

Çelik, Yavuz. (2021). “Orta Asya İçin Kuşak ve Yol Projesinin Stratejik Sonuçları”. *Asya Arařtırmaları Uluslararası Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi*. 5 (1), 79-94.

Lisans Üstü Tez Makalesi

ORTA ASYA İÇİN KUŞAK VE YOL PROJESİNİN STRATEJİK SONUÇLARI*

The Strategic Implications of Belt & Road Initiative for Central Asia

Yavuz ÇELİK**

Öz

Çin, 1991’de Sovyetler Birlięi’nin dağılmasından bu yana hem ekonomik hem de stratejik bir ortak olarak Orta Asya’da önemli bir konum elde etti. Orta Asya devletleri, Çin’in Kuşak ve Yol Girişimi (BRI) çerçevesi altındaki ekonomik planları ve altyapı faaliyetlerini göz önünde bulundurarak, ekonomilerinin ve-bir şekilde politikalarının – Rusya’nın etkisinden ziyade daha çok Çin etkisine göre şekillendięi tarihlerinde önemli bir döneme yaklaşıyorlar ve BRI bu senaryoyu destekliyor. Bugün Çin, bölgede önemli bir söz sahibi ve Orta Asya ekonomileri üzerinde önemli bir etkiye sahip, özellikle de Kuşak ve Yol ile saygılı bir şekilde iş birlięi yapan ve karşılıklı fayda sağlamaya çalışan beş ülkede, Kazakistan, Özbekistan, Kırgızistan, Tacikistan, Türkmenistan. Bu politikada, ikili ilişkiler yoluyla, Çin, Pasifik’ten Baltık Denizi’ne stratejik bölgesel yerlere trafik bağlantısını iyileştirme sözü veriyor. Asya’da, özellikle Orta Asya’da yeni bir ekonomik Kuşak oluşturmak için Çin Devlet Başkanı Xi Jinping, Çin ve Orta Asya ülkelerinin iletişimlerini hızlandırmaları, karayolu bağlantılarını iyileştirmeleri ve ticareti daha da artırmaları gerektiğini öne sürdü. Finansal entegrasyon için Çin hükümeti, Çin’in ticaret ortaklarıyla bağlantı kurması için gerekli altyapıyı geliştirme çabasının bir parçası olan Asya Altyapı Yatırım Bankası’nı (AIIB) kurdu. Çin, BRI gibi AIIB’yi de Orta Asya’daki devletlerin ihtiyaçlarını da göz önünde bulundurarak ekonomik başarısını yinelemek için bir araç olarak görüyor. Orta Asya ülkeleri ile Çin arasında yeni yaklaşımlar, başarılar, fırsatlar, zorluklar ve engeller mevcuttur. Her ülkenin çıkarına göre, dięer komşu ve bölge ötesi ülkeler bu ilişkiyi doğrudan ve dolaylı olarak etkiler ve bu etkiye verilen tepkileri çeşitlidir. O halde odak noktası, Orta Asya için Kuşak ve Yol Girişimi’nin stratejik sonuçlarını ve bu bölgenin şimdiye kadar buna nasıl yanıt verdiğini anlamaktır.

Anahtar Sözcükler: BRI, Çin, Orta Asya, Rusya, AIIB.

Abstract

China has gained a significant position in Central Asia since the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991, both as an economic and strategic partner. Central Asian states are approaching a cornerstone for their history, in which their economies and - somehow their policies - are shaped more towards Chinese influence rather than Russia’s, considering that China’s economic plans and infrastructure activities under the Belt & Road Initiative (BRI) framework, the BRI have bolstered this scenario. Today, China is an important stakeholder in the region and has a real impact on Central Asian economies, especially the five countries, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, which have respectfully cooperated and sought to achieve mutual benefits through the BRI. In this policy, through bilateral relations, China promises to improve the traffic connectivity to the strategic regional places from the Pacific to the Baltic Sea. In order to create a new economic Belt in Asia, particularly in Central Asia, China’s President Xi Jinping suggested that China and Central Asian countries

* Geliş Tarihi / Received: 4.05.2021, Kabul Tarihi / Accepted: 29.06.2021. DOI: 10.34189/asyam.5.1.008

** PhD Candidate, Shanghai University, yavuzcelik@gmail.com, ORCID ID:<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2350-993X>

must expedite their communication, improve road connectivity, and further trade. For financial integration, Chinese government created the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB), which is part of China's broader push to develop the necessary infrastructure to connect China with trading partners. China considers the AIIB, like the BRI, as a tool to replicate its economic success by considering the needs of the states in Central Asia. New approaches, achievements, opportunities, challenges, and obstacles exist between the Central Asian countries and China. According to each country's interest, other neighboring and trans-regional countries direct and indirectly influence this relationship, and the reaction or response to this influence is diverse. The focus, then, is to comprehend the strategic implications of the BRI for Central Asia and how this region so far has answered to it.

Keywords: *The BRI, China, Central Asia, Russia, The AIIB.*

Introduction

One of the most recent developments in Central Asia is China's Belt & Road Initiative (BRI) that China is touted. The BRI proposed by the Chinese President Xi Jinping in 2013 and he hatched the idea to reutilize China and develop its economic influence in the region as an investor in Central Asia. The various financial and economic mechanisms initiated by expanding Chinese leadership conform to the BRI policy's core institutional components. These components provide the basis for expanding financial and economic connectivity expansion in the region, serving as a significant architecture for promoting inclusiveness and a springboard for opening various programs along the New Silk Road. In the past, it was once said that: 条条大路通罗马 (Tiáo tiáo dàlù tōng luómǎ) "all roads lead to Rome", however in contemporary times, it can be said, 条条大路通中国 (Tiáo tiáo dàlù tōng zhōngguó) "all roads lead to China", this perfectly captures the basis of the BRI, as China aims to construct and lead this \$4 trillion project.

