



## МЕЖДУНАРОДНЫЕ ЭКОНОМИЧЕСКИЕ ОТНОШЕНИЯ

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### Implications of «One Belt, One Road» Strategy for China and Eurasia

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**Abstract.** The «One Belt, One Road» (OBOR) initiative was proposed by Chinese President Xi Jinping during his visits to Kazakhstan and Indonesia, in 2013. The initiative «One Belt, One Road» could be fully treated as a comprehensive domestic and foreign policy concept. OBOR is designed to strengthen China as an attractive actor in the global market and advance its soft power. It is mostly aimed at increasing economic exchanges between China and the world.

Historically the concept of the «Silk Road» was not only focused on the trade agenda. It also had rather significant cultural meaning. Obviously, the OBOR initiative could serve as a cultural bridge between China and the world and in this sense, emphasizes the dialogue between civilizations, not only markets and forces. With its long-term interests, China treats OBOR as a grand strategy. The initiative has been extensively discussed among academics and policy-makers both inside and outside China.

The article shows also coordinating efforts of China and Russia in regional development as well as the internationalization of Central Asian region after 1991 and the role of China in this process. Contours of possible great powers rivalry as well as lack of mutual political trust between the Central Asian countries are described.

This article intends to provide the analysis on the issue from the Chinese scholars' perspective.

**Key words:** China, Silk Road, Maritime Silk Road, «One Belt, One Road», One Axis, Two Wings, National Strategy, FTA Strategy, Second Eurasian Continental Bridge, Central Asia

Nowadays the Asia-Pacific region is playing the role of global economic and financial center. Regional share in global gross domestic product (GDP) continues to increase, growing from 30.1 percent in 2000 to 42.6 percent in 2017<sup>1</sup>. However, the economic development of various regional countries seems to be more isolated, partly due to the «fragmentation» of the development trend since the «cold war». The region still lacks an effective economic integration.

Moreover, there is a large gap on the level of economic development between countries of «One Axis, Two Wings» (fig. 1), including countries neighboring China (*main axis*), 24 countries in Europe, Africa and elsewhere in Asia (*west wing*) and 7 Latin American countries (*east wing*)<sup>2</sup>, and other countries, engaged in global economic integration process<sup>3</sup>, promoted by United States and Europe [Fergusson, Williams 2016].

<sup>2</sup> Embracing the BRI ecosystem in 2018 // Deloitte Insights. February 12, 2018. URL: <https://www2.deloitte.com/insights/us/en/economy/asia-pacific/china-belt-and-road-initiative.html> (accessed: 02.10.2018).

<sup>3</sup> Solis M. The Containment Fallacy: China and the TPP. The Brookings Institution. URL: <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/up-front/2013/05/24/the-containment-fallacy-china-and-the-tpp/> (accessed: 02.01.2019).

<sup>1</sup> ADB: Asia-Pacific region's share of global GDP rises to over 42 pct in 2017 // Xinhuanet. September 10, 2018. URL: [http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2018-09/10/c\\_137458047.htm](http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2018-09/10/c_137458047.htm) (accessed: 02.01.2019).

