

Heilongjiang's Participation in the Belt and Road Initiative

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Chinese General Secretary Xi Jinping put forward new instructions during the official visit to Northeast China that three provinces (Heilongjiang, Jilin, Liaoning) had to deepen the integration of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and to build an open border area. Heilongjiang Province has 25 national highly-developed ports and 2,981 kilometers of the Russian-Chinese border. In the last five years, Heilongjiang Province, using its advantageous geographical position in the core of Northeast Asia, has actively promoted the national strategy of the Belt and Road Initiative. It has deepened open cooperation with the countries in Northeast Asia and has focused on developing economic and trade cooperation, strategic interaction with Russia and building a new model of openness to the outside world in order to achieve significant results. The paper describes the progress of the participation of Heilongjiang Province in the Belt and Road Initiative, which was launched in 2013, in terms of the “five links” strategy. This strategy includes policy coordination, financial integration, infrastructure development, unimpeded trade and close relations between people. The feasible measures for the growth of thorough openness of Heilongjiang Province are proposed.

Keywords: Belt and Road Initiative, Heilongjiang Province, international cooperation, Northeast Asia, Russia, China, free trade, “five links” strategy.

Участие провинции Хэйлунцзян в проекте «Один пояс, один путь».

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Председатель КНР Си Цзиньпин во время инспекции на Северо-Востоке Китая озвучил указания, что три провинции КНР (Хэйлунцзян, Цзилинь, Ляонин) должны углубить свою интеграцию в инициативу «Один пояс, один путь» и в результате создать открытый приграничный район. В провинции Хэйлунцзян имеется 25 национальных высокоразвитых портов, а протяжённость китайско-российской границы составляет 2981 км. В последние пять лет провинция, используя выгодное географическое положение в центре Северо-Восточной Азии, активно продвигалась в рамках инициативы «Один пояс, один путь», углубляя открытое сотрудничество со странами Северо-Восточной Азии и уделяя при этом основное внимание развитию экономического и торгового сотрудничества, стратегической стыковке с Россией

и выстраиванию новой модели открытости внешнему миру для достижения весомых результатов. В данной статье подробно описывается прогресс участия провинции Хэйлунцзян в проекте «Один пояс, один путь», начиная с момента его запуска в 2013 г., в аспекте построения «Пяти точек на одной линии», а именно: координация политики, финансовая интеграция, развитие инфраструктуры, беспрепятственной торговли и более тесных связей между людьми. Предлагаются возможные меры для углубления всесторонней открытости провинции Хэйлунцзян.

Ключевые слова: «Один пояс, один путь», провинция Хэйлунцзян, международное сотрудничество, Северо-Восточная Азия, Россия, Китай, свободная торговля, «Пять точек на одной линии».

INTRODUCTION

In September, 2013, Chinese General Secretary Xi Jinping proposed the major initiative of “Jointly Building the Silk Road Economic Belt” and “the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road” in Kazakhstan and in Indonesia respectively, which is a great practice in building community with a shared future for mankind. In March 2015, the National Development and Reform Commission, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the Ministry of Commerce issued *Vision and Action for Promoting the Construction of the Silk Road Economic Belt and the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road*, which defined BRI as “policy coordination, connectivity of facility, unimpeded trade, financial integration, and closer people-to-people ties” (hereinafter referred to as “five links”) [6]. As one of the nine border provinces in China, Heilongjiang Province has 2,981 km border line with Russia and 25 national first-class ports. In the past five years, Heilongjiang Province has exerted its geographical advantages, actively participated in BRI, and focused on strategic docking with Russia and achieved fruitful results. This paper reviews in detail the progress and challenges faced by Heilongjiang Province in achieving the goals of “five links”, and then proposes feasible suggestions.

THE CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The paper mainly falls in five parts. First, from the perspective of policy coordination, Heilongjiang Province introduced relevant policies under the guidance of BRI, which cover three planning of “Eastern Land-sea Silk Road Economic Belt”, “Longjiang Land-sea Silk Road Economic Belt” (hereinafter referred to as “Longjiang Silk Road Belt”), and new pattern of “One Window, Four Districts”. And Russia also promulgated relevant documents in response to Heilongjiang Province’s planning, which contributes to effective docking between two sides and promotes Heilongjiang Province’s cooperation with Russia in various fields. Second, connectivity of infrastructure has achieved