This study examines the strategic policy of the BRI between China and Central Asia. Consequently, to analyze how Central Asian states and Russia have responded to this policy and to explore the strategic implications of the BRI for the Central Asia region and to study its embodied effects for China, the five Central Asian countries (Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Tajikistan, and Kyrgyzstan), and Russia. What opportunities and challenges are for each country in the region? This research will try to find out the advantages and challenges under the Belt and Road Initiative for China and the five Central Asian countries. This study refers to Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Tajikistan, and Kyrgyzstan by specifying Central Asia. The BRI includes six major land corridors and one maritime corridor referred to as this century's Maritime Silk Road. However, in this paper focus will be on; China-Central Asia Western Asia economic corridor. This corridor is linking China's Xinjiang province in China with the Central Asian states by rail network. These links pass through the five Central Asian states and Iran, and it ends in Turkey.

When Xi Jinping came to power, the Chinese economy faced two challenges, overcapacity, and excessive foreign exchange reserve. To solve these problems, Xi launched the BRI to improve neighboring policy to establish friendly, closer relationships (MFA, 2013) At the summit in Kazakhstan, in September 2013, Xi Jinping pointed out that China-Kazakhstan ties a significant example of neighborliness and mutually beneficial cooperation, Kazakh President Nazarbayev also emphasized that mutual support of one another's interests is fundamental for China-Kazakh comprehensive partnership (Kembayev, 2020, p. 7). The BRI has expanded into a trans-continental trade and infrastructure network covering most of the world from Eurasian continent to Africa, south Pacific region to Latin America, Central Asia to Europe. Maritime road the Maritime Silk Road also shipping lanes reaching all the way to Africa and the Mediterranean, however Maritime Silk Road is out the scope of this articles.

There has been a significant increase at the level of the Chinese economy in the last decades. At that time, China began to look to the neighbors, such as some Central Asian countries, to get raw materials and markets for their manufactured goods. The trade between China and its neighbors required significant improvement in transport and infrastructure facilities, and this situation gave rise to some initiatives and projects between these countries. Transport and connectivity projects had started much before the announcement of the BRI in 2013, which was given by President Xi Jinping.

It can be said that the BRI was the name given to those existing initiatives with the addition of many more infrastructure initiatives (Koparkar, 2017).

2. The interdependence between Central Asia and China's Belt & Road Initiative

Central Asian republics are approaching a cornerstone for their history. These countries' economies and somehow, their policies are shaped more toward China rather than Russia with China's economic plans and infrastructure activities under the BRI framework. The BRI itself challenges Russian influence in the region and Beijing trying to set up the region's Chinese century. Although the BRI has some economic and political challenges, overall, it seems exceptionally beneficial for five Central Asian states since its infrastructure activities started in the region. Some analysts claim that China wants to expand its export markets and access the region's natural resources rather than establish long-term economic growth for Central Asian states. However, it looks like there is a correlation between Chinese loans or credits and Chinese business engagement in Central Asia (Jaborov, 2018: 39).

Energy factor holds a significant position in the context of China's BRI especially in the last decades with growing China's demand. In this line with industrial and technological development, China has needed more energy suppliers. China's growing economic power and both regional and global influence to expand cooperative interactions with other countries including Central Asian states. The BRI has two ways of connecting China and Eurasia. The first one begins in Central China through Xinjiang and China's West into Central Asia, then the Middle East and Europe. The second one is that a maritime route that includes Southeast Asia and then west across some states of South Asia is thorough into Arabian Peninsula and then East Africa and finally stops in the Mediterranean (Payne, 2016). Central Asia is an important region in terms of energy potential and a bridge between China and the West. In this study, focus will be on Central Asia rather than any other region which with the BRI landed.

By improving relations with Central Asian states, focusing mainly on economic cooperation based on interdependencies, China is getting an important tool that stabilizes and economically liberates western China, which is perceived to be too backward compared to the country's East Coast - and diversifying its energy resources (Lakatos and Kosztur, 2017: 68).

2.1 Why is Central Asia important for the BRI

This paper also argues that, with the launch of the BRI, the strategic importance of Central Asia has significantly increase in the Beijing's foreign policy agenda, largely due to the regions' important geographic location in Eurasia and has direct border to Xinjiang with the three of five states of the region. Although the Central Asian region does not rank highest in the list of China's BRI priorities and Chinses trade with the region does not represent a high volume of the trade, nevertheless the strategic significance of the region to China is very crucial. The BRI concept has become a cornerstone of President Xi's foreign policy in China.

2.1.1. Political and Geo-Strategical Importance of Central Asia

Central Asia's political importance for China is growing in the context of the BRI. In the region, there are several countries those has interests such as Russia, China, United States, Iran, India, and Pakistan, these countries make the regions political importance significance (Blank, 2008: 73). There are terrorists, separatists, and extremists who are disturbing the peace in the Central Asian neighborhood, which sometimes spills over China's Xinjiang. Thus, the stability factor of the region is important for regional countries such as China and Russia. China encourages regional development to avoid political and social destabilization in the region, especially in border regions such as Xinjiang (Peyrouse, 2017: 97).