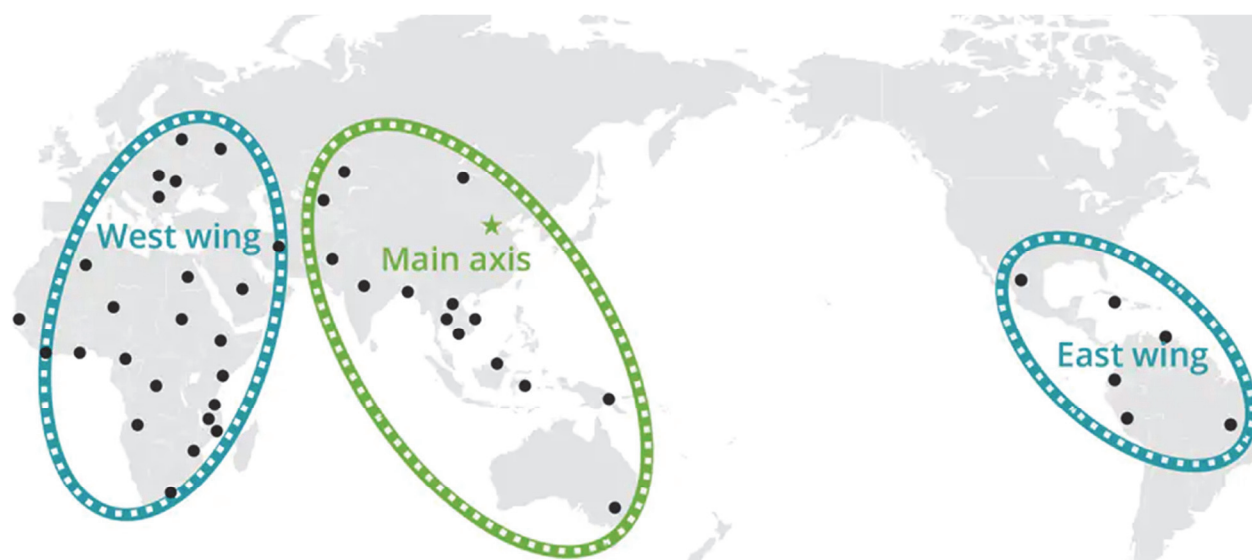


Fig. 1. “One Axis, Two Wings”

On January 23, 2017 the new US President D. Trump signed his first executive order to withdraw from Trans-Pacific Partnership, once again declaring his enormous preoccupation about American workers and historical goal to make America great again. Although this step is qualified in terms of Trump’s protectionism ideology, it created a best chance for China to fill the economic vacuum as America looks mostly inward, and expand its sway over Asia and beyond<sup>4</sup>.

On September 7<sup>th</sup>, 2013, Chinese President Xi Jinping delivered an important speech in Astana, Kazakhstan, where he proposed the Initiative «Silk Road Economic Belt» with innovative mode as the national strategy<sup>5</sup>. Later on October 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2013, President Xi proposed the «21st Century Maritime Silk Road» Initiative in his speech addressed to the Indonesian parliament<sup>6</sup>. And on March 5<sup>th</sup>, 2014, Chinese Premier Li Keqiang made the Government

Work Report on economic work, requiring a high level of opening-up strategy, seize planning and constructing of the “Land and Maritime Silk Road” and promoting “Bangladesh-China-India-Myanmar Economic Corridor”, also with the “China-Pakistan Economic Corridor” construction [Khan et al. 2018].

### Some Historical Facts (or Traces)

«Silk Road» beyond the history begins east from Chang’an city, capital of both Han (The Han Dynasty is divided by Western Han Dynasty (206 BC — 24 AD) and Eastern Han Dynasty (25 AD — 220 AD)) and Tang Dynasty (618—907), through the Hexi Corridor and Xinjiang, then across Central Asia, West Asia to Europe, with a total length of 7000 km, and the continuation of 2,000 years. The ancient «Silk Road» is divided into northern, central and southern lines, and connected with three oceans (Pacific, Atlantic, Indian Ocean) and five seas (Caspian Sea, the Baltic, the Black Sea, the Mediterranean, the Red Sea). States surrounding did not only trade variety of goods, but also jointly safeguard and maintain the secure channel.

“Marine Silk Road” can be traced back to the Han dynasty, and reached its peak in the Ming dynasty. It is ancient maritime commercial trade route starting in Chang’an city, connecting Asia, Africa and Europe, for thousands of years it became an important corridor connecting with East and West. Nations frequently operated maritime trade peacefully, and promoted mutual exchanges among the coastal states.

<sup>4</sup> See: Gomez E. US Withdrawal from TPP: Geopolitical and Goeconomic Gift for China? How far will the U.S. pulling out of the TPP benefit China? // The Diplomat. January 25, 2017. URL: <https://thediplomat.com/2017/01/us-withdrawal-from-tpp-geopolitical-and-geo-economic-gift-for-china/> (accessed: 02.01.2019).

<sup>5</sup> President Xi Jinping proposes Silk Road economic belt // China Daily. 7 September 2013. URL: [http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2013xivisitcenterasia/2013-09/07/content\\_16951811.htm](http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2013xivisitcenterasia/2013-09/07/content_16951811.htm) (accessed: 05.12.2018).