remarkable results concerning the expansion of land and sea combined transport lines, the normal operation of Harbin-Europe Train and Harbin-Russia Train, the construction of cross-border bridges, the opening of oil and gas pipelines, and the opening of container hubs, the construction of high-speed railways, the renovation of hub airports and branch airports, and the construction of Sino-Russian information hub projects. Third, in the aspect of unimpeded trade, Heilongjiang Province mainly focuses on economic and trade cooperation with Russia. The part shows that cooperation in the past decade has grown to good trend. And recently, Heilongjiang Province has taken actions to transform traditional trade structure and vigorously developed “Internet + trade” cross-border e-commerce cooperation. Fourth, concerning financial integration, Heilongjiang Province has strengthened cooperation in finance with Northeast Asian countries, which will promote the circulation of currency and financial intermediation to optimize the allocation of resources, create stable financing environment to advance more open and deeper cooperation. In terms of financial services, Heilongjiang Province has made certain progress in the areas of facilitation and corporate financing channels. Fifth, concerning closer people-to-people ties, in the fields of science and technology education, some of colleges and universities have succeeded in cooperation of running school with others in foreign countries to boost the exploration of new educational mechanism and mode and enhance the breadth and depth of educational exchange. Moreover, Heilongjiang Province has established scientific cooperation projects and platforms with Russia. In cross-border tourism, based on the unique advantages of the original ecological environment, the tourism industry has been vigorously developed, and “clear waters and green mountains are invaluable assets”.

HEILONGJIANG PROVINCE'S PROGRESS ON “FIVE LINKS”

I. Policy Coordination [1; 10]

In response to BRI, Heilongjiang Province, on the basis of analyzing the top-level design and the advantages of the province, successively proposed a series of plans that met the needs of cooperation with other countries and of regional cooperation in Northeast Asia, which could deepen the integration of interests of all participating countries.

1. Preliminary Exploration: the Eastern Land-sea Silk Road Economic Belt

In August 2014, the Standing Committee of the Provincial Party Committee studied the Eastern Land-sea Silk Road Economic Belt, and proposed to incorporate it into national planning and to focus on connectivity of BRI with the provincial Five Major Planning and Provincial 13th Five-Year Plan. This plan aims to accelerate infrastructure interconnection of Heilongjiang Province with neighboring provinces and regional countries, and promote

the transformation and upgrading of foreign economic and trade cooperation. After the plan was submitted, President Xi Jinping made important instructions to definitely encourage this idea.

At the beginning of 2015, Heilongjiang Province issued *the Work Plan for Promoting the Construction of the Eastern Land-sea Silk Road Economic Belt*, which proposed to build a cross-border transportation system for the Harbin-Manzhouli-Russia-Europe Railway, speed up the infrastructure interconnection, accelerate the construction of supporting service facilities, and increase energy resources cooperation and development efforts, strengthen the construction of cross-border industrial parks and industrial chains, extensively carry out humanities science and technology exchanges and cooperation, so as to clarify the planning and goals of Heilongjiang Province's construction of the Eastern Land-sea Silk Road Economic Belt.

2. In-depth Advancement: Longjiang Land-sea Silk Road Economic Belt

In December 2014, the Heilongjiang Provincial Party Committee Economic Work Conference clearly stated for the first time that it would speed up the construction of the "China-Mongolia-Russia Economic Corridor" Longjiang Land-sea Silk Road Economic Belt. It is generally east-west, westbound connecting the Russian Siberian and Baikal-Amur Railways to the hinterland of Europe, eastbound radiating Japan, South Korea and other Northeast Asian countries, and connect to North China, East China, South China. At the beginning of 2015, the Heilongjiang Provincial Government Work Report clearly stated to deepen the all-round exchanges and cooperation with Russia to promote opening up, implement the strategic plan of BRI, and accelerate the construction of the planning, and strengthen all-round exchanges and cooperation with Russia.

The planning takes Harbin as the center and goes west to Manzhouli to connect with the Eurasian Continental Bridge via the Russian's Chita, and connects the Heihe River to the Siberian Railway to the north, echoing the Silk Road on the land, East to Suifenhe to the Russian Far East port that can reach Japan, South Korea, North Korea, south through Dalian into East China, South China and the Bohai Sea, the Yangtze River Delta, the Pearl River Delta, then connected to the Maritime Silk Road. The goals are to continuously improve the construction of an export-oriented economic system, create a convenient and smooth international channel, and build a cross-border transportation network for Russia and connecting Asia and Europe. The center of this "net" is Harbin. The four veins are the Daqing-Harbin-Jiamusi-Tongjiang Railway, Suifenhe-Manzhouli Railway, the Harbin-Heihe Railway, and railways along the border, which link to the Russian Siberian Railway and the Baikal-Amur Railway to jointly form international cargo passage network to link Asia and Europe. This line will attract a large number of production factors to gather along the line, in which domestic and overseas industrial parks and cross-border industrial chains are essential elements so as to jointly build a new growth pole for Northeast Asia regional economy.

