



THE CONCEPT OF BRI IN FOREIGN POLICY PRIORITIES OF CHINA

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One of the most significant international infrastructure projects of our time is undoubtedly the foreign policy initiative "One Belt, One Road" announced by Chinese leader Xi Jinping in 2013. The article is devoted to the Chinese World Project (CWP), the supporting structure of which is the concept of the Silk Road Economic Belt and the Maritime Silk Road of the XXI century. The article considers the historical prerequisites of the CWP: from adaptation to the world economy to the transition to the active development of the planet's economy in accordance with the Chinese program "entering the world". China's constructive initiatives, embodied in the concept of the "silk offensive", are aimed at mobilizing finance for the development of infrastructure throughout the Euro-Asian space and are catalyzed by the tasks of ensuring energy security and the need for the development of the western regions of the People's Republic of China. Special attention is paid to the activation of the PRC's activities in the field of financing the Belt and Road projects, investments in new international banks and development funds. In addition, the role of Uzbekistan in "One Belt One Road" and its useful aspects were analyzed.

Introduction.

The Belt and Road Initiative, launched by China in 2013, represents a massive, multifaceted undertaking with profound implications for global geopolitics and economics. The BRI, encompassing vast infrastructure projects spanning across continents, has become a cornerstone of China's foreign policy agenda. This ambitious initiative, often dubbed the "New Silk Road" seeks to enhance connectivity and foster economic cooperation between China and participating nations¹.

The BRI is rooted in China's vision of a shared future for humanity, promoting development through cooperation and mutual benefit. It reflects China's growing economic and political influence on the world stage and its commitment to reshaping the global order². The initiative has garnered significant attention and debate, with proponents highlighting its potential to unlock economic growth, reduce poverty, and promote regional integration, while critics raise concerns about debt sustainability, environmental impact, and China's geopolitical ambitions.

This study delves into the core concept of the BRI and its significance within the framework of China's foreign policy priorities. It examines the historical context, motivations, and objectives driving the BRI, analyzing its impact on China's relations with other countries. Furthermore, the study explores the various dimensions of the BRI, including infrastructure development, trade facilitation, and cultural exchange, assessing their contributions to China's overall foreign policy goals.

By examining the BRI's evolution, implementation challenges, and potential implications, this study aims to comprehensively understand its role in shaping China's global engagement. It will contribute to the ongoing discourse surrounding the BRI's transformative potential and its implications for the existing global order.

This study adopts a multidisciplinary approach, drawing on insights from international relations, political economy, and development studies. It utilizes a combination of qualitative and

quantitative methods, including literature review, case study analysis, and statistical data analysis. The study's findings will be of interest to policymakers, scholars, and practitioners seeking to navigate the complexities of China's rise and its impact on the global landscape.

Literature Review.

The Belt and Road Initiative has been the subject of extensive scholarly debate since its inception. This literature review provides an overview of the key themes and perspectives that have emerged in the existing scholarship on the BRI, with a particular focus on its implications for China's foreign policy priorities.

Scholars have offered various interpretations of China's motivations for launching the BRI. Some argue that it is primarily driven by economic considerations, such as securing access to resources and markets for Chinese companies³. Others emphasize China's desire to export its development model and enhance its soft power⁴. Still, others view the BRI as a geopolitical strategy aimed at reshaping the global order in China's favor⁵.

A significant body of literature has focused on the economic implications of the BRI. Studies have examined the potential benefits of infrastructure development, trade facilitation, and financial integration for participating countries⁶. However, concerns have also been raised about debt sustainability, transparency, and the environmental impact of BRI projects⁷.

The BRI's geopolitical implications have been a subject of intense debate. Some scholars argue that it is a benign initiative that promotes cooperation and development⁸. Others view it as a tool for China to expand its influence and challenge the existing international order⁹. The potential for the BRI to exacerbate regional tensions and create new security challenges has also been highlighted.

The BRI has significant implications for international business and policy. Studies have examined the opportunities and challenges for businesses operating in BRI countries, as well as the policy

¹ Zhang, W., Alon, I., & Lattemann, C. (2018). China's Belt and Road Initiative. Springer International Publishing.