<sup>6</sup> Chronology of China’s Belt and Road Initiative. The State Council of the People’s Republic of China. URL: [http://english.gov.cn/news/top\\_news/2015/04/20/content\\_281475092566326.htm](http://english.gov.cn/news/top_news/2015/04/20/content_281475092566326.htm) (accessed: 02.01.2019).



Fig. 2. Geographic version of the “One Belt, One Road” (OBOR) initiative

Whether the “Silk Road Economic Belt” or the “21st Century Maritime Silk Road” (fig. 2) is the solid basis for economic cooperation and mutual benefits, cultural exchanges. From Chinese viewpoint, insisting on non-interference into internal affairs of regional countries, the initiative does not seek neither influencing regional affairs nor forming spheres of influence.

### Geopolitics of Economic Corridors

“One Belt and One Road” is a comprehensive three-dimensional transport network interconnection across the Eurasian continent, consisting of railway, highway, air, maritime transport, oil and gas pipelines, transmission lines and communication networks. The initiative covers the following set of tasks: develop cooperation in capital flows and logistics, increase information exchanges, activate new potential and demonstrate an economic growth. These projects should promote economic prosperity and development in Central Asia, West Asia and South Asia, and the ASEAN region [Vinogradov 2013].

Globally “One Belt and One Road” strategy constitutes a new pattern of China’s all-round opening-up strategy and new strategic diplomatic framework. Many western experts (M. Almeida<sup>7</sup>;

<sup>7</sup> Almeida M. China’s ‘Marshall Plan’ for the Arab world // Arab News. July 14, 2018. URL: <http://www.arabnews.com/node/1338856> (accessed: 02.01.2019).

M. Auerback<sup>8</sup>; E. Curran<sup>9</sup>; J. Higginbottom<sup>10</sup>, Sh. Tiezzi<sup>11</sup>) qualified this strategy as China’s new “Marshall Plan”. From the connotation of opening-up strategy, from “bring in domestically” to “take outside globally” [Song 2012], opening-up can significantly promote reforms<sup>12</sup>. From the scale of opening-up strategy, the implementation of westward strategy in order to develop China’s western region marks the formation of a new pattern. From the depth of opening-up strategy, comply with the development trend of global regional economic integration, accelerate the implementation of the free

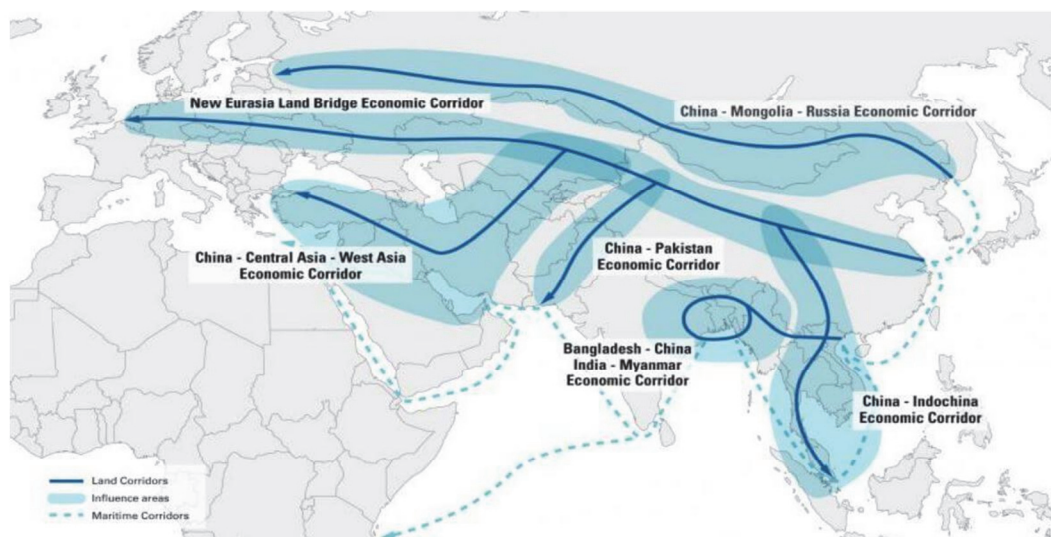
<sup>8</sup> Auerback M. China’s Belt and Road Initiative: a Marshall Plan in reverse // Asia Times. December 5, 2018. URL: <http://www.atimes.com/chinas-belt-and-road-initiative-a-marshall-plan-in-reverse/> (accessed: 02.01.2019).