3. Comprehensive Improvement: a New Pattern of All-round Opening up of "One Window, Four Districts"

In April 2017, under the instructions of Xi Jinping's investigation in Heilongjiang, the 12th Party Congress of Heilongjiang Province proposed to focus on optimizing the opening up pattern, deepening the national strategy of BRI, actively participating in the construction of China-Mongolia-Russia economic corridor, and strengthening cross-border infrastructure construction, improve the opening up platform, develop export-oriented industries, expand foreign exchanges and cooperation, and accelerate the formation of a new pattern of all-round opening up.

In August 2017, Zhang Qingwei, secretary of the provincial party committee, emphasized at the special meeting of the Leading Group for Promoting the Construction of BRI in Heilongjiang Province that the whole province should thoroughly implement the spirit of important speech to Heilongjiang and Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation Summit, more actively dock BRI and the construction of China-Russia-European Economic Corridor, continuously improve the level of docking with the Russian Far East, create an important window for China's opening to the north, build Heilongjiang Sino-Russian Free Trade Area, key development and open experimental zone along the border, cross-border economic cooperation demonstration zone, logistics hub extending to Europe and Asia (ie "One Window, Four Districts"), which would accelerate the formation of a new pattern of all-round opening up.

4. Docking of China and Russia Relevant Planning

In recent years, China and Russia have successively signed *the Outline of Cooperation between Northeast China and Russia's Far East and Siberia (2009–2018)*, *the Outline of the Construction of China-Mongolia-Russia Economic Corridor*, *China-Russia Joint Statement on the Construction of the Silk Road Economic Belt and the Construction of the Eurasian Economic Union*, *China-Russia Cooperation Planning in the Russian Far East (2018–2024)* and other documents. In May 2018, Heilongjiang Province established *the Joint System of Heilongjiang Province's Cooperation with Russia*, and Harbin City proposed *A Three-year Action Plan for the Construction of BRI (2019–2021)*, which laid a good foundation for cooperation with Russia. Russia has also intensively introduced *Social and Economic Development Plan for the Far East and Baikal Region*, *Development Concepts for Border Areas Such as the Far East Federal District and the Baikal Region*, *Leaping Social and Economic Development Zone Law*, *On the Free Port Law of Vladivostok*, *the Development Concept of Binhai No. 1 and Binhai No. 2 International Transportation Corridor*, *the Law on Prolonging Tax Preference for Large-scale Investment Projects in the Far East Federal District*, and *the Strategy of Social and Economic Development in the Far East and Baikal Regions Before 2025*, which were beneficial to cooperation upgrade of laws and regulations between Northeast China and the Russian Far East.

II. Connectivity of Infrastructure

In the past five years, Heilongjiang Province has strengthened its connectivity with neighboring countries in the field of infrastructure construction projects, jointly promoted the construction of cross-border multi-domain channels, and gradually built an infrastructure network that would radiate Northeast Asia and connect to Europe and America.

1. The Construction of “Three Bridges, One Island, One Corridor, One Port”

Road unicom is a prerequisite for unimpeded trade. Guided by Xi Jinping’s important speech on Heilongjiang in 2016, Heilongjiang Province proposed to use “three bridges, one island and one port” as a breakthrough to accelerate infrastructure construction and promote multi-point docking of cross-border infrastructure. Specifically, Heilongjiang Province has implemented the construction of Tongjiang Railway Bridge, Heihe Highway Bridge, Dongning boundary Highway Bridge and Heixiazi Island Port, and made a good connection with the Russian Binhai No. 1 International Corridor, and form an interaction with Vladivostok Free port, which is bound to build a cross-border multiple transport corridor to extend to Russia, Asia and Europe, and integrate an interconnected network of infrastructure, including railways, highways, waterways, aviation and pipelines. The construction is a new way for Heilongjiang Province to rely on domestic regional cooperation and focus on opening up to Russia in order to create a new all-round opening to Europe, the United States, Japan, South Korea, Hong Kong, Macao and Taiwan. During the period of the Third Five-Year Plan, Heilongjiang Province has accelerated cross-border infrastructure construction.

