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## CHINA'S BELT AND ROAD INITIATIVE AS EURASIAN INTEGRATION PROJECT: PROS AND CONS

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### *Abstract*

In the context of global economic challenges to modern society, which consist in international economic sanctions, the possibility of optimal integration into the international division of labor in the new conditions is associated with the development of economic cooperation with China. Russia and Uzbekistan will have to step up the development of a new approach to strategic partnership with China. Particularly relevant is the development of the Chinese Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), the impact of which on the economy of these countries and society, scientists estimate differently. The argumentation base covers a wide range of opinions, from clearly positive to extremely negative. The current development of the Belt and Road initiative within China is generally regarded as an additional (important) way to overcome internal regional imbalances, mainly through the development of the Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous region, the Inner Mongolia Autonomous region, and Gansu province. In this regard, it is important to analyze the expected socio-economic effects, how they are seen by modern sociologists, economists, and political scientists.

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**Keywords:** Belt and Road Initiative, Eurasian Integration.



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## 1. Introduction

Historically, the first period of the Great Silk Road existed from II BC to XV AD. As a trade route, it passed through different countries and continents from China to the Mediterranean, from East to West. In addition to the main trade, new technologies were spread along this route, and information about the existence of hitherto unknown countries was revealed (Lebedintseva, Karapetyan, Gonashvili, Starovoitova, & Karapetyan, 2018). The great Silk Road ceased to exist with the advent of sea routes, as navigation provided much more opportunities. The beginning of the second period can be established from the beginning of the XXI century: the period of revival of the Great silk road the new Silk Road, which is proposed in One Belt, One Road Initiative.

The Great Silk Road opened a new page in the annals of diplomatic relations between peoples of different countries 2000 years ago. Zhang Qian of the Western Han dynasty went on a mission to the Western lands, and Xuanzang of the Tang dynasty went on campaigns through the territory of Uzbekistan in order to learn new spiritual knowledge from India. Thus, in Central Asia, gradually there were signs of the Chinese technology of paper-making, smelting iron etc., and in China gradually emerged knowledge from Central Asia about astronomy, geography, mathematics etc. It is possible to say that in the cultural ties between China and Western countries, Uzbekistan acted as a bridge. Despite the fact that Uzbek-Chinese relations were closed during the Soviet period, this did not affect their long-standing historical roots. The new Silk Road can be divided into land and sea routes. The silk road economic belt provides for the creation of three TRANS-Eurasian economic corridors: the Northern, the Central and the Southern corridors (Du & Zhang, 2018). The Maritime silk road of the XXI century includes the creation of two sea routes: from China through the South China sea to the South Pacific region; from China via the South China sea and the Indian ocean to Europe (Abegunrin & Manyeruke, 2020; Chan, Dai, Wang, & Lacka, 2019).

The current development of the Belt and Road initiative within China is generally regarded as an additional (important) way to overcome internal regional imbalances, mainly through the development of the Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous region, the Inner Mongolia Autonomous region, and Gansu province. In this regard, it is important to analyze the expected socio-economic effects, how they are seen by Chinese sociologists, economists, and political scientists (Clarke, 2016; Gonzalez-Vicente, 2019).

The Chinese Initiative is an example of building integration links that cover wide territorial borders. The idea of the initiative is based on another Chinese concept - community of the common destiny of mankind.

## 2. Problem Statement

The concept of the community of the common destiny of mankind was presented by the Chinese government in 2012 year (Du & Zhang, 2018). This idea, to some extent, can even be called the concept of globalization in Chinese, China's view of modern integration processes and serves as an alternative to Western theories of globalization (Greer, 2018; Lu & Mei, 2019). The main goal set by the Chinese government in the framework of this concept is to achieve peaceful mutual development, cooperation and harmonious coexistence of countries based on the principles of universal security, shared prosperity, openness and tolerance, mutual respect and dialogue.

### **3. Research Questions**

At the same time, it is necessary to answer the question: what does this situation give Russia, Uzbekistan and Belarus from the standpoint of social and economic development? What is the argumentation base put forward by supporters and opponents of this project in Russia?

### **4. Purpose of the Study**

One of the main features of the concept, which distinguishes it from Western ideas, is that the construction of a single destiny community of humanity is not aimed at imposing its own value orientations and patterns of behavior on other countries, but at intertwining different values and interests, mutual exchange of cultural patterns, while the globalist theories of the West have the opposite goal. (Mekhdiev et al., 2019).

The Belt and Road project has an important geopolitical and geo-economic significance: it connects not only many different countries, but, first of all, two world centers located in the East and West.

### **5. Research Methods**

The main research method is content analysis. In the context of global economic challenges to modern society, which consist in international economic sanctions, the possibility of optimal integration into the international division of labor in the new conditions is associated with the development of economic cooperation with China.