² Niyangoda, N., Keppetipola, M., & Bowatte, A. (2021). Evolving regional and global dynamics and future of cpec. ISSRA Papers, 13, 163-173.

³ Djankov, S., & Miner, S. (Eds.). (2016). China's Belt and Road Initiative: motives, scope, and challenges. Peterson Institute for International Economics

⁴ Zhang, W., Alon, I., & Lattemann, C. (2018). China's Belt and Road Initiative. Springer International Publishing.

⁵ Ohashi, H. (2018). The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) in the context of China's opening-up policy. Journal of Contemporary East Asia Studies, 7(2), 85-103.

⁶ Blanchard, J. M. F. (2021). Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) blues: Powering BRI research back on track to avoid choppy seas. Journal of Chinese Political Science, 26, 235-255.

⁷ Beeson, M. (2018). Geoeconomics with Chinese characteristics: the BRI and China's evolving grand strategy. Economic and Political Studies, 6(3), 240-256.

⁸ Beeson, M. (2018). Geoeconomics with Chinese characteristics: the BRI and China's evolving grand strategy. Economic and Political Studies, 6(3), 240-256.

⁹ Schulhof, V., Van Vuuren, D., & Kirchherr, J. (2022). The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI): What will it look like in the future?. Technological Forecasting and Social Change, 175, 121306.

responses of different countries to the initiative¹⁰. The role of foreign direct investment in the BRI and its impact on host countries have also been explored.

This literature review highlights the complex and multifaceted nature of the BRI and its implications for China's foreign policy priorities. The existing scholarship provides valuable insights into the motivations, objectives, and potential consequences of this ambitious initiative. However, further research is needed to fully understand its transformative potential and its impact on the global landscape.

Methodology.

This research therefore adopts a qualitative approach to investigate the concept of the BRI in light of the priorities of China's foreign policy. This approach is considered best to arrive at a deep understanding of the complex interaction between the objectives, implementation, and implications of the BRI for China's global engagement.

The present study heavily draws from an in-depth review of the existing literature on BRI, be they academic journals, books, policy reports, or even official government documents. Reviewing largely ranges with a focus on motivations, goals, and strategic implications of the BRI as regards China's foreign policy objectives.

The study also adopts an in-depth case study approach to investigate in-depth the specific aspects of implementation and impacts, which this initiative will have on the relations of China with other countries. The cases for study will be selected based on the

Priority Area	Country/Region	Member Countries
1	Mid Asia	Kazakhstan - Kirghizstan - Tajikistan - Turkmenistan - Uzbekistan
1	Russia	
1	South Asia	Afghanistan - Bangladesh - India - Maldives - Nepal - Pakistan
1	Southeast Asia	Brunei - Cambodia - Indonesia - Laos - Malaysia - Myanmar - Philippines - Singapore - Sri Lanka - Thailand - Vietnam
2	Middle East & East Africa	Egypt - Iran - Iraq - Kuwait - Oman - Qatar - Syria - UAE
3	Other European & African Counters	Benin - Mongolia - Nigeria - Poland - Ukraine

The Belt and Road Initiative does not adhere to the Western model of establishing formal bilateral or multilateral treaties among all participating nations. Instead, the Chinese approach emphasizes the cultivation of economic partnerships that incentivize domestic firms to access new markets, provide diplomatic support, facilitate

level of relevance to the research questions and their potential to offer insights into the various challenges and opportunities presented by the BRI.

Data analysis will involve the systematic examination of the data collected to identify emerging, reiterating themes, patterns of information, and contradictions in the information obtained. This process will include coding and categorizing of data in order to facilitate analysis and meaningful conclusions. The findings will be presented clearly and concisely, supported by evidence from the literature and case studies.

This strict methodology would be applied in the study for an in-depth and comprehensive analysis of the role that the BRI plays in shaping the foreign policy priorities of China and its implications for the evolving global order.

Results.

In 2013, China introduced the "Belt and Road Initiative", which aims to strengthen ties and enhance mutually beneficial collaboration among countries in Asia, Europe, and Africa through a new form of cooperation. According to estimates by Chinese experts, 40-65 developing nations are located along the BRI routes. Furthermore, over 100 countries participated in the inaugural Belt and Road Forum held in Beijing in 2017. Despite the historical and geographic references in the name, the initiative is open to participation from countries in other regions as well.

access to financing, and simplify standards for international trade expansion. This is viewed as a diplomatically sensible project that aims to increase China's influence in the geopolitically and economically significant region of Eurasia.