2. Normal Operation of Harbin-Europe Train

On January 5, 2017, Harbin-Europe Train was formally incorporated into the China-European train chart and became a famous brand in China and Europe. At present, China’s 3C products, daily necessities, textile products, Volvo vehicles are continuously sent to the hinterland of Europe, while imported auto parts and high-end daily necessities from Europe are also sent from Harbin to all parts of the country. With the increase of freight volume, the operating hours and operating costs of Harbin-Europe Train are further compressed, and a standardized, professional and normal operation mode has been formed. For the time being, Harbin-Europe Train has become a cross-border railway line for China’s railway transportation to Russia with the shortest time, the lowest cost and the best environment.

3. The Construction of Land-sea Transport

Harbin-Suifenhe-Russia-Asia land-sea transport, centered on Harbin and supported by Harbin-Mudanjiang-Suifenhe-Dongning industrial belt, with the help of the Russian Far East port groups, has opened “Chinese-foreign-foreign” international cargo corridors to Japan and South Korea and

“Chinese-foreign-Chinese” domestic trade goods cross-border transportation corridor, and “foreign-Chinese-foreign” Eurasian international transport corridor, which is an important result on connectivity of China’s BRI with Russia’s Eurasian Economic Union and South Korea’s Eurasia Initiative. Harbin-Suifenhe-Russia-Asia land-sea transport has penetrated Europe and Asia, which has outstanding potential. The goods are transported from Harbin via Suifenhe Port and Russian Far East Port to Busan, South Korea, with 224 km shorter than via Dalian Port, and 1390 km and 740 km respectively to Niigata and Yokohama, and 2,000 km to the west coast of the United States, which can effectively accelerate Heilongjiang Province’s economic and trade cooperation with the Russian Far East, Japan and South Korea. Since the official opening in June 2016, 94 trains and 10,500 TEU have been issued, with a volume of 158,000 tons and a value of 950 million yuan. The domestic trade goods import ports have been extended to 15 in Shanghai and Taicang, and the transportation commodities have been expanded to various varieties such as grain, petrochemical and timber. On April 11, 2017, the express route from Russia Oriental Port to Taicang Port in China was opened (only 9 days from Dongfang Port to Taicang Port and then returning to Dongfang Port. The three flights per month are the most efficient and the shortest.)

4. The Construction of Oil and Gas Pipelines

The Sino-Russian crude oil pipeline starts from crude oil pipeline Skovorodino distribution station in the Russian Far East, crosses the Chinese border, passes through Heilongjiang and Inner Mongolia, and ends at the Daqing terminal station in Heilongjiang. The pipeline is nearly 1,000 km long and has a designed annual oil transportation capacity of 15 million tons, with the maximum annual oil transportation capacity of 30 million tons. In January 2011, the Sino-Russian crude oil pipeline was officially put into operation. The Sino-Russian crude oil pipeline transportation contract of 15 million tons per year and 20 years is officially fulfilled. The Sino-Russian East Line natural gas pipeline project includes the “Siberian Power” pipeline in Russia and the Chinese territory of the Sino-Russian East Line natural gas pipeline project (ie Heihe-Shanghai), totaling more than 6,000 km. The newly built pipelines in the Chinese territory are 3,371 km, which are approved in phases according to the northern, central and southern sections (Heihe-Changling, Changling-Yongqing, Yongqing-Shanghai). The Heihe-Changling trunk line is 715 km long, which is the most difficult route construction project with the highest technical requirements, the most difficult construction conditions. The project plans to start production in Heilongjiang and Jilin sections at the end of 2019. The whole line will be completed and put into use in 2021, which will connect the Russian natural gas resources with key natural gas markets in Northeast China, Beijing-Tianjin-Hebei and Yangtze River Delta, and interconnect with the existing regional gas pipeline network. Therefore, the pipeline will supply clean and high-quality natural gas resources to the Northeast, Bohai Bay and Yangtze River Delta regions, reducing emissions of carbon dioxide and sulfur dioxide by more than 160 million tons per year.

III. Unimpeded Trade

Heilongjiang Province has focused on promoting the upgrading of foreign trade structure and deepening economic and trade cooperation with Russia.

1. Foreign Trade and Economic Development

The relationship between China and Russia is at its best in history with comprehensive strategic cooperation partnership. Cooperation policies are strongly guaranteed with the revitalization of old industrial bases such as Northeast China and the integration of the Russian Far East into national development strategy, and the cooperation mechanism between the two countries is complete and efficient including Northeast China and the Russian Far East and Baikal Intergovernmental Cooperation Committee and the Industrial Council, and a dialogue meeting between Chinese and Russian local leaders. At the end of 2018, the trade volume between China and Russia exceeded 100 billion US dollars for the first time. Just as Premier Li Keqiang said at the press conference of the NPC&CPPCC, we could not only grasp big projects, trade in bulk commodities, but also help small and micro enterprises, including cross-border e-commerce cooperation. It is possible to cooperate with the aerospace industry and to promote non-governmental exchanges, which is to use all the energy and resources to consolidate the achievements of China-Russia economic and trade scale which had exceeded 100 billion US dollars, and try to double it (fig. 1).