<sup>9</sup> Curran E. China’s Marshall Plan // Bloomberg. August 07, 2016. URL: <https://www.bloombergquint.com/china/china-s-marshall-plan#gs.yimC7u4z> (accessed: 02.01.2019).

<sup>10</sup> Higginbottom J. Why China’s Marshall Plan is scaring the neighbors? // OZY. December 10, 2018. URL: <https://www.ozy.com/fast-forward/why-chinas-marshall-plan-is-scaring-the-neighbors/90914> (accessed: 02.01.2019).

<sup>11</sup> Tiezzi Sh. The New Silk Road: China’s Marshall Plan? // The Diplomat. 6 November 2014. URL: <http://thediplomat.com/2014/11/the-new-silk-road-chinas-marshall-plan/> (accessed: 05.12.2018)

<sup>12</sup> Xi Jinping and His Era // China Daily. November 18, 2017. URL: [http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/kindle/2017-11/18/content\\_34683261.htm](http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/kindle/2017-11/18/content_34683261.htm) (accessed: 02.01.2019).



**Fig. 3.** Overview of the economic corridors of the OBOR initiative

trade zone strategy in order to achieve free flow of goods, capital and labor. Meanwhile, the geographical scope of “One Belt and One Road” is open. It primarily comes from but is not limited to the ancient “Silk Road” and “Marine Silk Road”. Central Asia, Russia, South Asia and Southeast Asia are being key priority. Middle East and East Africa are basically the intersection land of “One Belt and One Road”. Europe, CIS and Africa should also be taken into account in the long term strategic consideration [Degterev, Li Yan, Trusova, Cherniaev 2018].

China contributed to creation of the transport channel from Pacific Ocean to Baltic Sea via the Second (New) Eurasian Continental Bridge (fig. 3) in the northwest, strengthening energy and infrastructure cooperation with Central Asian countries, and closely connecting Central Asia’s “depressed area” with the world’s largest economy EU and the global economic center. China and Pakistan have jointly built “China-Pakistan economic corridor” by opening up passage from Xinjiang through Pakistan to the Indian Ocean. Southwest China is also committed to creating «Bangladesh-China-India-Myanmar Economic Corridor» (see fig. 3) in order to connect southwest China, Indochina and the Malay Peninsula [Du, Ma 2015].

“Marine Silk Road” is based on policy of opening-up southeastern China’s coastal areas to the Asia-Pacific region via FTA negotiations with Japan and South Korea; strengthening investment, trade and financial cooperation with Chinese Taiwan; es-

tablishing the upgrade China-ASEAN Free Trade Zone; speeding up infrastructure interoperability; and further broadening financing channels for co-operation projects. “Marine Silk Road” can further extend northward and connect with Russia’s “North Sea Road” (Arctic route), strengthening port and other infrastructure construction cooperation with Russia [Yagiya, Kharlampieva, Lagutina 2015].

### Free Trade Areas Strategy of China

WTO Doha Round of negotiations have stranded, showing that WTO is becoming a minimum threshold of global free trade cooperation. Foreign trade strength of the developed countries under the impact of the current round of economic crisis has declined, and the market potential of emerging economies is further highlighted. In order to weaken the influence of emerging states on the international economic order, regional trade liberalization has gradually become a policy tool for balancing global trade patterns for traditional European and American economic powers. The global trading system has witnessed some major changes with its key trend — the regional trade liberalization, which prioritizes the free trade zone strategy. For example, Japan launched the full free trade area strategy, widely practicing free trade agreements in Asia<sup>13</sup>.

<sup>13</sup> Yoichiro S. Free-Trade Agreements in the Asia-Pacific: Competitive Aspects of Sub-Regional Trade Institution Building. URL: <https://apcss.org/Publications/Edited%20Volumes/RegionalFinal%20chapters/Chapter14Sato.pdf> (accessed: 02.01.2019).

The process of regional trade liberalization development implies the formation of new international trade rules. For China, the most important task is to provide these rules in accordance with China's own wishes. However, these rules are often formed by the developed countries, and consequently reflect their demands and interests. If these rules eventually dominate the new order, then it could lead to the emergence of new global political and economic development imbalances. In this case, China has to develop an overall strategic plan to actively respond to the challenges of the regional trade liberalization.