Figure-1: Proposed new Silk Road and 21st Century Maritime Silk Road



Additionally, the distinctions between the two declared components of the BRI - the Continental Economic Belt of the Silk Road and the oceanic Maritime Silk Road - have become increasingly blurred¹¹. The One Belt, One Road Initiative has in fact incorporated

the entire external economic agenda of Chinese diplomacy and a significant portion of its foreign policy. Its study has emerged as an important area of modern Sinology. Numerous publications analyze the priorities in establishing bilateral relations and developing

¹⁰ Ohashi, H. (2018). The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) in the context of China's opening-up policy. *Journal of Contemporary East Asia Studies*, 7(2), 85-103.

¹¹ Денисов И. Е. Поднебесная смотрит на Запад. Контуры глобальных трансформаций, 2016, № 6 (51), сс. 20-40. [Denisov I. E. Podnebesnaya smotrit

na Zapad [The Celestial Empire looks West]. *Kontury global'nykh transformatsii*, 2016, no. 6 (51), pp. 20-40.] DOI:10.23932/2542-0240-2016-9-6-20-40

regional and sectoral cooperation projects. According to Chinese researchers, this advancement represents a transition from China's passive participation in globalization to a more active influence¹².

The global coronavirus pandemic led to a significant economic slowdown in 2020, with GDP of the G20 nations falling by an average of 6.9% in the second quarter. While the worst impacts of the pandemic on the economy have subsided and the global economic model has gradually adapted to the new conditions, the recovery process has been slow, and the future remains highly uncertain.

During the pandemic, the Belt and Road Initiative served not only as a connection between China and other countries, but also between developed and developing nations, contributing to the overall global financial balance.

Through the BRI, China has linked its own economic stability to the broader global recovery, positioning itself as a bridge between domestic and international economic cycles. This is facilitated by China being the first country to recover from the COVID-19 crisis and achieve economic growth.

The China-Europe freight train service and Silk Road shipping have continued to operate and expand during the pandemic. The "Made in China" concept has become central to the global supply chain.

The China-Europe rail service has operated efficiently and safely during COVID-19, consistently delivering critical medical and production supplies to Europe. This "lifeline" has served as an inspiring example for the resumption of economic activity and stimulation of recoveries.

The ambitious scope of the BRI and the complex dynamics with current economic powers are compelling China to rebuild key global development institutions to suit its own interests. Within the BRI framework, five priority cooperation areas have been identified, each functioning as a tool for China to ascend the global value chains and solidify its position at the center of the world economy.

1. *Political coordination* – support of Chinese TNCs when entering foreign markets through the mechanisms of bilateral intergovernmental ties.

2. *Interconnection of infrastructure* – removal of infrastructural restrictions for transferring production from China to developing countries, going abroad of competitive Chinese construction corporations, consolidation in the markets of semi / peripheral countries through tied loans, geographic diversification of trade routes.

3. *Uninterrupted trade* – lowering duties on foreign markets, lifting restrictions on Chinese investments, fighting protectionism.

4. *Free movement of capital* – creating an alternative infrastructure to provide independent project and political finance.

5. *Strengthening the proximity between peoples* – training a personnel reserve and public opinion for the implementation of foreign projects of Chinese TNCs.

For full participation in world economic relations, China needs to change the world monetary and financial infrastructure¹³. Directed transformation will require the solution of a whole range of tasks, where the priority today is given to the creation of channels of international financing and raising the status of the Chinese national currency.

One of the main advantages of the countries of the center is the ability to control funding from international organizations. China, on the other hand, has consistently advocated an increase in the quotas of developing countries in them. Today, the PRC's share in world GDP has already exceeded 15%, but the share of its votes in the IMF in 2016 grew to only 6.41% and is inferior to the United States (17.46%) and Japan (6.48%). International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD) it is 4.57% versus 16.39%

in the United States and 7.07% in Japan¹⁴. An important factor in overcoming this inequality can and has already become the creation of new financing channels.

