

International Cooperation and International Finance Centre Construction Under the Great Changes of Globalization

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Abstract

This paper discusses the relationship between the construction of an international financial center and international cooperation under the major changes of globalization. By analyzing the historical evolution of financial globalization, this paper expounds the formation and development of international financial centers. This paper focuses on international finance center's international cooperation strategy under the Belt and Road Initiative, and the impact of China's financial opening, interconnection and offshore RMB hub construction on international finance center. The article points out that Hong Kong has unique advantages in the construction of "Belt and Road", and should further consolidate its competitive advantages, strengthen cooperation with the mainland and countries along the route, and promote the internationalization of RMB and the construction of financial infrastructure to cope with the complicated and ever-changing external environment and ensure the stable development of international finance center.

Keywords

Globalization, International financial center, Belt and road, Internationalization of RMB, Hong Kong

Introduction

In the contemporary globalized world, the dynamics of financial globalization and the evolution of international financial centers play a crucial role in shaping the international economic landscape. As globalization continues to transform the way financial markets operate, the construction and development of international financial centers have become increasingly important. This paper aims to explore the relationship between the construction of international financial centers and international cooperation, particularly in the context of significant changes in the global geopolitical and economic structure [1]. By examining the historical evolution of financial globalization, this paper seeks to provide insights into the formation and development of international financial centers and their strategic importance in the modern global

economy. The process of modern financial globalization can be roughly divided into five stages, each marked by unique characteristics and developments.

Great changes in financial globalization and the evolution of international financial centers

Under the background of profound changes in the global geopolitical and economic structure, it is necessary to examine the construction of international financial centers from a longer historical perspective. The process of modern financial globalization can be roughly divided into five stages, each marked by unique characteristics and developments [2]. At the same time, it also highlights the deepening interdependence between financial centers and international cooperation.

The Dawn of Globalization (Late 19th Century to World War I)

The first stage, from the late 19th century to World War I, marked the first wave of globalization. It was based on British hegemony and the expansion of Western powers. With London as the international financial center, the global liquidity of capital was significantly enhanced under the framework of the gold standard and trade liberalization [3]. This period laid the foundation for the interconnected financial markets that would characterize subsequent eras.

Turbulence and Disintegration (World War I to World War II)

The second stage, from World War I to World War II, was marked by frequent international conflicts, the rise of protectionism, the collapse of the gold standard, and the disintegration of financial globalization. All major countries-imposed restrictions on capital outflows and strengthened domestic financial controls, leading to a sharp contraction in global trade and capital flows [4,5].

(1) Frequent International Conflicts and Rising Protectionism

The outbreak of World War I in 1914 shattered the relative peace and stability of the early 20th century. The war not only caused immense human and material losses but also severely disrupted international trade and financial flows. The global economy was thrown into turmoil, and the pre-war financial order began to unravel. The war's aftermath saw the rise of protectionist policies as countries sought to shield their economies from further instability [6]. Tariffs were raised, trade barriers were erected, and international cooperation waned, leading to a fragmented economic landscape.

(2) The Collapse of the Gold Standard

The gold standard, which had underpinned the stability of international finance in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, began to falter during this period. The strain of financing the war efforts and the subsequent economic dislocations made it

increasingly difficult for countries to maintain the gold standard. The United Kingdom, which had been the linchpin of the gold standard, was particularly hard hit. The suspension of the gold standard by major economies led to currency instability and further undermined confidence in the international financial system [7].

(3) Disintegration, Retrogression, and Reconstruction

The collapse of the gold standard and the rise of protectionism accelerated the disintegration of the financial globalization that had been achieved in the pre-war era. The global financial system moved towards retrogression, with countries retreating into isolationist policies [8]. The interwar period was marked by a series of financial crises and economic downturns, culminating in the Great Depression of the 1930s. The Depression further exacerbated the decline in global trade and capital flows, leading to a sharp contraction in international economic activity.

(4) Restrictions on Capital Outflows and Strengthened Domestic Financial Control

In response to the economic turmoil, all major countries-imposed restrictions on capital outflows to varying degrees. These measures were aimed at preserving domestic financial stability and preventing capital flight. At the same time, governments strengthened their domestic financial controls, implementing stricter regulations and oversight mechanisms [9]. The focus shifted from international cooperation to safeguarding national interests, further fragmenting the global financial system.

