threaten the achievements of humanity.

The facilitation of cultural understanding through scholarship and art should be the primary goal of The Eurasian Cultural Belt. This will make Eurasian Cultural Belt conferences and exhibitions of the New Silk Road unique events, where scholars and artists, the leaders of culture, economy and politics can find new tools and comprehensive approaches for their own work.

The engine of the above initiative should be the Eurasian Cultural Exchange Trade Posts (ECETP), domiciled in every capital and major city of the new Silk Road. These trade posts should take the form of spacious art and cultural villages, housing libraries, study rooms for scholars, art galleries, showrooms, conference and meeting facilities, cafes, restaurants and hotels along with art fashion and media studios to facilitate excitement, experience and interaction between scholars and artists and anybody else interested.

The programs should include art and research scholarships, conferences, presentations, exhibitions, media events and public culture dissemination.

The culture and history of the nations of the New Silk Road should be researched

and promoted by the Eurasian Cultural Exchange Trade Post. Confidence, self esteem and generosity towards each other will than develop in an open and inclusive atmosphere.

The Eurasian Cultural Exchange Trade Post will work on the premise that diversity is strength and not weakness, and that cooperation evolves from the appreciation and understanding of each other's culture. According to Charles Darwin, those that survive are not the strongest, or smartest, but those who are able to adapt to changing environments.

This is the necessary new paradigm for the Eurasia of the 21st century and beyond. Otherwise division and strife will dominate the next century within the old paradigms we know, in the midst of environmental and social deterioration.

Emre Kovacs is an independent scholar-artist. He is committed to the research of the common roots and interaction of Eurasian cultures from the stone age up to our days. He is a spiritual teacher, the author of books, articles and artworks, the creator of large granite stones and bronzes. For spiritual teachings he uses an ancient native script of deep symbolism which he researched, practices and teach as well. He has an interdisciplinary background reflecting his various interests including the fine arts, art history, linguistics, theology, religious studies, computer system design and cultural anthropology. He travels frequently in Eurasia. He had several intellectual and spiritual teachers in different parts of the world.

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Murray Hunter has been involved in Asia-Pacific business for the last 30 years as an entrepreneur, consultant, academic, and researcher.

As an entrepreneur he was involved in numerous start-ups, developing a lot of patented technology, where one of his enterprises was listed in 1992 as the fifth fastest going company on the BRW/Price Waterhouse Fast100 list in Australia.

Murray is now an associate professor at the University Malaysia Perlis, spending a lot of time consulting to Asian governments on community development and village biotechnology, both at the strategic level and "*on the ground*". He is also a visiting professor at a number of universities and regular speaker at conferences and workshops in the region.

Murray is the author of a number of books, numerous research and conceptual papers in referred journals, and commentator on the issues of entrepreneurship, development,

and politics in a number of magazines and online news sites around the world. He takes a trans-disciplinary view of issues and events, trying to relate this to the enrichment and empowerment of people in the region.