At the initiative of China, two new large interstate financial institutions were created - the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, headquartered in Beijing (authorized capital of \$ 100 billion, China's share of 26.06%) and the New Development Bank, headquartered in Shanghai (authorized capital of \$ 50 billion, the share of the PRC is 20%).

China is also increasing the overseas investment portfolio of its "political" banks and sovereign wealth fund. Since 2013, the State Development Bank (SDB) and the Export-Import Bank of China have provided more than \$ 110 billion in loans for the implementation of more than 1200 projects in the Belt and Road countries¹⁵. As early as 2015, the total volume of foreign loans of the RRB exceeded \$ 320 billion¹⁶. The Silk Road Fund (authorized capital of \$ 40 billion) was created especially for the implementation of foreign projects.

The National Sovereign Fund (China Investment Corporation, CIC) and its predecessor, the first sovereign wealth fund (Investment Company of the State Administration of Foreign Exchange Control, SAFE Investment Company) own assets worth over \$ 650 billion (including domestic ones), and also create investment funds for working with individual countries.

In parallel with the development of its channels of international financing, China is making efforts to internationalize the yuan, which could significantly increase the opportunities for Chinese TNCs abroad. The main obstacle to this is still the lack of free conversion of the yuan, for which the country is not yet ready. To strengthen its position in the financial services market, China is developing "global cities" and creating free trade zones, but their effect is still limited¹⁷. Nevertheless, since 2016, the yuan has been included in the IMF's Special Drawing Rights basket, and its share in international transactions has doubled over the past three years and today accounts for almost 1.5% of all settlements in the SWIFT system¹⁸.

To enable foreign banks to lend to customers in RMB, China is entering into currency swap agreements. In 2016, there were such agreements with 36 countries totaling 3.5 trillion yuan. If currency swaps are symmetric exchange of currencies for equal amounts, then agreements on the creation of clearing centers mean a transition to the next level of internationalization of the yuan, when the parties assume obligations to offset mutual claims in national currencies.

An important step in increasing China's economic influence was the development of UnionPay, AliPay and WeChatPay payment systems as alternatives to Visa and MasterCard in developing countries¹⁹, as well as the creation of international rating agencies (Chengxin Credit Ratings, Lianhe Credit Rating and Dagong Global Credit) and exit of Chinese banks abroad. By the end of 2016, a total of 9 banks with Chinese capital had opened 62 branches in 26 Belt and Road countries.

The evidence presented demonstrates China's consistent effort to establish a comprehensive international financial infrastructure. This enables favorable conditions for the successful global expansion of both private and state-owned Chinese enterprises.

The COVID-19 pandemic has presented new opportunities for the comprehensive implementation of the Belt and Road Initiative. The Digital Silk Road and Healthy Silk Road projects are thriving. As social exclusion has increased, approaches to learning and work have evolved, with growing demands for online education, seminars, and meetings. The Digital Silk Road has provided substantial support for the global economic recovery by enhancing

¹² 刘卫东. “一带一路”战略的认识误区. [Misunderstandings of BRI (In Chinese)]. Journal of Chinese Academy of Government, 2016, no. 1, pp. 30-34.

¹³ Михеев В.В., Луконин С. А. Китай: новые тренды развития на рубеже 2015–2016 гг. Мировая экономика и международные отношения, 2016, том 60, № 6, сс. 24-34. [Mikheev V.V., Lukonin S. A. Kitai: novye trendy razvitiya na rubezhe 2015–2016 gg. [China: New Development Trends in 2015-2016]. Mirovaya ekonomika i mezhdunarodnye otnosheniya, 2016, vol. 60, no. 6, pp. 24-34.] DOI:10.20542/0131-2227-2016-60-6-24-34

¹⁴ IMF Members' Quotas and Voting Power, and IMF Board of Governors. Available at: <http://www.imf.org/external/np/sec/memdir/members.aspx>

¹⁵ Совместное строительство “Одного пояса, одного пути”: идея, практика и вклад Китая. Канцелярия руководящей рабочей группы по продвижению строительства “Одного пояса, одного пути” Joint construction of “One belt, one road”: idea, practice and contribution of China. Office of the leading Working

Group on promoting the construction of “One belt, one road” (In Russ.) Пекин, Изд-во литературы на иностранных языках, май 2017. 75 с.