The economic and trade cooperation with Russia is the top priority. The development orientation of “opening a window and building four districts” will realize the transformation of Heilongjiang Province’s economic and trade cooperation with Russia to all-round cooperation, even extending to cooperation with the European region. Since the new century, Heilongjiang Province’s import and export trade with Russia has grown at a faster rate and is in a spiral upward trend. Since 2007, the trade volume between Heilongjiang Province and Russia has exceeded 10 billion US dollars for the first time, achieving a leap-forward development of trade with Russia. In 2009, affected by the financial crisis, bilateral trade volume fell sharply. In 2011, the Sino-Russian crude oil pipeline was put into operation, and the trade volume increased significantly. In 2018, Heilongjiang Province’s trade with Russia was once again greatly improved (fig. 2).

In promoting the construction of BRI, Heilongjiang Province has continued to deepen exchanges and cooperation in

The import and export of trade volume between

Year Countries	2014	2015		
	Total	Total	Year-on-year growth, %	Accounted for HLJ's import and export, %
Russia	232.6	108.5	-53.4	51.70
Japan	3.7	3.3	-12.3	1.60
South Korea	4.4	3.5	-19.2	1.70
Mongolia	1.4	1.2	-11.3	0.58

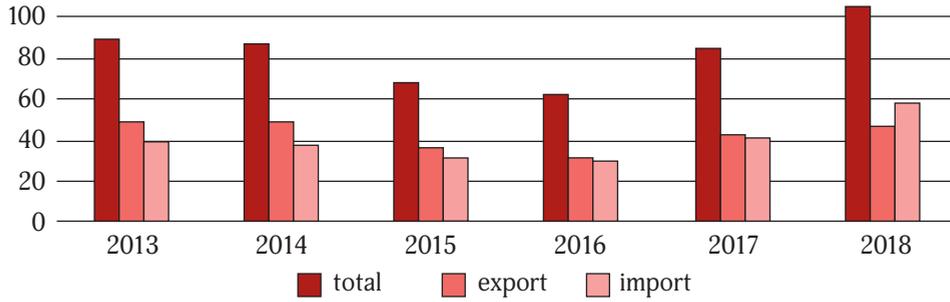


Fig. 1. The import and export of merchandise trade between China and Russia in 2013–2018 [11] (unit: billion dollars)

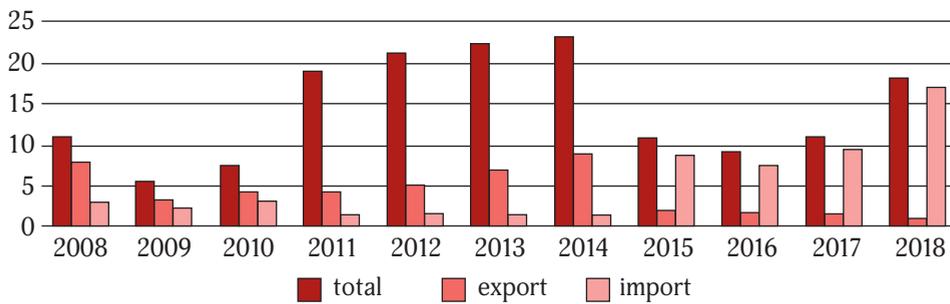


Fig. 2. The import and export of merchandise trade between Russia and HLJ in 2008–2018 [12; 4] (unit: billion dollars)

various fields in Northeast Asia countries such as Japan, South Korea and Mongolia. In 2018, the import and export trade volume of Heilongjiang Province with Japan, South Korea, and Mongolia accounted for 13.6%, 8.8%, and 5.4% of the province’s total foreign trade, respectively, with a significant increase from 2017. It can be seen that there is still much room for cooperation and development in the future among countries in the Northeast Asia region (table 1).