(5) Sharp Contraction in Global Trade and Capital Flows

The combination of frequent conflicts, protectionist policies, and the collapse of the gold standard led to a dramatic decline in global trade and capital flows. International trade volumes plummeted, and cross-border investment virtually ground to a halt. The once-thriving global financial markets became increasingly fragmented, with countries operating

in relative isolation. The pre-war era of financial integration was replaced by a period of fragmentation and uncertainty, setting the stage for the post-World War II efforts to rebuild the global financial order [10].

Post-War Reconstruction and the Rise of the Dollar (Post-World War II to 1970s)

The third stage: After World War II, the international governance system with the United Nations as the core became the foundation of the global order. The establishment and development of the Bretton Woods system laid the foundation for the international financial system with the US dollar as the dominant currency. Under the framework of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), multilateral international cooperation made progress. After the decoupling of the US dollar from gold in the 1970s, many countries switched to floating exchange rate systems and relaxed capital controls. The United States has kept the dollar in China with its comprehensive strength [11-13].

However, by the late 1960s, the Bretton Woods system became unsustainable due to economic imbalances and the increasing need for currency flexibility. In 1971, the US suspended the dollar's convertibility to gold, effectively ending the fixed exchange rate regime. This shift led to the adoption of floating exchange rate systems by many countries, allowing currencies to adjust more dynamically to global economic conditions. The US dollar, backed by the country's economic strength, emerged as the dominant currency in the international financial system. As a result, New York gradually replaced London as the most important global financial center [14].

The New Wave of Financial Globalization (1980s to 2008)

The fourth stage, from the 1980s to 2008, saw a new wave of financial globalization. Many countries vigorously promoted economic and financial liberalization, leading to deeper integration of

international trade and cross-border capital flows under the framework of the World Trade Organization (WTO). This period witnessed the rise of global supply chains, the deepening of intra-product division of labor, and rapid economic growth in East Asia. The global financial system became increasingly interconnected and complex, with the US dollar further consolidating its dominant position. This era also saw the expansion of financial markets and the development of new financial instruments, which contributed to both economic growth and increased financial volatility [15].

The Post-Crisis Era and the Challenge to Globalization (2008 to Present)

The fifth stage, from 2008 to the present, has been marked by significant challenges to globalization. The global financial crisis of 2008 led to a resurgence of protectionism and populism, questioning the foundations of the global economic order. The crisis exposed vulnerabilities in the global financial system and led to calls for regulatory reforms and increased financial stability. Since 2018, geopolitical tensions such as the US-China trade friction, the COVID-19 pandemic, and the Russia-Ukraine conflict have further exacerbated risks of fragmentation and politicization in the global trade and financial systems [16]. These events have raised concerns about the future of financial globalization, with some suggesting a shift towards "financial regionalization" and the fragmentation of global payment systems.

Hong Kong's vibrant economy and international standing

Figure 1 captures the essence of Hong Kong's vibrant economy and international standing. With its iconic skyline reflecting in the deep blue waters of Victoria Harbour, the city serves as a microcosm of globalization's achievements and the challenges it now faces. Despite the ongoing political and economic uncertainties, Hong Kong remains

testament to the power of human ingenuity and resilience, striving to navigate through uncertainty and continue its journey towards progress and prosperity.



Figure 1. Hong Kong's Victoria Harbour: a Symbol of Modernity and Prosperity.

Market, the international financial center assumes the function of network hub. However, in historical and realistic scenarios, financial globalization and the form of international financial centers are highly dependent on specific geopolitical and economic patterns. From the historical evolution, London was the dominant global financial center from the end of the 19th century to the beginning of the 20th century.

A Nexus of Financial Globalization

Later, with the rise of the United States and a new round of globalization, New York replaced London as the most important global financial center, while London still maintained an important position thanks to the development of offshore dollar market, forming a dual-center structure of New York and London. Since 1980s, with the rise of emerging economies in Asia, a new pattern of regional international financial centers such as Tokyo, Hong Kong and Singapore has gradually

formed. Since the end of the Cold War, the global geopolitical and economic structure has generally been in the process of changing from “one superpower, many poles” to “multipolarization”, but this change has different forms and unbalanced progress in different fields.

In the field of international finance, the United States still maintains its leading position as a “super financial power”, which is reflected in the guidance of the US dollar and the Federal Reserve's monetary policies on global liquidity, the shaping of global financial markets by large US financial institutions and financial market infrastructure, and the regulation of global financial activities by the US legal system and “long arm jurisdiction”. Although the development of the European Union and East Asian economies has greatly promoted the multipolarization of the overall pattern of the global real economy, it has not yet challenged the leadership of the United States in the field of international monetary finance [17].