¹⁶ China Development Bank Overseas Loan Hits \$328.2 billion. China Daily, 16.12.2015. Available at: http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/business/201512/16/content_22727758.htm

¹⁷ Chubarov I., Brooker D. Multiple Pathways to Global City Formation: A Functional Approach and Review of Recent Evidence in China. Cities, 2013, no. 35, pp. 181-189. DOI:10.1016/j.cities.2013.05.008

¹⁸ [The inclusion of the RMB in the SDR basket will help to get away from the monopoly of the USD in the global monetary system (In Russ.)]. Available at: http://russian.china.org.cn/international/txt/2016-10/01/content_39414265.htm

¹⁹ China's Fight with Visa and MasterCard Goes Global. Financial Times, 24.04.2017. Available at: <https://www.ft.com/content/a67350fa-1f6f-11e7-a454-ab04428977f9>

internet access and lowering barriers to the international e-commerce market.

Major Chinese internet firms are expanding their e-commerce and mobile payment services across Southeast and South Asia, playing a crucial role in coordinating local COVID-19 response efforts. For instance, Alibaba has established logistics centers in key overseas markets such as Thailand and Malaysia.

The Healthy Silk Road has fostered a favorable environment for the global economic recovery. The pandemic has highlighted issues in the coordination of the international public health system. It has become clear that the global community lacks collaborative mechanisms to effectively prevent and control the spread of dangerous viruses, as well as robust regional emergency response capabilities and medical capacities.

By facilitating the construction of hospitals, the transfer of materials, and the implementation of the latest healthcare standards, the Healthy Silk Road concept has helped mitigate the impact of epidemics in countries along the Belt and Road Initiative route. In the post-pandemic period, there is an opportunity to expand the scope of cooperation in the field of health through the Belt and Road Initiative, where China can make a significant contribution to promoting improved global health governance.

Simultaneously, institutions of multilateral cooperation provide avenues for the recovery of the global economy. During the global pandemic, the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank announced the establishment of the COVID-19 Pandemic Recovery Fund to assist participating countries in the area of public health. Within three months, 12 states, including Indonesia, Pakistan, India, the Philippines, and Kazakhstan, provided financial support totaling up to \$5.9 billion. The Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank also issued panda bonds worth 3 billion yuan.

Empirical evidence suggests that the Belt and Road Initiative demonstrates remarkable resilience in supporting the recovery and development of the global economy.

With significant financial resources, China is taking steps to build and maintain its positive image abroad. The purpose of building up "soft power" is to increase the efficiency of foreign economic activity, which requires qualified translators, as well as specialists in various fields who speak the partner's language and understand the style of doing business in China.

Thanks to government support, a real breakthrough has taken place in the field of education for foreigners. 2005–2014 the number of foreign students in the PRC has tripled, making the country the third largest in the world in this indicator after the United States and Great Britain. The fastest growing number of students, at 26% per year, was the number of students from Africa; the number of students from Kazakhstan increased more than 15 times, students from Pakistan increased 7 times, from Thailand - 6 times, from India - 4 times, from Indonesia - 3 times, while the number of students from developed countries²⁰. At the end of 2015, 398 thousand foreigners studied in more than 800 educational institutions in China, 3/4 of them came from semi-periphery and periphery countries.

Over the past three decades, education for foreigners has progressed from teaching Chinese language and culture to expanding the proportion of non-linguistic majors. To attract foreign students, the number of scholarships and courses in English increased and intergovernmental agreements on the recognition of diplomas were concluded²¹. More than 40 thousand students annually study at the expense of the PRC government (an increase of 5.5 times in 10 years) and the same number, if not more (there are no exact statistics) - within the framework of provincial or city quotas. Free internships for foreign scientific and pedagogical workers and refresher courses for foreigners - teachers of the Chinese language are widespread. 512 Confucius Institutes (in universities) and 1,073 Confucius classes (in schools) were established abroad to promote the Chinese language and culture²². Thus, the Chinese state systematically and consistently invests in

the foreign "talent pool" for joint projects, with priority given to developing countries.