Table 1

HLJ and Northeast Asian countries in 2014–2018 [13; 14] (unit: billion dollars)

2016			2017			2018		
Total	Year-on-year growth, %	Accounted for HLJ's import and export, %	Total	Year-on-year growth, %	Accounted for HLJ's import and export, %	Total	Year-on-year growth, %	Accounted for HLJ's import and export, %
91.90	-15.3	55.60	110.90	22.5	58.1	181.9	64.7	69.8
3.80	16.5	2.30	4.30	13.9	2.2	3.6	-17.4	13.6
1.89	-46.6	1.60	1.93	2.2	1.0	2.3	19.2	8.8
0.80	-39.0	0.69	0.90	26.6	0.5	1.4	52.4	5.4

2. Transformation and Upgrading of Traditional Trade

At present, the traditional trade province of Heilongjiang is vigorously promoting cross-border “Internet + trade” and exploring a new mode of cross-border e-commerce business. Harbin and Daqing were approved by the National Development and Reform Commission to become national e-commerce demonstration cities. Harbin, Mudanjiang and Suifenhe were approved by the General Administration of Customs to become pilot cities for cross-border trade e-commerce services. Harbin Economic and Technological Development Zone, Suifenhe Border Economic Cooperation Zone, Daqing E-commerce Industrial Park and the E-commerce Enterprise Park of Mudanjiang Economic Development Zone were approved by the Ministry of Commerce to become a national e-commerce demonstration base. The e-commerce and logistics enterprises such as Heilongjiang SEG International Trade Co., Ltd., Heihe Zhongji E-Commerce Co., Ltd., Heilongjiang Ruston International Logistics Co., Ltd., etc. have been approved by the Ministry of Commerce as e-commerce demonstration enterprises of the Ministry of Commerce. Evidently, cross-border e-commerce demonstration system in Heilongjiang Province has developed remarkably.

IV. Financial Integration

The financial cooperation between Heilongjiang Province and North-east Asian countries has promoted the circulation of money and financial resources to optimize the allocation of resources, create a stable financing environment for participating in BRI, and assist in a wider range of open and deeper cooperation [15].

1. The Status Quo of Investment Attraction

In 2010–2017, the total amount of foreign investment actually utilized in Heilongjiang Province continued to maintain a steady growth trend. As of November 2018, Heilongjiang Province has actually utilized 58.931 billion US dollars of foreign capital and utilized 3,057.396 billion yuan (\$522.75 billion) of funds outside the province. At present, 51 in Fortune 500 companies have invested in 104 projects in Heilongjiang Province to promote the adjustment of the province’s industrial structure and drive the development of emerging industries [16] (fig. 3). At the same time, with the Chinese economy entering a new normal, the growth rate of foreign investment in Heilongjiang Province has slowed down (fig. 4).

2. Progress in Financial Services

Heilongjiang Province has accelerated the promotion of RMB cross-border settlement business, and has made certain progress in the areas of facilitation and corporate financing channels. At the beginning of 2015, the Heihe and Suifenhe Customs officially opened the cross-border customs clearance business of Rubles. In November 2015, Heilongjiang Province launched the “Internet + Inclusive Finance” action plan to further expand the payment and

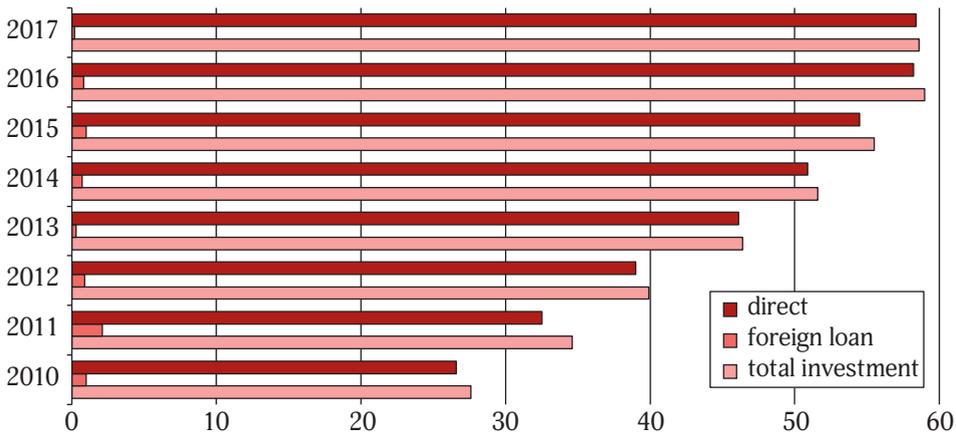


Fig. 3. HLJ's foreign investment actually utilized in 2010–2017 [4] (unit: billion dollars)