The bursting of Japan's bubble economy and the adjustment of the euro zone after the debt crisis have strengthened the position of the US dollar as a supplier of so-called global “safe assets”. After the disintegration of the Soviet Union, “shock therapy” brought great harm to Russian social economy. The rise of China has had a profound impact on the global political and economic structure, but the internationalization of RMB and China's financial opening still face many structural challenges. In 2020, the United States accounts for about 25% of global GDP and 11% of global trade, but accounts for about 60% of global foreign exchange reserves, more than 80% of global foreign exchange transactions and nearly 50% of global payments.

In 2022, the size of the US bond market is more than twice that of China and more than four times that of Japan, and the size of the US stock market

is much higher than that of the European Union, China and Japan combined.

“One Belt, One Road” and international finance center’s International Cooperation Strategy

Challenges and Opportunities for Hong Kong

In the past few years, faced with the COVID-19 epidemic and the complicated international geopolitical situation, Hong Kong’s social economy has experienced multiple challenges. Although Hong Kong’s core competitiveness and development foundation as an international financial center are still solid, and it has shown strong resilience in the face of challenges, under the background of profound changes in the external environment, Hong Kong should deepen its integration into China’s national development strategy by enhancing cooperation with mainland provinces on infrastructure connectivity and regulatory alignment, thereby creating new market opportunities for the Belt and Road Initiative.

Building the “Belt and Road” has provided new opportunities for the mutually beneficial development of all countries in the world, opened new space for international cooperation for China’s open development, and provided China’s plan for improving the global economic governance system and providing global public goods.

In recent years, the economic and trade exchanges between China and countries along the Belt and Road have been deepening, and two-way investment has grown steadily. As an international financial, trade and shipping center, Hong Kong is an important bridge connecting the mainland of China and the international market and has a unique hub advantage in the process of building the Belt and Road Initiative. Hong Kong, with its mature business environment, international-standard financial and legal systems, extensive professional network, and free flow of funds, goods, and information, is well-positioned to serve as a core hub for the ‘Belt and Road’ initiative, leveraging its

familiarity with both the mainland and international markets.

However, to give full play to Hong Kong’s advantages and promote the construction of the “Belt and Road”, it is necessary for the Hong Kong SAR government and all sectors of society to reach a consensus, form a systematic and long-term strategic plan and layout, and turn it into a concrete action plan.

Strengthening International Cooperation

In terms of international cooperation, Hong Kong needs to develop its strengths and make up for its weaknesses and actively explore new international networks and economic and trade ties based on consolidating its existing advantages. Hong Kong has a solid foundation and traditional advantages in linking the mainland of China with the markets of developed economies such as Europe, the United States and Japan. However, Hong Kong needs to make further efforts in developing market links with developing countries. Regionally, Hong Kong has relatively strong links with Southeast Asia, South Asia and the Middle East, but weak links with Central Asia, West Asia and Central and Eastern Europe. Hong Kong needs to further deepen its international ties with countries along the Belt and Road Initiative, actively participate in and sign bilateral and multilateral economic and trade agreements, extensively explore communication channels and enhance the convenience of exchanges. Among them, the urgent task is to complete the accession to the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (RCEP) as soon as possible. As a regional trade agreement covering major economies in the Asia-Pacific region, RCEP involves 15 economies, covering about 3.5 billion people in the world, with a GDP of 23 trillion US dollars, accounting for about 32% of the global economic scale and 29% of the global trade volume. Joining RCEP is of great significance for Hong Kong to consolidate its hub advantages and deepen

international cooperation with economies along the Belt and Road in the Asia-Pacific region.

Professional Services and Financial Infrastructure

In terms of professional services, Hong Kong is the world's largest offshore RMB business hub and a leading international asset management center and risk management center in the Asia-Pacific region. With the deepening of international cooperation under the "Belt and Road Initiative", the restructuring of international industrial chain and the internationalization of RMB are the general trend. In the new geopolitical and economic environment, building the "Belt and Road" will inevitably require a more efficient and reliable comprehensive service platform. Hong Kong needs to strengthen the construction of a safe and controllable financial infrastructure that is in line with international standards, give play to the advantages of an offshore financial center and a free trade port, and provide various comprehensive professional services, promote trade and two-way investment between China mainland and countries along the Belt and Road, and participate in and guide the restructuring and development of international industrial supply chains and innovation chain.