At present, China's FTA strategy has an initial prototype, with a total of 18 free trade areas undergoing, involving 31 countries and regions worldwide. 12 free trade agreements have officially been negotiated and signed, involving 20 countries and regions; 6 FTAs are being negotiated, involving 22 countries [Kostyunina, Baronov 2018; Zeng 2016]. Despite the significant achievements, the following set of problems is still present at the China's FTA strategy:

1. *Narrow geographical range, low economic levels.* Covering mainly the area in Southeast Asia, Central America and Oceania, the key trading partners are mostly developing countries. In this regard it's difficult to compare China's FTA strategy with any other current existing trade agreements in scope.

2. *Simple form, lack of depth.* Agenda includes mainly the tariff concessions, with limited coverage of intellectual property, competition policy and other non-traditional issues.

3. *Lack of leadership for regional trade cooperation without enough potential for changing the international trade system.*

### **China and Russia: Regional Co-development**

With the interest to strengthen the economic ties between European and Asian countries, deepen the mutual cooperation and accelerate promotion of "Silk Road Economic Belt" construction, China and Central Asian countries should negotiate and make appropriate arrangements on the promotion of trade and investment facilitation issue. Some Central Asian countries such as Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan are members of Eurasian Economic Union, thus the FTA negotiations between China and Central Asian countries implies negotiations between China and Eurasian Union with participa-

tion of Russian Federation. China should also actively participate in regional organizations such as Shanghai Cooperation Organization [Zhu, Han 2015; Yurtaev, Rogov 2017].

China's revitalization of North-East strategy can effectively be associated and coordinated with Russia's strategy aimed at developing Eastern Siberia and the Far East. The 2012 APEC summit that took place in the Far Eastern city Vladivostok, Russia, marks the launch of Russia's new Asia-Pacific strategy. Sanctions launched by Western countries against Russia since 2014 around the Ukraine crisis prompted Russia to accelerate speed of strategic eastward development. So, the eastern part of Russia due to its geographical conditions, is getting great opportunity of participating in the Asia-Pacific political and economic integration process. Thus, Russia's strategy is closely linked to China's, both governments need to revise and review "North-East China, East Siberia and the Far East Russia Cooperation Plan (2009—2018)" which had officially been signed by China and Russia in 2009<sup>14</sup>. However, so far, the Plan was not successfully developed due to multiple complicated reasons<sup>15</sup>.

Comparing China's "One Belt and One Road" strategy with the «Silk Road» plan or program that United States or Europe have ever offered, the biggest feature is its openness and inclusiveness. United States' "New Silk Road" plan<sup>16</sup> is aimed to open up a south channel to the Indian Ocean for Central Asia through Afghanistan, Pakistan and India, in order to make Central Asian countries get rid of dependence on Russia and China. Europe's "Europe-Caucasus-Asia transport corridor" (TRACECA) program<sup>17</sup> has almost the same goals with the United States' "New Silk Road" plan (fig. 4).

<sup>14</sup> Программа сотрудничества между регионами Дальнего Востока и Восточной Сибири России и Северо-Востока КНР на 2009—2018 гг. URL: [http://www.russchinatrade.ru/assets/files/ru-ru-cn-coop/programm\\_coop.pdf](http://www.russchinatrade.ru/assets/files/ru-ru-cn-coop/programm_coop.pdf). Дата обращения: 19.12.2018.

<sup>15</sup> Zuenko I. A Chinese-Russian Regional Program Ends With a Whimper // Carnegie Moscow Center, 26.09.2018. URL: <https://carnegie.ru/commentary/77341> (accessed: 02.01.2019).

<sup>16</sup> U.S. Support for the New Silk Road. U.S. Department of State. URL: <https://2009-2017.state.gov/p/sca/ci/af/newsilkroad/index.htm> (accessed: 02.01.2019).

<sup>17</sup> EU support to the Europe—Caucasus—Asia Transport Corridor. Brussels. February 28, 2012. European Commission. URL: [http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release\\_MEMO-12-141\\_en.htm?locale=en](http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_MEMO-12-141_en.htm?locale=en) (accessed: 02.01.2019).



