

# Professor Yang Jiemian:

## Strategic Implications of the BRI



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“There is an English expression, ‘the early bird catches the worm’. The Chinese idiom ‘whoever runs fast and first will get the results’, more or less has the same meaning. So first, the Belt and Road Initiative focuses on economic cooperation. Economic cooperation means we can only get the benefits and gains when we get an early start. Only those who start first, and have a strategic vision can achieve more than the others. For instance, when the Belt and Road Initiative was first begun, Great Britain was not on the map, the initiative stopped at Düsseldorf. But the British were very smart and they said, ‘We have the British Northern Engine Programme and we could match it with the Belt and Road Initiative’. And when these two leaders came together we made it happen. Nowadays, people are calling for immediate and tangible benefits, which is very important. If you tell people you can reap the harvest in 10 years, nobody will want to follow you. You must give them an early harvest. This is in our strategic thinking as well. So therefore an early harvest is necessary both to convince supporters and demonstrate [what is ahead for] the future.”

*“China and Britain, as a joint driving force, could work together in institution building, rule-making, advanced research and closer networking.”*

Through the BRI, China-Britain can not only generate more markets, investments, and jobs, but also show the world their unique perspectives and wisdom. The direct cargo railway service between Yiwu and London is a good example with immediate gains, and their financial cooperation holds far-reaching significance. This is not only a matter of economic benefit.

Second, the Belt and Road Initiative strives for policy coordination, interconnectivity and people-to-people exchanges. In addition to economic cooperation, cooperation in finance, investment, infrastructure and China-Britain plus, we could cooperate [in other areas]. Our respective and joint strategies and policies should be ones of stability, predictability and sustainability, but most of all compatibility. Furthermore, people-to-people exchanges provide the basis for a deeper and better understanding of each other.

Third, we are [working] in tandem, and should pool our resources. China proposed the initiative, but expects to join efforts with all the relevant

parties for planning, consultation and building to achieve a win-win end. On one hand China is still a developing country; people might laugh [when they hear this], but [the very developed cities of] Shanghai, Shenzhen, Beijing are only part of [China]. Go to Guizhou, go to Sichuan, then you can better appreciate why we say we are still a developing country. We have limited experience in promoting this unprecedented BRI mega-project. It is easy for us to set up a business, for us to establish a technical, new, high-tech park; it is more difficult to set up joint ventures which have the guidance and enlightenment for our people and for the younger generations to come. Our two countries are located at both ends of the Belt and Road Initiative. China and Britain complement each other, especially when it comes to strategic planning, pragmatic business, the high end of the economy and multilateral cooperation.

My fourth thought: strategic consultation and [partnership]. The Belt and Road Initiative could garner the best possible achievements only by [having participants] docking

with each other's plan, such as the British Northern Engine Programme, the German Industry 4.0 Strategic Initiative, the Sunny Road of Kazakhstan, and the Grassland Road of Mongolia.

Furthermore, China and Britain could draw benefits from expanding our coordination with the programmes of other Belt and Road Initiative participants. Britain was among the first of several major western countries to join the Belt and Road Initiative and the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank; with your joining, and AIIB Australia, others followed. Moreover, larger scale economic cooperation implies more strategic and diplomatic coordination is also happening.

China and Britain are two important actors in the present world, and they complement each other in many ways. China and Britain, as a joint driving force, could work together in institution building, rule-making, advanced research and closer networking. Indeed collective cooperation would achieve far more than individual efforts for the BRI.”