Since Soviet Union collapsed in 1991, the Russian influence in Central Asia has been on a decline. The US influence has increased in the region following the 9/11 and it then began the decline following years. Today, China is a significant player in the region, especially with its BRI projects (Goble, 2016). Above all, China and Russia are on a collision course in Central Asia, a region that has long been considered, and as far as Russia is concerned, still is, its back- yard. Since the early 2000s, this region has attracted China's attention through its Western Development Strategy, which has been

expanded and rebranded as expanded and rebranded as the Belt and Road Initiatives under the current administration. Bilateral relations in Central Asia are a weathervane for Chinese–Russian relations, and even if the short to medium-term weather seems settled, the long-term indications are for storms (Swanstöm, 2017: 11). As China and Russia are by far the two most crucial participants and critical factors in the regional issues, their relations will significantly affect the development of their respective approach to all the other countries in that region. Their political and diplomatic relations policies and cooperation will determine the future of Central Asia's population.

Central Asia is a land-lock territory which is located in the center of Asia. Two critical regional powers have surrendered the Central Asian territory, Russia and China. As well as Beijing and Moscow, there have been other regional and trans-regional players in Central Asia such as Iran, the US, and Turkey. This region is located in Eurasia, and it increases the geo-strategical importance. On the other side, trans-regional powers have changed Central Asia into a significant geopolitical region. China has also aimed to exploit market openings in Central Asia for Chinese goods and products; this may give rise to open up access to Russia, Turkey, Iran, and Europe thanks to the region's geo-strategic importance. To sum up, China has become an oil importer country, particularly in the last decade; Central Asia has vast oil fields for China (Wu and Chen, 2004: 1071). Beijing is trying to maintain easy access to these oil fields and with the BRI the Central Asian states and Russia generally welcomed the Initiative and sought to align their own development priorities. Furthermore, the region's stability is vital for China and Russia in addition to Central Asian states to maintain regional projects successfully.

2.1.2. Economic Importance and Natural Resources Factor

The BRI projects are likely to increase China's economic leverage as a creditor in the region. China has established the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, which is a multilateral and 440 billion Silk Road Fund for economic issues (Habib and Faulkner, 2021). In terms of geographical landscape and economic structure, Central Asian countries have some similarities. Generating electrical energy and irrigations system held an important position in economic importance. However, Central Asia countries' main mineral resources are oil, natural gas, some metals such as gold and silver, and chemical raw materials.

China has been a critical driver of infrastructure investment and construction in Central Asia in the last decade. The Belt & Road Initiative builds on China's long-standing economic investment in Central Asia, and also, the initiative plan has many opportunities to further develop the Central Asian country's economies (Lain, 2016). So far, China has done more than just invest in extractives material. Chinese companies in the region have built many roads, railways, tunnels, power lines. The distinctive economic expansion of China, especially in the last decade, has created a golden opportunity for Central Asian countries to emerge as a hub for trade and commerce place. The BRI has the potential to a significant opportunity for the regional countries to develop physical infrastructure, generate new revenues, and access new markets with cheaper routes. Although Central Asia is located in a strategic region, China's BRI could transform Central Asia into a more important strategical region in the world (Kurbanov, 2018: 86).

Energy is making up most of the trade coming through Central Asia to China. As China develops to become a modern economy, China will require massive quantities of natural resources to meet such a big economy's demands. One can argue that Central Asian countries were relatively poor; they had natural resources that the Chinese needed (Naarajärvi, 2012: 113–16). Central Asia has plenty of natural resources, particularly primary natural resources are oil, natural gas, colorful metals such as gold and silver, and chemical raw materials. The five Central Asian republics, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, and Tajikistan, have immense natural resources. They are located in Eurasia's center by holding an important position for other countries, especially China and Russia, in the region. Central Asian countries, as their natural resources, can satisfy some amount of energy demands of China since they are rich in oil, natural resources, and many other resources (Masoud, 2014). Thus, it is understandable that China's desire to extend its economic activities to this region.

In short, there are valuable environmental potentials such as existing colorful and rare metals, including uranium, titanium, manganese, and industrial metals including iron, copper, and rich oil and gas resources in the region, making Central Asia very important for both regional such as China, Russia, and trans-regional powers such as the US. This region became the economic battlefield for the West and the East's super and ample powers because of these potentials. For instance, China is mostly seeking energy resources and the market while Russia mostly considers the region as its security territory, and the US also is seeking new energy resources and stabilizing the region.

3. Bilateral Relationships Between China and Central Asian Countries in the context of the BRI

Some scholars compare that China and its relationship with the states in Central Asia are also similar to those of imperial times even though the trade now is of natural gas, oil, coming from the Central Asian steppes, and China now seeks to sell its industrial goods to Central Asia and the West (Yuan, 2010: 855). According to the Chinese policymakers, elites, and scholars, Central Asia is still as important as the imperial rule in security and economic development. Shortly, in history with the ancient Silk Road dating back more than two thousand years when camel trains transported everything such as spices, silk between east and West, today those camels for transportation have been replaced by planes, trains and ships.

The BRI has aimed to make the Central Asian region more connected to the world by redrawing Central Asia's energy map. One gas pipeline had built from Kazakhstan and an oil pipeline that allowed Turkmenistan to decrease its dependence on Russia, another pipeline that has given rise to increasing Russian oil flow to China. Chinese companies have been involved in many infrastructure activities, such as building roads, bridges, and tunnels in the region. The presidents of Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Kazakhstan attended the Belt and Road Forum in Beijing in May 2017, and they found an opportunity to discuss current projects. The forum was an opportunity for Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan for them to further discuss about railways for potential progress in their relationship (Putz, 2017).