Fig. 4. Eurasian Railway and Road Corridors



Fig. 5. Russia's "Trans-Eurasian belt development program"

The purpose of the Russia-led Eurasian integration process is to re-integrate original Soviet Republics in the region through the Eurasian Economic Union. Meanwhile, Russia also realizes the geopolitical importance of the Caspian Sea as a transport hub, and takes active participation in the Pan-European transport network with European standards on "North-South transport corridor" project (see fig. 4). The main purpose of "North-South transport corridor" is to ensure transport and logistics security of the Nordic countries, Russia and the Persian Gulf, the Indian Ocean and Southeast Asian countries through Iran; and ensure cargo security from Europe and the Nordic countries to Moscow and St. Peters-

burg; and through ports of Caspian Sea to the Central Asian countries.

In addition, the "Trans-Eurasian Belt Development Program"<sup>18</sup> proposed by the Russian national railway company has been demonstrated by the Bureau of the Russian Academy of Sciences, and has the high potential to become major national strategy (fig. 5). As an important starting point of the development of Siberia and the Far East, the concept

<sup>18</sup> Trans-Eurasian Belt Development: A Long Trip Home. URL: <http://sites.psu.edu/markmarich/2016/04/13/trans- Eurasian-belt-development-a-long-trip-home/> (accessed: 02.01.2019).

of “Trans-Eurasian belt development program” uses the Trans-Siberian railway as the backbone, to build a grand belt development corridor starting from the Atlantic Ocean to Europe, to Siberia and to the Pacific Ocean, and then across the Bering Strait into Alaska to connect with North America which integrates transportation, energy and telecom. That will favor Russia in becoming the core of the interests of three regions: Western Europe, North America and Southeast Asia, geographically and geopolitically [Lukin, Yakunin 2018].

The first Eurasian continental bridge (or the Eurasian Land Bridge) is the rail transport route for moving freight and passengers overland between Pacific seaports in the Russian Far East and China and seaports in Europe via “Transsib” railroad<sup>19</sup>. The starting point of the Pacific Vladivostok harbor is frozen in winter, though another Russian port — Nakhodka (Nakhodka Commercial Sea Port) — located not far from Vladivostok port, is one of leading non-freezing ports in the Far East. As Nakhodka Port has recently been declared a Free Economic Zone, it can get numerous advantages being a key point within the “One Belt and One Road”.

### Internationalizing Central Asia

In the 1990s, after the independence of the Central Asian countries, the construction of the Second Eurasian Continental Bridge had been actively promoted by China. The opening in 1992 of international rail transport at the border-crossing points, Dostyk-Alashankou and Altynkol-Khorgos, connecting China and Kazakhstan has promoted the economic ties between the Central Asian states and foreign countries<sup>20</sup>. The scope of the Second Eurasian Continental Bridge is broad, including not only the interconnection, but also highways, aviation, communications, and other aspects such as customs cooperation, transit, rail freight, etc. The Second

<sup>19</sup> See: Debreczeni G. The New Eurasian Land Bridge: Opportunities for China, Europe, and Central Asia // The Public Sphere. URL: [http://publicspherejournal.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/02.eurasian\\_land\\_bridge.pdf](http://publicspherejournal.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/02.eurasian_land_bridge.pdf) (accessed: 02.01.2019).

<sup>20</sup> See: Nuryshv S. Kazakhstan and China: Strategic Partnership and Good-Neighborliness. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Kazakhstan. URL: <http://mfa.gov.kz/en/content-view/shakhrat-nuryshv-kazakhstan-and-china-strategic-partnership-and-good-neighborliness> (accessed: 02.01.2019).

Eurasian continental bridge could contribute for Central Asia to build a solid road transport hub on the Eurasian continent.

The international community demonstrates an unprecedented enthusiasm in this regard, some financial institutions are being actively involved in the launch of the transportation cooperation projects, both in Europe<sup>21</sup> and in Asia (Central Asia Regional Economic Cooperation (CAREC) project proposed by the Asian Development Bank<sup>22</sup>).

China provided exports ports for Kazakhstan goods, and opened up a number of land crossings<sup>23</sup>. Turkmenistan, a landlocked and resource-rich Central Asia country, routing by a 925-km stretch of railway, built jointly by the three Caspian neighbours (Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan and Iran), eases the exchange of goods between the Turkmenistan and the countries lying along the Indian Ocean and the Persian Gulf<sup>24</sup>. Flood of cheap goods from China, Iran, Turkey and other countries were exported into Central Asian countries to alleviate domestic economic crisis and ensure the basic needs of people.