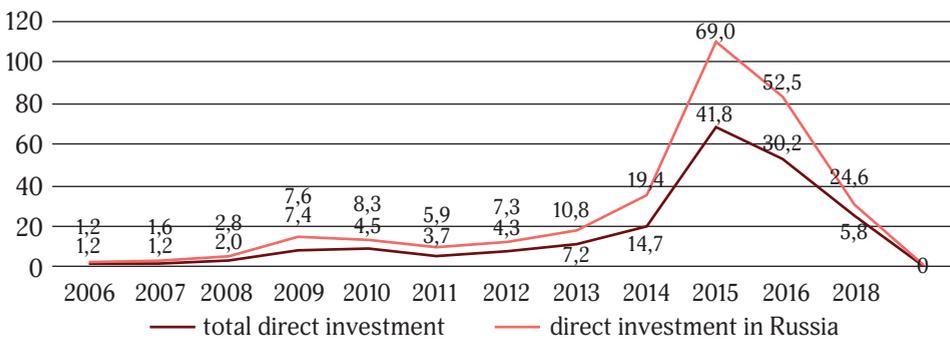


Fig. 4. HLJ's direct investment in foreign countries in 2006–2018 [2] (unit: billion dollars)

settlement channels in Heilongjiang, and provide support for the development of cross-border e-commerce [14]. At the end of 2015, the Harbin Central Sub-branch of the People's Bank of China formulated and planned to build a regional financial service center for Harbin to Russia, focusing on accelerating the layout of foreign-related financial settlement centers, establishing a sound cross-border investment and financing mechanism, accelerating the development of ruble cash business, and setting up a cross-border e-commerce payment platform, accelerating the development of offshore financial services and the development of a diversified financial support service system [7]. In January 2016, the first-level foreign exchange branch of Industrial and Commercial Bank of China, Harbin Ronghui Branch, successfully settled in Harbin High-tech Zone and held a signing ceremony with Harbin Scientific and Technological Valley International Purchasing Service Center to build an international financial settlement center, which focuses on the Russian-speaking CIS countries in Europe and Asia, and integrates domestic and international high-quality financial service resources to provide professional international financial services. In addition, Heilongjiang Province has also

actively played the advantage of Harbin Bank's ruble market maker, promoted the construction of cross-border e-commerce online payment and settlement platform between China and Russia. At the same time, Cross-border RMB business maintained growth. In 2016, the actual revenue and expenditure were 31.18 billion yuan (US \$4.65 billion). The two banks and the Russian bank signed a cross-border RMB financing agreement of 23.5 billion yuan (US \$3.5 billion), and realized a capital of 8.5 billion yuan (US \$1.3 billion). The scale of external loan under overseas guarantee in business gradually increased. As of the end of December 2016, the loan balance under Heilongjiang Province's overseas guarantees was US \$0.133 billion, a year-on-year increase of 1.23 times. Relying on the Bank of China and Harbin Bank, the establishment of a cross-border e-commerce payment platform between China and Russia has solved the bottleneck problem of long-term domestic exchange of Russian e-commerce companies and high online payment costs [3].

V. Closer People-to-people Ties

Heilongjiang Province actively inherits and promotes the spirit of friendly cooperation between the Silk Road, and extensively carries out cultural exchanges, academic exchanges, talent exchanges and cooperation, media cooperation, youth and women's exchanges, volunteer services, etc., laying a solid foundation for public opinion in deepening bilateral and multilateral cooperation, so as to build a community of interests that is culturally inclusive with neighboring countries.

1. Exchanges and Cooperation of Education, Science and Technology

In 2018, BRI has spread to 70 countries around the world [9]. Heilongjiang Province's universities have successively carried out Sino-foreign cooperation with colleges and universities in neighboring countries, the United Kingdom and the United States. As of March 2018, 27 colleges and universities have conducted academic education in China and abroad. A total of 178 undergraduate and above projects were held; among them, 85 projects were cooperated with 29 universities in Russia, accounting for 47.8% of the total number of projects. And according to the Ministry of Education's 2015 study report in China of foreign students, Heilongjiang Province received foreign students up to 12085, of whom 30% are Russian students, ranking first in the country [8]. At the same time, Heilongjiang Province has established 7 Confucius Institutes overseas to promote the overseas promotion of Heilongjiang Culture. Therefore, the smooth development of Chinese and foreign school-running projects is also a mechanism and model for Heilongjiang Province and relevant countries to explore educational cooperation and exchanges. As an important window and node city to the north, Heilongjiang Province has always played a leading role in the scientific and technological cooperation with Russia. It has built cooperation projects such as Harbin Institute of Technology Sino-Russian Exchange of talents and Scientific Research Cooperation

Bases, and platforms for scientific and technological exchanges between Heilongjiang Sino-Russian Ship and Marine Technology Cooperation. At the same time, Harbin Science and Technology Innovation City located in Harbin New District, at present, have signed 235 projects settled in 160 units, including 13 institutions in 9 countries covering the United States, Russia, Britain and New Zealand and so on, which has gathered many high-end scientific and technological innovation resources, “the Northern Valley of Wisdom” and is also releasing huge scientific and technological potential for the economic construction of Heilongjiang Province and Harbin.