3.1 China-Kazakhstan

Due to its centralized authority and stable economy, Kazakhstan has used its advantage for its natural resources. Therefore, Kazakhstan was the first and most significant Central Asian country to get involved with China's investment projects under the BRI in Central Asia. China is a significant partner for Kazakhstan, both economic and political, along with Russia. Kazakhstan is quite open to any cooperation with China, particularly in the fields of economy and transport (Strachota and Jarosiewicz, 2013: 30). Following the dissolution of the Soviet Union and its independence in 1991, Kazakhstan sought to look elsewhere to export its natural resources. In the 1990s, China's economy had an expanded double-digit annually; Chinese firms such as China National Petroleum and Sinopec approached Kazakhstan to invest in the oil and gas sectors. This, in turn, would give rise to an expanded export of oil and natural gas to China. Starting from 1997, Kazakhstan had its first oil shipment to China at 1000 barrels per day (China Daily, 2007). The petroleum from the Kazakh oilfields had to travel great distances to reach the Chinese markets; hence they need to be sent via massive pipelines to the Chinese borders. These would also be taxed by the amount of flow through and the mileage gone through pipelines. China started to increase to buying up more up of the natural resources from Central Asia, and then the Central Asian countries got offer attractive packages such as loans for infrastructure development under the BRI. In terms of both import and export, Kazakhstan is the most important trade partner of China in Central Asia. Cooperation between two countries in the field of petroleum and gas officially began in September 1997 when Vice Premier Li Lanqing visited Kazakhstan. In addition to this cooperation, an agreement was also signed between China National Petroleum Corporation (CNPC) and the Kazakh minister of energy and mineral resources to construct the pipeline (Lai, 2009, p. 37). The high trade volumes have been generated by exports of oil, uranium, and metals from Kazakhstan to China (Strachota and Jarosiewicz, 2013: 30).

In 2011, China and Kazakhstan started to China-Kazakhstan Railway and China-Kazakhstan International Border Cooperation Center at the Khorgos in terms of the business relationship. Both sides intend to work together in order to develop infrastructure, particularly public infrastructure.

Those infrastructure operations required a certain number of Chinese laborers who went to Kazakhstan on work visas Kazakhstan. Chinese workers in Kazakhstan accept the laws and social rules in the region; basically, they keep up with Kazakhstan's rules or laws. In conclusion, Kazakhstan welcomes China's BRI initiative; therefore, China's aid and infrastructure plan have been taken. Chinese present presence in the country and social relations between both country's citizens results in China does not face so much public criticism in the country (Hao, 2018: 29–31).

In Sum, Kazakhstan is rich in natural resources and can cooperate with China the prospect of creating jobs for its citizens all around the country. China is cooperating in many infrastructure projects in Kazakhstan, such as roads, railroads, pipelines, bridges (Masoud, 2014). This kind of bilateral relationship efforts in the region further demonstrates Central Asia's importance for the Belt and Road Initiative in Kazakhstan and the Central Asian region. China wants to use BRI in order to expand its economic influence. The BRI remains a work in progress with some uncertainties. However, it is an opportunity for Kazakhstan and other Central Asian states to be a close relationship with China under the BRI frameworks and Chinese trade and investment in the region (Kirişci and Corre, 2018). So far, massive amounts of energy products are sold from Central Asia to China, and this has been further done so via international or regional agreements such as the Shanghai Cooperative Organization (SCO). Besides fossil fuels, states such as Kyrgyzstan have also sold hydroelectric power to China (Sheives, 2006, p. 205–08). The Central Asian region also has some of the world's windiest areas and is currently also trying to tap into wind power to stimulate clean energy trade export to China.

3.2. China-Uzbekistan

Since the early 1990s, China and Uzbekistan has improved their diplomatic ties. Beijing got ample opportunity to re-establish its historical ties with Central Asian states including Uzbekistan, which has been seen as one of the BRI centers. In October 1992, China opened its embassy in Tashkent; afterward, an Economic and Trade Agreement was created between these two countries. Karimov, former president of Uzbekistan, was invited to China three times, in 1992, 1994, and 1999. Uzbekistan's cooperation with Russia in terms of trade has remained strong, but in 2014 China overtook Russia as Uzbekistan's biggest trade partner with more than 3 billion US dollars (Madiyev, 2017: 2–7).

Tashkent has become one of the significant partners for China in Central Asia, not only regarding transport connections but also in terms of trade and natural resources. Uzbekistan has considerable oil and natural resources in the region and the CNPC has been already working with Uzbekistan's national oil and gas company, which is named Uzbekneftegaz, since 2006. Furthermore, the gas pipeline of China-Central Asia is vital for Chinese natural gas supplies (Garlick, 2016). At the end of 2010, China had 35 direct investment projects in Uzbekistan, and the amount of investment was US\$4 billion. China became the second-biggest trading partner of Uzbekistan and the biggest investor as a country in Uzbekistan (China.org, 2012). Uzbekistan is a SCO member that does not share a border with China, which may give rise to a different relationship with other Central Asian countries (Oresman, 2007, p. 77). In addition to oil and gas, China also has some invested in Uzbekistan's other sectors such as railways and electricity. XD, one of the groups of China, is involved in the field of modernization and construction of the Uzbek capital's electricity supply system by providing some equipment worth US\$ 26.3 million (Uz Daily, 2009). In April 2012, this company signed an agreement with the National Energy Company of Uzbekistan for engineering, procurement, and construction project. In March 2013, the Chinese company Xian Electric and Uzbekenergo, state joint-stock company of Uzbekistan, signed a Memorandum of Understanding to construct a wind farm in Uzbekistan (Madiyev, 2017: 12).

China and Uzbekistan will continue to deepen cooperation in various oil and gas trade and high-speed trains. To advance their strategic partnership, according Chinese diplomats say, China and Uzbekistan are enjoying deepening political mutual trust, effective cooperation on security, and fruitful practical cooperation. Both countries have maintained close coordination in jointly fighting the "three evil forces" of terrorism in the region, extremism, and separatism, ensuring the Beijing Olympic Games' success and the 2010 Shanghai World Expo (China Daily, 2013).