Due to the slow economic recovery of Central Asia, limited transit capacities, and security threats, the economic cooperation within the region still remains very smooth, transport cooperation faces real troubles. Western countries are mostly concerned about the energy development in Central Asia and democratic process. Transportation plans of the United States and Europe towards Central

<sup>21</sup> European Commission identifies the infrastructure priorities and investment needs for the Trans-European Transport Network until 2030. European Commission. URL: [https://ec.europa.eu/transport/themes/infrastructure/news/2015-01-15-corridors\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/transport/themes/infrastructure/news/2015-01-15-corridors_en) (accessed: 02.01.2019).

<sup>22</sup> Central Asia Regional Economic Cooperation: Supporting Capacity Development Needs of CAREC 2020. Asian Development Bank. Technical Assistance Report. Project Number: 46140-001. December 2012. URL: <https://www.adb.org/sites/default/files/project-document/75173/46140-001-reg-tar.pdf> (accessed: 02.01.2019).

<sup>23</sup> See: Nuryshv S. Kazakhstan and China: Strategic Partnership and Good-Neighborliness. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Kazakhstan. URL: <http://mfa.gov.kz/en/content-view/shakhrat-nuryshv-kazakhstan-and-china-strategic-partnership-and-good-neighborliness> (accessed: 02.01.2019).

<sup>24</sup> See: Gurt M. Landlocked Central Asia gets shorter railway link to Persian Gulf // Reuters. URL: <https://www.reuters.com/article/turkmenistan-railway/landlocked-central-asia-gets-shorter-railway-link-to-persian-gulf-idINKCN0JH1Q820141203> (accessed: 02.01.2019).

Asia are focused on preventing Russian geopolitical growth.

The Central Asian countries can't accept the construction of standard gauge railway: transit operations are hindered by the difference in railway track gauges in China and the EU (1.435 m), and in Russia, Belarus, and Kazakhstan (1.520 m) which also affects the transport and customs clearance facilitation. In this case, the Second Eurasian continental bridge still remain in the conception and planning, hardly be operated, and hardly be an optimistic international transport option [Rakhimov 2014]. "Silk Road economic belt" can help to break these challenges, and promote the implementation of a number of international projects, giving the Second Eurasian continental bridge new vitality.

### Great Game around OBOR

"One Belt and One Road" could seriously change regional status-quo and thus it faces serious geopolitical challenges implicating major powers, including US.

Over the past decade, USA launched two wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, and also engaged in "Great Central Asia Program", "New Silk Road Program", "Great Middle East initiative", etc., in order to bring Eurasian area into the direct US sphere of influence. The formation and development of the China's "Silk Road economic belt" will absolutely improve China's strategic position and obviously challenge the US strategic interests. Actually, many American scholars consider "Silk Road" as China's counter strategy in responding the US containment [Wuthnow 2017]<sup>25</sup>.

Apart from China and USA, Russia and Iran are states which have close relations with five Central Asian countries. Cross ties between these four countries are very complicated. Thus, Sino—US relations reflect the track "rising power" — "hegemon". Russia and Iran are strengthening their ties in the framework of the Syrian conflict settlement. China and Russia have the comprehensive strategic cooperative partnership, though relations between China and US are also solid [Badrutdinova, Degterev, Stepanova 2017]. Iran is China's largest trading partner in the West Asia.

Russia historically considers Central Asia as its "backyard". The formation of the "Silk Road economic belt" should be natural process with respecting equality principle and advocating mutual benefits, finally strengthening common dreams for countries and peoples. Bilateral relations between Russia and China are deepening, especially in security and political areas. However, Russia have some concerns regarding China's growing influence in Central Asia [Dadabaev 2018]. In fact, without Russia's support "Silk Road economic belt" is difficult to be formed.

Apart from major powers rivalry, there is a certain lack of mutual political trust between the Central Asian countries. Central Asia possesses a number of regional integration mechanisms (Organization of Collective Security Treaty, Shanghai Cooperation Organization, etc), with different directions of integration process [Haas 2017]. The successful regional economic cooperation should start as a precondition from having stable political relations and the commitment to transfer a part of "sovereignty", which requires a high level of political confidence and mutual trust.