### **6. Findings**

#### **6.1. Uzbekistan and China**

Uzbekistan is the heart of Central Asia by its geographical location. The country's population is approximately 50 % of the total population of Central Asia. The development of Uzbek-Chinese relations can have a positive impact on Uzbekistan's internal reforms, which can be conditioned by the following real objective conclusions: first, based on its location, Uzbekistan is a landlocked country. The closest way to the sea is through China. Second, China is a large country within Asia, not only in terms of population, but also in terms of the speed of economic development. China is a member of the General Assembly and a member of the UN Security Council. China's position on the world stage is gradually increasing. Strengthening relations with China will help Uzbekistan, which is a relatively young independent country that occupies a special place in the political and economic sphere, in the positive dynamics of its international status and authority. Thirdly, based on economic aspects, Uzbekistan and China have a special geopolitical advantage. China is a neighboring country for Uzbekistan. The distance between their borders is only 150 km. The economic and geopolitical advantage of both countries gives their relations complementarity. Fourthly, China is a huge country that takes an active part in maintaining security and peace throughout the world. After gaining independence, Uzbekistan, in turn, must ensure its own security, stable development of politics and economy in its region, and cooperation and interaction with China is necessary. In addition, the territories of both countries are home to the Uzbek nation, and in the Western

part of China there are other nationalities that share a common origin with the peoples of Uzbekistan, with a similar culture and religion. Therefore, maintaining friendly good-neighborly relations would not only affect the development of the Western part of China, but also affect the steady development of Central Asia as a whole. In addition, Central Asia is an alternative route for importing energy resources to China. China views Uzbekistan as a rapidly developing country and is ready to develop long-term cooperation on an equal basis. Especially recently, China has been paying attention to the development of relations with Central Asian countries in order to preserve the security of the Western part of China, which has stimulated China to develop comprehensive relations with Uzbekistan.

#### *Russia and China*

Russia participates in the Belt and Road project through membership in the EEU, which in May 2018 signed an agreement on trade and economic cooperation with China.

If we talk specifically about the advantages of developing the initiative for Russia, then participation in this project can lead to the following positive outcomes:

- Strengthening and strengthening Russia's position in the global economic arena during the period of active development of such projects as the Transatlantic and TRANS-Pacific trade partnerships;
- Improvement of the transport system, both outside the country and within it. An example is the agreement on the construction and financing of the Moscow – Kazan high-speed railway, which will become part of the Moscow – Beijing high-speed transport corridor. As well as the creation of a transport route "China-Europe", this will pass through the territory of the Russian Federation;
- Growth of the national currency level (Nalbantoglu, 2017).

Among the positive potentials for the development of Russia and the EEU within the framework of the new Silk Road is the Eurasian land bridge across the territory of China, Kazakhstan and Russia to Europe. However, it is noted that positioning the EEU countries not only as territories that provide transit of Chinese goods to the European market is a multi-faceted complex task (Razika, Yang, & Hafeez, 2019).

The main goal of the BRI is to achieve a harmonious state of the world, mutual solution of global problems, and mutual development of countries (Saud, Chen, & Haseeb, 2020; Swaine, 2015). In addition to the unambiguous advantages of the project, there are also significant disadvantages, but it is still quite difficult to talk about any exact consequences, because the topic is still relevant and is in the process of its implementation. It is also difficult to talk about the consequences that the implementation of the "One belt, one road" initiative can lead Russia to, and the outcomes that have already been predicted are quite contradictory and cannot be unequivocally called positive or negative for the country.

## **7. Conclusion**

Summing up, it can be revealed, firstly, that the development of diplomatic relations with China is of particular importance in the foreign policy of Uzbekistan. Relations between the two countries began more than 2000 years ago, during the great Silk Road. In the modern era, in foreign policy, both States adhere to the policy of non-interference in the sovereignty of other States, the policy of independence, the policy of mutual benefit, which laid the Foundation for the development of bilateral friendly relations. Following China's promotion of the BRI policy, relations between the two countries are constantly improving and have a large space for their expansion in the near future (Yu & Chang, 2018).

Secondly, the participation of the Republic of Belarus in the Chinese initiative fully meets the national interests of the country. The Belarusian leadership has high hopes for its implementation in the framework of increasing bilateral cooperation. Of course, it is naive to expect an instant solution to all existing problems in the socio-economic and technological development of the country by participating in the EPSP (ZiroMwatela & Changfeng, 2016). However, it is necessary to participate in this project, since the benefits for the Belarusian state and society are obvious, especially since the EPSP is supported by most countries of Eurasia, including Russia. Therefore, Belarus is placing a serious stake on improving the infrastructure system; further developing logistics, the Chinese-Belarusian industrial Park, creating joint ventures, etc.

Thirdly, because the topic of the BRI is still at the initial stage of its implementation and is being actively discussed in the world community, it is still too early to draw any concrete conclusions, because the world situation is quite unstable, and China can always radically change the direction of the project's development.

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