To sum, Uzbekistan's role has been dramatically increasing as a source and transit country in the process of implementing within China's BRI by meaning transportation, transit, and energy (Yuldasheva, 2017: 89).

3.3. China-Kyrgyzstan

Kyrgyzstan is one of China's gateway into Central Asia, with an 858-kilometer border. There have been some problems in Kyrgyzstan such as drugs, organized crime, Islamic radicalism that have had cross-border effects on China's domestic security. Kyrgyzstan is an important transit route for Chinese goods to other Central Asian countries and Europe, and therefore this country needs Chinese infrastructure investment such as rail and road links (Oresman, 2007: 76). Since the establishment of diplomatic relations between China and Kyrgyzstan, bilateral trade between the two states has overgrown. Since its independence until 2015, Kyrgyzstan received nearly 2 billion USD from China in loans (Wu and Chen, 2004: 1068). This amount of money was almost half of the Kyrgyz external debt in 2015.

The head of the Kyrgyz president's office head of foreign policy department, Aizada Subakozhoeva, declared that president Atambayev "...noted the importance of expanding fiber-optic communication lines from China to Europe via Kyrgyzstan, e-commerce, and the creation of logistics centers. The project of construction of the China-Kyrgyzstan-Uzbekistan railway was noted as promising..." (Putz, 2017). Although Kyrgyzstan is not a significant energy partner as Kazakhstan as for China, Kyrgyzstan offers quite essential transit routes for China's plans and provides Chinese consumer goods in the region. Kyrgyzstan has been the only country in the Central Asian region to share WTO membership with China for some years. However, political problems and the unstable economy of Kyrgyzstan made it vulnerable to China's expansion in the economy. In Kyrgyzstan, Chinese companies work on infrastructure projects under the BRI framework by bringing their Chinese labor force. Sultan Sarigaev, a Kyrgyz officer, reported that in Chinese-Kyrgyz projects, approximately reserve 70% of available jobs for the Chinese labor force such as engineers and technical staff, rest of the local percentage labor people (Hao, 2018: 33).

Beijing's economic influence in Kyrgyzstan increased dramatically in the last years, with a volume of investment growing gradually. Economic cooperation between China and Kyrgyzstan usually imports Chinese goods; furthermore, currently Chinese companies have also begun to be highly active in some sectors such as energy and mining in the country. China has invested millions of dollars in these projects. For instance, an oil processing plant was built for around US\$ 250 million by two Chinese investors; it is supposed to reach 800,000 tons of oil capacity per year. China is trying to access some deposits which have rare earth elements, and several companies in the country are currently involved in exploration (Jaborov, 2018: 37–38).

3.4. China-Tajikistan

Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan are more impoverished country compared to other Central Asian countries from an economic perspective. However, it is a strategically important country for the region. Tajikistan has a long border with the Xinjiang region, and China is also a key factor for Tajikistan economically. China has developed roads for the region, for instance, the Dushanbe-Chanak highway and some power lines and hydropower plants (Mariani, 2013). Most commentators believe that Tajikistan has been adequate for Chinese interests. That small country where surrender with mountains suffered a decade of civil war after they got independence gave rise to lack of an industrial base natural resources other than water. Consequently, China has begun to extend its financial influence in some areas of the Tajikistan economy, and also China has wanted to cooperate with agricultural lands (Goble, 2016).

According to Tajik authorities, there had a growth in the number of Chinese nationals living and working in Tajikistan by 30 percent since 2015, and also it is estimated by an unofficial number that there are 150 000 Chinese working in Tajikistan. However, the government authorities say that the local quotas are only around 8,000 a year (Goble, 2016).

Tajikistan is a significant country in terms of its natural resources and a significant number of deposits. The amount of foreign investment in China passed US\$ 1 billion in 2016 in Tajikistan, which

made China the leading investor in Tajikistan. The country has around 50 types of resources and has much more than 500 deposits that just have been discovered not long time ago. Coal, copper, zinc, gold, silver are the country's primary resources. It has been said from time to time, either by some politicians or elites, that Tajikistan is swapping its natural resources for infrastructure projects without a well-planned economic strategy and environmental analysis. In Tajikistan and Turkmenistan, the amount of public awareness for the rapid increase of China's influence of natural resources in the region is lower than that of Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan (Jaborov, 2018: 37).

Imomali Rahmon government has also placed high hopes in China's infrastructure investments to transform Tajikistan into a vital transit corridor between China and Central Asian countries. Beijing so far, has already made significant investments in Tajikistan's hydropower, power engineering, cement, and manufacturing goods industries, and agricultural cultivation. Its total direct investments in the Tajik economy reached to \$1.1 billion in 2016 which was almost 3% of the total amount (Dave and Kobayashi, 2018: 272).

3.5 China-Turkmenistan

Like Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan does not have a border with China, and it is farther from the Chinese landscape. China has invested in Turkmenistan in the fields of gas and oil (Oresman, 2007: 78). Turkmenistan's natural gas holds a significant position for China. China and Turkmenistan signed an agreement in 2006 to bring the gas from Turkmenistan to China by a new through Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan (Sutter, 2012: 251). Turkmenistan is one of China's largest trade partners in the region. Bilateral trade between these two countries reached slightly more than US\$ 15 billion in 2015. In 2017, Kazakhstan was the second-largest trading partner for China in the Central Asian region, with US\$ 14.2 billion. Kyrgyzstan follows with US\$ 4.3 and Uzbekistan US\$ 3.4, and finally Tajikistan US\$ 1.8 billion (Jaborov, 2018: 39). Recently, the CNPC has been one of Turkmenistan economy's most prominent contributors. Moreover, in addition to breaking Gazprom's gas monopoly around the region, the CNPC seeks to be well situated to act as a mediator in the region, the China-Central Asia pipeline, which consists of three different ownerships China-Turkmenistan, China-Uzbekistan, and China-Kazakhstan (Toktomushev, 2015).