The prospects for the development of the Chinese economy are primarily associated with the strengthening of its integration with less developed economies in order to more fully realize the already achieved comparative advantages. The One Belt, One Road project is an important stage on the way of the possible entry of the PRC into the core of the world economy by the middle of the 21st century. Successful work in the five main BRI areas will ensure the integration of Chinese TNCs into the already established world production chains and will create new ones that will tightly link China with the semi-periphery and periphery. The wave of industrialization of the developing world initiated by the Celestial Empire is just emerging, but in the future, it can radically change the spatial organization of many industries. A prerequisite for this is the availability of its own financial and human infrastructure, in the creation of which China has been actively investing in recent years. Beijing offers the world an "inclusive" economic globalization, which should ensure higher living standards and reduce property contrasts. According to Keynesian logic, this is not charity, but a calculation related to the expectations of an increase in the capacity of the world market and an increase in demand for Chinese goods and services. The success of the BRI and, ultimately, the possibility of achieving the set mega-goal depend on how China manages to find a balance between its economic interests and the interests of other developing countries.

Investments from China are also of growing importance for the Kazakh economy. In 2005-2016, the volume of accumulated direct investments of Beijing in the economy of Kazakhstan amounted to 13.9 billion dollars. At the expense of Chinese investors, the country is developing mineral deposits (primarily hydrocarbons), building infrastructure and industrial enterprises. Chinese funds remain a significant source of funding for projects in Uzbekistan. The total amount of accumulated investments by China exceeds 7.8 billion dollars. At the same time, Uzbekistan, unlike other countries in the region, has managed to orient Chinese capital to work in the real sector.

Thus, according to the President of Uzbekistan Shavkat Mirziyoyev, a striking example of cooperation is "...the Uzbek-Chinese industrial Park of high technologies created in 2013-the free economic zone «Jizzakh», where mobile phones, sewing machines, construction materials, solar collectors and other competitive products are produced»²³. Against the background of the successes of Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, the results of Kyrgyzstan's cooperation with China looks less impressive. Like most Central Asian republics, the main motives for Bishkek's participation in the BRI project lie in the development of its own infrastructure at the expense of Chinese investments. The Kyrgyz side attaches particular importance to the construction of the North-South highway and the China-Kyrgyzstan-Uzbekistan railway (negotiations on the latter resumed after the change of leadership in Uzbekistan). So far, the progress of the project is hampered by the remaining differences between the parties on the route of the potential route and the gauge of the railway track.

Despite the fact that the leaders of Tajikistan and Turkmenistan did not participate in the first BRI forum, both republics are already involved in its projects. In Tajikistan, with the participation of "...Chinese capital, the reconstruction and construction of transport infrastructure (Kulma-Khorog-Kulyab-Dushanbe, Dushanbe-Khujand-Chanak), the Dushanbe-2 thermal power plant was built and repair work on the South-North transmission line was carried out. However, from the point of view of the transit potential of the Republic is significantly lower than in Kazakhstan"²⁴.

The development of international routes through Tajikistan is hampered by weak infrastructure, low level of economic development, unfavorable geographical conditions on the border with China and the high cost of construction. The temporary "freeze"

²⁰ 2014 年来华留学调查报告 [Report on Foreign Students in China 2014 (In Chinese)]. Available at: <http://www.eol.cn/html/1hlx/content.html>

²¹ [Great Chinese March for Foreign Student (In Russ.)] Available at: http://www.ng.ru/nauka/2015-10-28/11_china.html

²² 关于孔子学院课堂 [Confucius Institutes and Classes (In Chinese.)] Available at: http://www.hanban.edu.cn/confuciusinstitutes/node_10961.htm

²³ Malysheva D.B. Vyzovy bezopasnosti v Centralnoj Azii - Collective Monograph Institute of World Economics and International Relations of the Russian Academy

of Sciences, Foundation for Advanced Research and Initiatives, Foundation for Supporting Public Diplomacy named after A.M. Gorchakov, Foundation named after Friedrich Ebert. Security Challenges in Central Asia Moscow, RAS 2013