Central Asian countries still have vulnerability and uncertainty of political environment. "Three evil forces" (terrorism, separatism and extremism) is essentially a political issue, but it has significantly closed ties with the Islamic Revival Movement which raised since the 1970s. The color revolutions in Kyrgyzstan and other Central Asian countries in the recent years provoked the formation and development of religious extremism, terrorism and ethnic separatist forces [Vinokurov, Libman 2012].

At present, relations between China and relevant countries involved into "Silk Road Economic Belt" are generally favorable, but mainly reflect the level of senior government. The local civil attitude towards China is still quite complicated: realizing the positive trend for the common development, societies are deeply concerned and even worried about the rapid Chinese development. The so called "China threat theory" has a great market among Central Asia countries [Denoon 2015]. And US' Central Asia policy, aimed at containing China, has penetrated the "Anti-China" ideology into local people's concept [Dobbins 2018]. It makes China more difficult to demonstrate its own competence of soft power skills in the region.

<sup>25</sup> Cooley A. New silk route or classic developmental cul-de-sac? The prospects and challenges of China's OBOR initiative // Ponars. 2015. URL: <http://www.ponarseurasia.org/node/7833> (accessed: 21.11.2018).



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It is expected that a thorough coordination of efforts and flexible strategies of the relevant countries of the “Silk Road Economic Belt” initiative would permit to form a third economic cooperation shaft axis across the Eurasian continent, besides the Atlantic and Pacific Economic Cooperation axis in the global scale. China, as a country that has conceived this initiative, should be mostly focused on advancing common goals rather than its own national interests.

China has clearly declared that it does not and will not seek the great power status in this belt, neither any other countries will seek for “core and edge” exploitative economic relations, nor attached with the attachment unequal economic relations. All countries involved are equal participants, participating in the project on the principles of equality and

mutual benefit. In this process, China advocates a new concept of justice and value of “giving more, taking less”, which is essentially different from the underlying purpose of the “New Silk Road Plan” pushed by certain hegemonic countries. China should fully apply and explain this viewpoint to neighboring countries and other states in order to get more trust and support and to avoid the rebound of “neo-colonial theory” or “spheres of influence” theory.

“One Belt, One Road” is an open cooperation initiative, countries outside the region are always welcomed to participate. The cooperation with Russia and Central Asian countries is actively developing. The possibility of cooperation with the US and European powers in this framework should not be excluded.

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## **Значение стратегии «Один пояс, один путь» для Китая и Евразии**

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Инициатива «Один пояс, один путь» была предложена президентом Китая Си Цзиньпином во время его визитов в Казахстан и Индонезию в 2013 г. Данная инициатива может восприниматься в качестве инструмента как внутренней экономической, так и внешней политики КНР. Стратегия призвана укрепить Китай как привлекательного игрока на мировом рынке и усилить его мягкую силу. Реализация стратегии предусматривает в основном расширение экономических обменов между Китаем и внешним миром.

Исторически концепция «Шелкового пути» была ориентирована не только на развитие международной торговли. Она также имеет значительную гуманитарную составляющую. Очевидно, что данная инициатива будет служить культурным мостом между Китаем и зарубежными странами и в этом смысле способствует формированию диалога между цивилизациями, а не только между рынками или крупнейшими мировыми игроками. Китай с его долгосрочными интересами рассматривает «Один пояс, один путь» как важную составляющую своей большой стратегии. Эта инициатива широко обсуждается учеными и политиками как в Китае, так и за его пределами.

В статье показаны координация усилий Китая и России по вопросам регионального развития, а также интернационализация региона Центральной Азии после 1991 г. и роль Китая в этом процессе. Описаны контуры возможного соперничества великих держав, а также отсутствия взаимного политического доверия между странами Центральной Азии в контексте реализации стратегии.

Данная статья позволяет взглянуть на вопрос реализации стратегии «Один пояс, один путь» с точки зрения китайских исследователей.

**Ключевые слова:** Китай, «Шелковый путь», «Морской шелковый путь», «Один пояс, один путь», Второй Евразийский континентальный мост, Центральная Азия

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