4. The Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB)

Financial integration is crucial to support the implementation of the BRI. Therefore, the BRI proposals should involve a deepened currency stability system, investment, and financing system in Asia. China emphasizes that the Initiative framework must be built on regional economic cooperation - meaning that the BRI should be inclusive and balanced among all the member countries and, consequently, generating mutual benefits (Ruixue, Xiuling & Li, 2016: 51). Considering that this Initiative created under the Xi Jinping administration has focused on promoting development projects and neighboring Asian countries, China had to figure out a viable way to finance these giant projects. The emerging countries could not entirely rely on the existing financial institutions, such as the ones originated by the Bretton Woods conference – the World Bank, IMF, and ADB, for example – considering they are no longer capable of supporting all the necessary financial aid, besides from not letting the developing countries to have a more excellent voice in the decision-making process of the Banks' governance.

According to China's foreign policies' objectives of attracting more alliances worldwide and expanding its economic growth, creating a new financial institution capable of financing development projects for the members of the BRI was the perfect opportunity for the Chinese government to achieve these goals. It is also a good chance for the Asian countries to have another option of loans from China and not anymore from only the United States and Europe. Therefore, the Chinese government created the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB), which is part of China's broader push to develop the necessary infrastructure to connect China with trading partners mainly in Asia and further-reaching Europe, the Middle East, and Africa (Zimmerman, 2015: 6–7). The AIIB is one of China's most important financial integration initiatives to promote the BRI, which embraces regional markets and bilateral currency swaps (Callaghan & Hubbard, 2016: 120).

In other words, the main reason for instituting the AIIB is that provide secured loans to underdeveloped Asia-Pacific states – especially to the ones with difficulties obtaining funds through

other global financial institutions. The AIIB is a multilateral development bank in which the members aim to develop together. Fifty co-founding members signed an agreement in order to establish US\$ 100 billion as the core capital of the AIIB, with China owning 30.4% of the equity share, India followed with 8.5%, Russia with 6.7%, and 54.4% diversified among other members of the organization. China aspires to establish regional leadership and increase its influence in the Asian market by funding its initiatives, such as BRI (Kubalkova, 2015: 667–79).

The AIIB calls for 'multinational governance,' and it assures that its goal is to be more transparent and accountable. It also aims to fight against corruption to establish good governance; thus, it will have no tolerance for hyper patrimonial and hyper meritocratic positions among its members. Another aim of the AIIB is to provide a platform for developing states like Central Asian countries to increase their national capital via secured loans and help fund and develop their national economies (Kubalkova, 2015: 671). It is acceptable that China has its reasons for making sure that the AIIB functions as a genuinely multilateral institution. The AIIB is a vital vehicle for delivering Xi's signature foreign economic policy- the Silk Road economic belt' or Belt and Road Initiative and '21st century maritime Silk Road'.

5. Responses from the Central Asian States

So far, all those republics have generally responded positively to China's Initiative, even though some Chinese BRI challenges in the region have been challenged. In regard to the Central Asian region, China has massively increased trade between the two regions. Trade between China and the Central Asian countries has grown exponentially to US\$ 50 billion by 2013. China is a significant player in developing the infrastructure of Central Asia. The BRI incorporates both of these concepts, and a significant policy is born out of such (Hornby and Clover, 2015). Between 2005 and 2015, Central Asia and the Caucasus saw a dramatic increase from US\$ 5 billion to almost US\$ 50 billion in trade amount, which shows China's rising economic and geopolitical interests in the region (Dilleen, 2017). In the last years, the BRI has strikingly stepped up the Chinese investment in the region. For instance, Uzbekistan was given promises of about US\$ 20 billion in investment, which includes three years of natural gas supply agreement and funding for a gas plant. By looking at this agreement, the region is crucial as a natural resource for China's Initiative plan. The BRI can further improve China's ability to draw necessary agricultural and mineral resources from Central Asian republics.

Central Asia is a crucial constituent of China's BRI. All five Central Asian countries, Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan are in the Chinese Initiative's land. In 2006, the Kazakhstan-China Crude Oil Pipeline was completed with an initial capacity of 10 million tons annually (China Daily, 2007). This was one of several massive infrastructure projects that China funded and supported, and it is one of many throughout the region. Chinese investment is interested in the area as it provides work for many of its citizens and improves access to precious natural resources, otherwise having to go through the Malacca Straits. Uzbekistan is one of those countries with rich oil and natural gas reserves; however, it had difficulty processing and transporting the products with poor infrastructure. China is trying to gain more access to mineral rights did not mind offering attractive low-interest loans to Uzbekistan to improve its drilling and transport infrastructure.

Kazakhstan is likely to continue to be one of the key countries in the region regarding the BRI and China, Russia, and the US triangular relationship in the region. Kazakhstan President Nazarbayev was keenly aware of the noose held on his neck by the Russians; therefore, it was one of the priority to find other markets to strike a balance of powers in Central Asia. This relief also came not from the Chinese entering into their energy markets but an interest of both Americans and Europeans. One can argue that Nazarbayev was satisfied with the American investment in the region. In the aftermath of the September 11th attacks in the US, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and Kyrgyzstan open their airbases recently closed for American aircraft for bombing the Taliban (Sheives, 2006: 215–16). Such development increased the American involvement in the Central Asian area, which helped unbalance the two original hegemonies, China and Russia. Nevertheless, with the BRI, Chinese influence in Central Asia has increased dramatically compared to other relevant stakeholders.

