

# Thoughts on Silk Road Think Tank Network

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The Silk Road Think Tank Network is a great contribution to the Silk Road project which brings about the opportunity to realise joining Asia and Europe by land, which will contribute substantial economic development to the world.

The concept of Eurasia has existed for many centuries and this project is a good example of using the past to inform the future. The new form of Eurasia replaces camel trains by trains and highways and canals. It supplements the ocean travel of freight and the passengers by air. The terrain it covers will follow many energy pipelines and lead to a substantial urbanisation of many hundreds of millions of people over the next decades.

It spreads prosperity across nations and regions and by building sustainable trade and investment it creates inter-dependence that promotes peace, innovation from new peoples and companies, and enables many to escape poverty. It also promotes sustainable development as its very transnational thinking means the new and sustainable ways will be employed.

It is clear that China and other nations have already formed many ideas and plans, and new trading and security blocks have created an outline structure for the developments and their security.

New financial institutions – such as AIIB, the Silk Road Fund, the Brics Bank – and future ones consolidate modern financial flows into this initial stage which could total \$10 trillion.

The project has highlighted high-speed trains as a major component and this sets the picture for state of the art technology to be used in the core infrastructure. As much of this is currently in G7 companies the potential for jealousy is minimised as there will be a spread of benefit across many nations inside the Silk Roads and from well beyond their borders.

Harmonising the infrastructure across borders to enable seamless development will be a task of the commissioning bodies and the sources of finance.

This is a new way of managing development and the transnational dimensions will add to the cost of doing business. So careful thought must be given to finding the balance between harmonising and

cost, efficiency and latest technologies.

There will need to be excellent co-ordination and auditing to ensure efficiency, appropriate decisions, and a commitment to address the tendency of corruption to appear in such big endeavours, which calls for constant audit procedures to be efficient and effective without excessive slowing.

This is a business roundtable and primarily concerned with business dimensions.

So moving to the more specific from those introductory comments we should not over concern ourselves with business communications establishing where and how the opportunities will be tendered. The requirements of modern financing will ensure that new business tenders are well advertised, and the financial institutions should ensure proper procedures for decision making.

What is needed is a supervening communication network so business can always know what is being considered and offered for tenders.

The Think Tank Network should develop a set of specific proposals around the tendering and the publicity .

But the Network should also concern itself with establishing a multinational – and possibly multi language – magazine that promotes understanding to business of what has happened, is happening and will happen.

This magazine should be developed on a commercial basis as that proves its worth, but overall managed by those who understand the long term objectives. Short term profit should not subsume the integrity of the long term process of good articles and research.

Whilst the magazine should not seek to be a critique of what is happening it can play a role in promoting good quality assessments.

The Network should also promote within itself a business group who ensure that they are communicating on a macro level how the business community is engaging and how that can be improved. Their recommendations can come to an annual meeting of the sort we are seeing this week.

As the materials produce more understanding so the Network may find there are issues that are arising of a general nature that require some study and recommendations to mature.

In this field the Network should not become a lobbying body but a network that enables understanding of issues .

There are many challenges ahead and the Network and its business agendas should be focused on informing and understanding how to manage the challenges.

Governments and institutions make the decisions. We should not try to establish our thinking beyond the exploration of issues and ideas to address new challenges, and promoting understanding of the Silk Roads.

The Network might consider establishing a network of Silk Road Trade Promotion Organisations (SRTPO) in each country that wishes to participate. The national SRTPO's could be coordinated through this network to develop a medium term form, and that can be reviewed on a regular basis for effectiveness. Such an idea can be thought through if it meets the needs of the Network.