²⁴ Kapustin N. Soprazheniye Yevrazijskogo ekonomicheskogo soyuza i Ekonomicheskogo poyasa Shelkovogo puti: dilemma integracii? (Published on the website of the Russian Council on Foreign Affairs 10.01.2018 <https://russiancouncil.ru/blogs/nikolaykapustin/33975/>)

of the construction of the fourth line of the Turkmenistan–China gas pipeline indirectly testifies to the low efficiency and risks of investments in large-scale routes through Tajikistan. Turkmenistan, in turn, remains one of the most important suppliers of energy resources to China. The bilateral contract in force since "...2009 provides for the supply of 30 billion cubic meters of Turkmen gas per year with an increase in the volume of supplies to 65 billion cubic meters by 2020. To ensure the import of raw materials in 2009, China has allocated funds for the development of gas fields Galkynysh, becoming the only country to get access to Turkmen resources on land"²⁵ and also secured the construction of three pipelines to transport resources to the site.

Thus, China's global initiatives resonate with the Central Asian republics. Beijing is interested in investing and expanding its economic influence, and the countries of the region need external investment and the development of their own infrastructure. Mutual interest dictates high dynamics of cooperation between the republics of Central Asia and China. The most important and most popular potential of the BRI project for the peoples of the region is that the involvement of the economies of these countries in this project activates industrial production, development of social infrastructure and agriculture, which is expressed by new jobs and opportunities for growth of small and medium-sized businesses in the region.

The Republic of Uzbekistan has supported the BRI from the very beginning. The country's involvement in the megaproject is important from the point of view of achieving priority tasks to ensure sustainable economic development, the implementation of major transport and infrastructure projects that can have a comprehensive positive impact on the whole of Central Asia.

Tashkent's position on the BRI is in tune with the main priorities of our country to further deepen the comprehensive strategic partnership with Beijing. The PRC is one of the leading trade, economic and investment partners of Uzbekistan.

As part of his participation in the second meeting of the Belt and Road Forum on April 25-27 2017 in Beijing, President Sh. Mirziyoyev held intensive talks with his Chinese leader Xi Jinping and Chairman of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress Li Zhangshu.

During the meeting, Xi Jinping said that China regards Uzbekistan as an important strategic partner and is ready to jointly make efforts to achieve common development and prosperity, ensure peace and stability in Central Asia.

According to the Chinese leader, President Shavkat Mirziyoyev can be called one of the founders of the Belt and Road Initiative, and the attention paid in Uzbekistan to participation in the forum testifies to the high level of relations between the two countries.

In his speech at the international forum, the President of Uzbekistan put forward a number of important initiatives aimed at increasing interconnectedness in Central Asia, solving food security problems, meeting the urgent social needs of the population, developing cultural, humanitarian and tourism ties.

Discussion.

The maximum disclosure of the transport potential of Central Asia and the formation of the economic corridor "China - Central Asia - West Asia". In this context, the construction of the Uzbekistan-Kyrgyzstan-China railway will bring benefits to all participants: it will intensify trade, create jobs, attract tourists, and bring profit from transit. The prospects of the project are demonstrated by the already established road corridor Kashgar - Irkeshtam - Osh - Andijan - Tashkent, which for the first time allowed road carriers from Central Asia to go directly to China.

Of particular importance is the construction of the Mazar-i-Sharif-Kabul-Peshawar railway with access to the southern ports. Uzbekistan, together with Afghanistan, Kazakhstan, Pakistan and Russia, is already working on the implementation of the project. In December 2018 and March 2019, five-sided meetings of the heads of railway departments were held in Tashkent, during which key details regarding the specified corridor were discussed. Along this route, the highway between Mazar-i-Sharif and Kabul already passes, power lines from Uzbekistan and Tajikistan are stretched, leading to the capital of Afghanistan. In the future, the route can be continued to India. To finance the indicated transport and