In terms of economic policies in China's and Central Asian countries and regional powers like Russia, one urgent task must be to eliminate barriers created by different trade policies in the BRI countries. Connectivity and integration of standards also rules and regulations should be regulated as on behalf of each country in the region (Monan, 2017). It is possible to further the economic cooperation, connectivity, and communication among the countries in the region. In order to achieve more integration as an economic or political, countries should establish more cooperation.

6. The Challenges for China-Central Asia relations in the context of the BRI

China is becoming a significant actor in Central Asia from the bottom up thanks to the BRI projects that bring an increasing Chinese influence in the region. That kind of economic engagement makes China a big player in the area. However, there are some challenges, and they require broader cooperation and partnership between China and regional states and possible Russia-China interest conflict over the region.

6.1 Possible Russia-China Interests conflicts

Today, Beijing and Moscow maintain a close relationship with each other even though their relationship was opposite during Soviet-Era. In the past, there were ideological between these countries' leaders, and they had some problems such as border disputes. Despite all the factors that caused the Sino-Soviet split, they converted to major strategic partners. Moscow decided to compromise with Beijing. One can argue that Moscow's position on the BRI is an implicit acceptance of China's influence in the Central Asian region. Russia avoids tension with China; they support the Central Asian states for the sake of political and social stability in the region (Peyrouse, 2017: 100).

Even though China and Russia maintain a close relationship, as mentioned up, some scholars argue that a strong resistance is expected from Russia against the BRI. Niklas Swanstöm argued that there might be a big issue or concern such as interests conflict between China and Russia. The reason behind his idea is that Russia sees Central Asia as its backyard and there is a significant growing China's influence in the region (Swanstöm, 2017: 11). The Eurasian Economic Union (EEU) which is a economic union located in western Asia, eastern Europe and Central Asia, may divide the relevant countries along the route, particularly in Central Asia, by choosing to pursue stronger historical ties with Russia or China. In the future, the EEU might not be willing to cooperate with the BRI (Pantucci and Chen, 2015: 12). The BRI is a trade and economic corridor initiated by China, while another is a new economic zone controlled by Russia. Anxieties of Russia about Central Asia are more visible at present. Russia has made renewed its ambitions in the region. Thus, Foreign Minister of Russia Sergei Lavrov put it, "...Russia has always respected the choice made by the people of the former Soviet Union who decided to be independent and develop their own countries..." He pointed out the Russian desires and emphasized that Moscow cooperated both as bilateral and multilateral cooperation, especially in Central Asia (Blank, 2017). To sum, China and Russia are have been able to avoid any political conflict, and they are neighbors of the Central Asian states; furthermore, both countries have several common concerns and interests that constitute the basis for their cooperation in the region.

6.2 Political situation in the Central Asian states

One of China's most severe challenges is the suspicion that other regional or global powers view China's aims and strategic purposes in a negative way. Many Chinese elites and commentators are concerned about some political risks. Most countries in Central Asia involved in the BRI are still in transition. China's economic growth will most probably impact its neighbors and influence the internal political dynamics of those countries in the Central Asian region. Opposition parties in the region countries may use China to make statements against current political power. For example, they may use some problems of the BRI frameworks against current authorities. Therefore, China needs to research Central Asia countries' domestic political situations, but this does not mean China should get involve with their domestic issues; China needs to understand more to get maximum profits from its BRI framework (Pantucci and Chen, 2015: 12). In this way, China may avoid dangerous unintended consequences. For instance, in Kazakhstan, Chinese loans, aids, and Chinese partnerships with Kazakh oil companies affected Kazakh leadership's power to stay in power (Hao, 2018: 29). Similarly, the stability is one of the main leading factors that need to be concerned. In this perspective, the BRI requires cooperation among those countries in the region, particularly between China and Russia, to

maintain stability (Lukonin, 2017: 7).

The effects of the BRI in the region are not entirely positive and there are some concerns about it. For instance, the countries have taken large amounts of loans, and there is a debt sustainability risk for those economically vulnerable countries like Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, where more than 40% of their external debts belong to China. Moreover, the Chinese labor force has a negative effect on those two countries. There are no laws that force employers to local laborers as in Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. There is a perception that such situation leads people in those countries to lose their jobs. Another perception is increasing numbers of Chinese laborers also cause some cultural problems. China provides security to the region to protect its assets. In the last years, China is getting more power than countries like Russia, the US, and the European Union in terms of economic penetration in the region. That also helps it get power in the political and security arena (Koparkar, 2017), even though the complicated security environment in which the BRI faces up in several regions and countries, security issues are not included in the BRI frameworks (Hao, 2018: 26). The development's supply of arms and ammunition to some of the Central Asian countries, counter-terrorism cooperation, and recently conducted joint military operations in Tajikistan make Central Asian countries and Russia uncomfortable. To sum, China's diplomacy toward its Central Asian states and Russia makes more cooperate and see them as its partners to further its economic interest.

6.3. Socio-Economic Challenges and Demonstration in the region (anti-Chinese sentiment)

China is following the traditional Chinese investment model by using Chinese workers and Chinese technology for projects in the region. Such an approach has given rise to some arguments in the region states. This is one of the challenges which China faces and is likely to face in the future (Dilleen, 2017). Most of the BRI framework-related projects may encounter difficulties in the coming years. These projects rely on Chinese labor rather than local labor in the countries. The idea of Chinese expansion to Central Asia is discussed in Tajik, Kyrgyz and Kazakh media. One of the reasons for the argument is the vast different populations between China and Central Asia so that the citizens of the region get worry about China's over-populated. For instance, Kazakhstan has witnessed many massive protests against rumored land leases to Chinese farmers. It was reported to the media that there were clashes between Chinese and local laborers in Kyrgyzstan. It was reported that 25 Chinese migrants working illegally at one of the oil refineries in the Tokmak, located north of Kyrgyzstan, were told they were deported after this event.