2. Development of Tourism Industry

In recent years, the tourism growth of Heilongjiang Province has continued to improve. Based on the unique advantages of the original ecological environment, the tourism industry has been vigorously developed, and “clear waters and green mountains are invaluable assets”. In 2017, the province received a total of 164 million tourists and a total tourism revenue of 190.9 billion yuan. The number of tourists and the total income of tourism were both higher than the national average [5]. In 2018, the province received a total of 182 million domestic and foreign tourists, an increase of 10.98% over the same period of last year, receiving tourism income of 224.402 billion yuan (US \$33.43 billion), an increase of 17.55% (fig. 5).

CONCLUSION

In September 2018, General Secretary Xi Jinping went to the northeast to inspect and make an important speech at the in-depth promotion of the Northeast Revitalization Symposium. It is necessary to deeply integrate BRI and build an open and cooperative highland, which is bound to specify direction for Heilongjiang Province's better engagement in BRI. At the same time, Heilongjiang

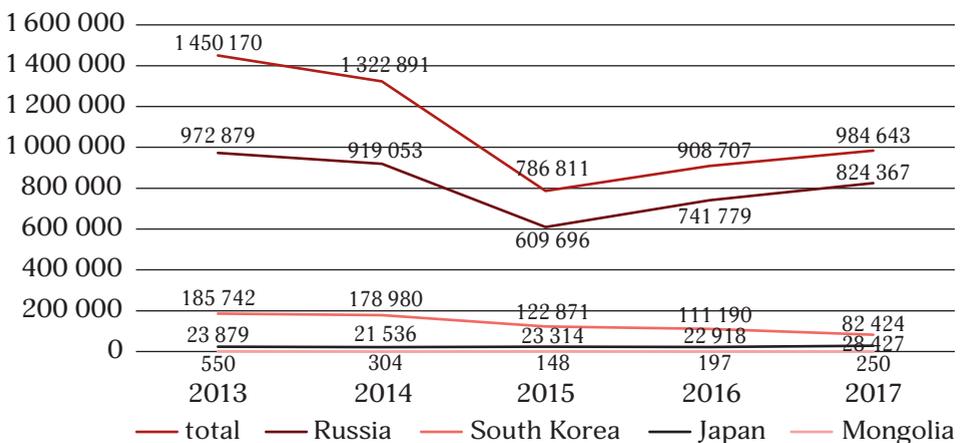


Fig. 5. HLJ's foreign inbound tourists by Northeast Asia relevant countries in 2013–2017 [4] (unit: person)

Province should explore a cross-border cooperation path suitable for the provincial conditions and the national conditions of neighboring countries, and deepen all-round exchanges and cooperation with the Belt and Road countries.

Heilongjiang Province should accelerate the construction of all-round infrastructure, speed up the construction of international major passages along the border, and promote trade and investment liberalization and facilitation.

- Relying on key development of open pilot areas, border economic ports, cross-border economic cooperation zones and other key areas along the border, and enhance the construction of key interconnection projects such as facilities in border ports, cross-border railway and port expressways, etc.
- Continuing to expand overseas routes with the Belt and Road countries and strengthen the functions of international aviation hubs.
- Making efforts to promote the construction of free trade zones, dock high-standard international economic and trade rules, and build trade rules on land with the Belt and Road countries, based on the construction of China-European trains.
- Actively developing cross-border trade, cross-border tourism, cross-border processing, cross-border finance, cross-border e-commerce, cross-border logistics and other industries. Heilongjiang Province should improve the cultural exchange mechanism with the Belt and Road countries, encourage local cultural exchanges, and further expand domestic and international influence.
- Exploring the establishment of funds for education cooperation and think tank exchanges with the Belt and Road countries and support the joint development of international exchanges in related fields.
- Encouraging universities explore cooperative education mode with the Belt and Road countries, continue to strengthen national language capacity building, establish a talent training base, and make up for the talent gap in humanities communication.
- Giving play to the advantages of cultural resources in various regions, and jointly create special tourism products with the Belt and Road countries to promote the transformation and upgrading of tourism.
- Holding activities such as international exposition and cultural festivals to promote humanities exchanges, strengthen international communication capacity and information communication, and enhance the influence of local publicity and exchange.

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