infrastructure projects, the President of Uzbekistan announced an initiative to create a "Financial Dialogue for the Countries of Central Asia and Afghanistan." Its main goal is to involve major international development institutions and the private sector in the implementation of the region's most important infrastructure projects, along with Chinese financial institutions - the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, the Silk Road Fund and others. In the current context, it is important to start this dialogue, to make it inclusive and transparent. At the same time, along with technical and economic aspects, it is necessary to pay the utmost attention to social and political issues. Transport communications not only solve connectivity problems, they create jobs, stimulate trade, and motivate development. In addition, transport projects passing through the territory of Afghanistan can become a powerful incentive for the early end of the longstanding confrontation in the country. New communications will unite Afghanistan's neighbors. They will have common economic interests. The conditions will be created for a much-needed regional consensus on the Afghan issue. All opposing groups will very quickly understand that peace and trade, unlike war, bring good profits, are the most important condition for progressive development. The vision of the Uzbek side is consonant with the ideas put forward by the leadership of the PRC. In his speech to the forum, Chinese leader Xi Jinping said that China will continue to work with other parties to build a network of interconnectedness, in which economic corridors will play a major role, complemented by new railways, international continental sea corridors and expressways.

Secondly, the promotion of "smart" agriculture, the creation of a joint center for agricultural innovation.

Ensuring food security in the face of climate change is one of the most important development challenges in the modern world. According to the UN Food and Agriculture Organization, the main food security risks for Central Asia are soil degradation, water scarcity and outdated agricultural practices.

Third, the widespread use of scientific and humanitarian potential for the development of human capital.

The earliest possible introduction of the latest achievements of science and technology in all spheres is the most important condition for sustainable economic growth, raising the standard of living of the population, and ensuring the high competitiveness of countries. At present, the PRC is already implementing the Action Plan for cooperation in the field of science, technology and innovation in the framework of the "Belt and Road". Together with partners, it is planned to promote four major initiatives: scientific, technical and humanitarian exchange, the creation of joint laboratories, cooperation in the creation of techno parks and technology transfer.

Fourth, the development of tourist exchange.

To achieve real results in the tourism sector, President Shavkat Mirziyoyev at the forum proposed to establish the International Silk Road Tourism Association in Samarkand and to organize the annual tourism forums "One Belt, One Road". Uzbekistan has significant potential for the development of tourism. There are over 7.4 thousand cultural heritage sites in the country, of which 209 are included in the UNESCO list. The republic has 11 national natural parks and state reserves, 12 wildlife sanctuaries, 106 museums and many other objects that can attract travelers. Active cooperation in this direction with the Belt and Road countries opens up great opportunities for Uzbekistan. 60 states are the largest "suppliers" of foreign tourists. According to the World Tourism Organization, China alone accounts for more than 20 percent of the total spending by outbound travelers worldwide. In 2017, they spent \$ 250.6 billion on tourism. Experts note that by 2021 this figure will grow to 429 billion. Summing up, I would like to emphasize again that the cooperation of Uzbekistan with the countries of the "Belt and Road" has a huge and not yet fully realized potential. The specific initiatives outlined by the President of Uzbekistan in the areas of transport, innovation, education are capable of bringing Uzbek-Chinese relations to a fundamentally new level, directing interaction within the megaproject to solve the most pressing problems that still hinder sustainable economic growth and development. The proposals of the Uzbek side create a good basis for further

²⁵ Tendencii i perspektivy razvitiya Yevrazijskogo ekonomicheskogo soyuza v kontekste opyta yevropejskoj integracii i globalnyx vyzovov - Collection of articles based on materials of an international scientific and practical conference

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cooperation with partner countries within the “One Belt, One Road” in the name of the common good and prosperity.

Conclusion.

This study examined the Belt and Road Initiative within the framework of China’s foreign policy priorities. The analysis reveals that the BRI represents a multifaceted endeavor by China to advance its geopolitical and economic interests on a global scale. By promoting infrastructure development, trade facilitation, and cultural exchange, the BRI aims to establish stronger economic and political ties between China and participating countries.

The BRI’s emphasis on connectivity and cooperation aligns with China’s pursuit of a “community of shared future for mankind”.

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Through the initiative, China seeks to reshape the global order by fostering interdependence and promoting its vision of a multipolar world. However, the BRI has also faced criticism and challenges, including concerns about debt sustainability, transparency, and potential geopolitical implications.

Despite these challenges, the BRI remains a cornerstone of China’s foreign policy agenda. Its long-term success will depend on China’s ability to address concerns, ensure project sustainability, and foster genuine partnerships with participating countries. The evolution of the BRI will continue to shape China’s role in global affairs and influence the geopolitical landscape for years to come.

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