In deepening cooperation with the mainland, Hong Kong needs to further integrate into the overall situation of national development, strengthen cooperation with mainland provinces in infrastructure connectivity and docking of rules and mechanisms, and jointly explore new market space for the Belt and Road Initiative. The state will speed up the construction of an efficient, standardized, fair competition and fully open national unified market, break local protection and market segmentation, and promote the unification of market basic system rules and high-standard connectivity of market infrastructure. At the same time, the state will accelerate the high-level opening, promote the coordinated development of internal and external

demand, import and export international two-way investment, and make more efficient use of global resource elements and market space. Hong Kong should give full play to its advantages as a hub and strengthen its function of connecting the internal and external double cycles in the overall situation of building a unified national market, promoting institutional opening and jointly building the "Belt and Road".

China's Financial Opening, Interconnection and Offshore RMB Hub

The Dual Structure of China's Financial System

In the process of reform and opening, China's financial system has formed two plates: onshore finance and offshore finance. The differences between the two sectors in currency, supervision, law, market infrastructure, market main body structure and capital flow are the basic characteristics and constraints of China's financial opening and shape the overall operating environment of international finance center. China's onshore finance is mainly reflected in the "internal circulation" of RMB financial activities supervised by the central government. Hong Kong is the key hub of China's offshore financial activities, while Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area is the connecting zone that combines domestic and international double cycles. There are long-standing barriers between onshore and offshore financial systems, such as market separation, regulatory separation and cross-border currency non-circulation.

High-Level Opening and Financial Stability

China is promoting high-level opening to the outside world and accelerating the construction of a new development pattern with domestic big circulation as the main body and domestic and international double circulation promoting each other. Hong Kong has a unique strategic position and role in the new development pattern, and it is a window, bridge and super contact for connecting

internal and external circulation. In recent years, China mainland has strengthened and improved financial supervision, deepened the reform of financial system, smoothly defused the risks posed by high-risk small and medium-sized financial institutions and firmly safeguarded against systemic risks, which has also provided a solid foundation for financial stability in Hong Kong.

Hong Kong has a solid foreign exchange reserve base and a mature, stable linked exchange rate system. It also benefits from abundant local liquidity in the banking system, stable operation of financial institutions, and the healthy development of offshore RMB business. The optimized currency swap agreement signed between the Hong Kong Monetary Authority and the People's Bank of China is conducive to further deepening the development of the RMB fund pool in Hong Kong. At the same time, Hong Kong's financial system and the mainland continue to strengthen the construction of interconnection mechanisms, including the North-South two-way Shanghai-Hong Kong Stock Connect, Shenzhen-Hong Kong Stock Connect, Bond Connect, and cross-border wealth management connect. Hong Kong is also actively exploring the development of the Central Clearing System for Debt Instruments (CMU) into a major international central securities depository institution (ICSD) in Asia, providing safe and efficient asset trading channels for overseas investors through the connection between Hong Kong and mainland financial infrastructure institutions.

Future Challenges and Opportunities

For the global financial system, the biggest challenge in the future is that financial market risk and geopolitical risk may resonate. The construction of Hong Kong's international financial center needs to maintain full sensitivity to geopolitical games and financial security games and comprehensively coordinate financial development and security. Hong Kong should further play the role of "double-cycle" super contact, promote the

interconnection with mainland financial markets, focus on the opportunities of "Belt and Road" and Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area construction, guide financial markets to better cooperate with the restructuring and development of regional industrial chains and supply chains under the trend of multiploidization, and promote the internationalization of RMB. In building a safe and controllable financial infrastructure that is in line with international standards, Hong Kong should play a leading role, fully promote the innovation of financial technology and financial supervision technology, seize the opportunity of digital currency and payment technology revolution, and improve the independent, safe and controllable level of foreign-related financial infrastructure.

As China Mainland continues to promote the high-level two-way opening of financial markets and the internationalization of RMB, Hong Kong, as an offshore RMB center, will face new development opportunities in terms of market size, product range, market participants, rules and mechanisms, and will also face new competition. The internationalization of the RMB requires robust financial market infrastructure and a pool of professional talent that meets international standards. Hong Kong, with its mature legal system and market mechanisms, is well-equipped to fulfill these requirements.

High-level professionals, while meeting the requirements of China's financial openness, security and controllability, have unique strategic value in helping RMB internationalization.

Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area is the best entry point for Hong Kong to further integrate into the "great domestic cycle" and play the role of a bridge of "double domestic and international cycles". As far as the long-term trend of supply and demand of financial services is concerned, the potential demand for international investors to buy high-quality assets in China is still huge from the perspective of optimizing their own investment portfolio. China families' demand for

diversification of wealth holdings and overseas investment is also growing rapidly, while China enterprises are further “going out” to explore the international market and lay out overseas supply chains. All these needs need all-round and multi-level cross-border financial services support. By deepening cooperation with other cities in the Greater Bay Area, such as Shenzhen, Hongkong can promote the interconnection and division of labor in Greater Bay Area’s financial industry, realize the steady expansion of the cross-border financial services market and solve the problem of insufficient supply.

Looking ahead, Hong Kong will face a more complicated development environment. On the one hand, Hong Kong has an important strategic position in the new development pattern of China. The 14th Five-Year Plan clearly supports Hong Kong to enhance its status as an international financial center. China’s long-term economic growth vitality, innovation driving force and industrial upgrading process will create greater development space for Hong Kong. The interconnection and coordinated development of Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area will be conducive to the more efficient flow of talents and funds. On the other hand, Hong Kong’s financial system faces complex external risks. Resisting various potential risks and effectively coping with external challenges are very important to ensure Hong Kong’s prosperity and stability. The stable development of international finance center has unique strategic significance for effectively safeguarding China’s financial security and deepening the overall situation of financial reform and opening.

Discussion

The impact of globalization on the construction of an international financial center

Mutual promotion between financial globalization and international financial centers: Financial

globalization promotes the transnational flow of capital and the formation and development of international financial centers.

As the hub of financial globalization, the international financial center has further promoted the allocation and integration of global financial resources. However, globalization changes the pattern of international financial centers, and the rise of emerging economies challenges the status of traditional financial centers but also brings new development opportunities.

Geopolitical factors restrict the construction of international financial centers: Geopolitical conflicts and unstable factors have had an important impact on the construction of international financial centers. To safeguard their own interests, some countries have adopted measures such as trade protectionism and financial sanctions, which have led to the division and instability of the global financial market and increased the difficulty of building an international financial center. International financial centers need to find a balance in the complex geopolitical environment and strengthen their ability to resist risks.

The opportunities and challenges of international finance center under the Belt and Road Initiative

Hong Kong’s unique advantages in the construction of the “Belt and Road”: As an international financial, trade and shipping center, Hong Kong has a mature business circle.

Environment, financial and legal system in line with international standards, a wide range of international professionals and free flow of funds, goods and information. These advantages enable Hong Kong to play an important role as a bridge in the construction of the “Belt and Road” and become an important hub connecting the mainland of China with the international market. Challenges faced by international finance center: Although Hong Kong has many advantages, it also faces some challenges in the construction of the Belt and Road Initiative.

On the one hand, Hong Kong needs to further strengthen its market ties with countries along the route, especially its cooperation with Central Asia, West Asia and Central and Eastern Europe. On the other hand, Hong Kong needs to cope with the competition from other international financial centers and constantly improve its financial service level and innovation ability to maintain its leading position in the international financial field.

China's financial opening and the development of international finance center

China's financial opening has promoted international finance center: China's financial opening has provided a broad space for international finance center's development. With the gradual opening of China's financial market, Hong Kong, as the key hub of China's offshore financial activities, can give full play to its advantages in cross-border financial services, RMB internationalization and financial innovation, and promote the interconnection between the mainland and international financial markets.

International finance center's important role in China's financial opening: international finance center plays an irreplaceable role in China's financial opening. Hong Kong's mature financial system and international business environment can provide experience and reference for the opening of China's financial market and provide an international financial service platform for China enterprises to help China enterprises "go global". Besides, Hong Kong's mature experience in financial supervision, legal system and personnel training can also provide strong support for China's financial opening.

Conclusion

Under the background of great changes in globalization, the construction of an international financial center is facing both opportunities and challenges. As an international financial center, Hong Kong has unique advantages and an important

strategic position in the process of the "One Belt, One Road" initiative and China's financial opening. Hong Kong should make full use of its advantages, strengthen cooperation with the mainland and countries along the route, and promote the internationalization of RMB and the construction of financial infrastructure. Additionally, it should improve the level of financial services and innovation ability to cope with the complicated and ever-changing external environment. This will ensure the stable development of the international financial center. At the same time, Hong Kong's development will provide strong support for China's financial opening-up and the "Belt and Road" initiative, promoting the common development of the regional economy.

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Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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