There is a view that by some people, Central Asia still has the negative environmental impact of Soviet time development initiatives in the region. Some local people also believe that Chinese projects in the region seem to worsen this situation; furthermore, it is considered that Chinese cement plants built by China in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan have contributed to the air pollution (Sharma, 2017). Moreover, some Central Asians have not been entirely accepted by the incoming of Chinese entering their markets. Some concerns, such as a flood of Chinese goods in the Central Asian markets, are feasible. Central Asians are conservative, and they most likely have been observing other regions in the world how they have had to cope with the flood of Chinese industrialize or manufactured goods. For this reason, the current attitude to the Chinese coming into the market to sell their merchandise is accepted lukewarmly.

There is a prejudice for some Central Asian people about China or Chinese regarding a sociological challenge. Edward Chow (senior fellow in the Energy and National Security Program at CSIS) claims that Central Asian children were thought to fear China or the Chinese under the Soviet education system. Some people still have this attitude today in the region. According to some scholars and elites, due to the increasing Chinese presence and Beijing's active projects about loans for resources, anti-Chinese sentiment is growing. The number of Chinese laborers stepped up in the region gives rise to competition for jobs in the region. Therefore, some people started to complain about the decline of the jobs opportunity for themselves in the region (Hao, 2018: 29). In sum, even though there is anti-Chinese sentiment in the region, overall, the BRI projects are welcomed by the government of the states in the region.

Conclusion

This article has examined the implications of Chinese BRI in Central Asia and the responses these have elicited from the Central Asian states. There have been critical debates among scholars, politicians, and analysts about the opportunities, benefits, and threats of the BRI to Central Asian states. Based on findings, some of them have a positive attitude about China's BRI. They think that with the BRI projects, the integration of individual countries will be more developed. They suggest that because Central Asia has a handicap with their geography, the Initiative may make these countries to be more significant transit countries for the trade in the region. Others take the opposite view about the BRI; they claim that China's intervention in the Central Asian region could create financial dependency by turning Central Asia countries into a Chinese colony (Jaborov, 2018: 34). On the other hand, some argue that the BRI will not be successful or it will face serious problems; for instance, Jonathan E. Hillman emphasized that support for the BRI could decline by other states and even may turn against China over time. (Hillman, 2018). Some large infrastructure projects are rarely delivered on time. The BRI's success is likely dependent on some factors, such as the openness of Central Asian elites to these projects, institutional reforms in the region, the success of fighting corruption, and leadership progression (Duarte, 2018: 20). Over time the BRI is getting essential and a well-known policy. Chinese media emphasized that global awareness of the BRI has tripled between 2014 and 2017; according to a survey done in 22 countries, the percentage reached 18 percent from 6 percent (Guo, 2018).

In the wake of the dissolution of the Soviet Union, newly formed Central Asian states Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan sought to expand their economic, political, and also security ties beyond the Soviet Union's former allies. While Central Asian countries are trying to develop their relationship beyond the former sphere of the Soviet Union, China, at the same time, has rapidly increased its influence toward the region. With the increasing bilateral and multilateral cooperation between China and Central Asian states especially economic and security areas, China has strengthened its influence particularly economic influence, in the region despite significant challenges as mentioned in previous part of the paper. Although the BRI impacts can be seen somehow, it is hard to isolate the BRI's economic and political impacts completely. Some think it is a brand rather than a master plan with many specific project inclusion criteria. Temporally, functionally, and geographically, what counts as a BRI project is open to interpretation. Even obvious cases can have complicating factors. For instance, there is a lag between the announcement of infrastructure projects, construction, completion, and usage; however, for such a big project, it is understandable that some projects may be late.

Moreover, the economic impact of a recently-completed railway project, for example, will not become apparent for several years. This is a frustrating answer, particularly for a hearing with a title that reminds us that the BRI's fifth anniversary is later this year. To sum, long-term monitoring of BRI-related activities in the region will be necessary for finding more exact answers for the sake of involving countries (Hillman, 2018).

As stated in the introduction China now faces the issue of extreme overcapacity in certain areas under the BRI. This includes sectors such as steel and coal and the BRI project is an appropriate solution to offsetting some of this overcapacity, as it provides them the opportunity to export their materials, equipment, and construction and engineering expertise. In addition to this, the improved connectivity is likely to lead to a significant boost in trade across Asia, Europe, and Africa, most of it via Central Asia and Eurasia, as well as improving the growth in China's underdeveloped provinces thanks to improved transport links. In the Central Asian region, the economic stagnation of Europe and Russia and the US's preoccupation with its internal and external problems have given Beijing an excellent opportunity to strengthen its positions in the region gradually.

China desires to lead critical regional processes within the BRI on both bilateral and multilateral levels (Yuldasheva, 2017: 88). Although the Chinese official position is that there are no political attachments and that this project should not be seen as a political alliance, there are some geopolitical implications, and it is fair to assume the investment in these economies will have conditions of some form. Firstly, it is predicted that China will be using its foreign reserves to finance

international infrastructure projects, leading to less dependency on the US dollar, it is something that has been a critical theme for a while. It may also give them exposure and potential control over Central Asia resources, which may be up to approximately 40% of the global total. This is very different from the US's approach, which follows a strategy whereby the US will offer security to its allies through its military power and protect them against threats. However, this approach comes at a high financial cost, which China is likely to be avoided by becoming closer with allies through physical connectivity. As mentioned, these political intentions are not publicly announced, and China has instead chosen the route of being seen as a champion of globalization. Donald Trump's view on international trade agreements, including his withdrawal of the US from the Trans-Pacific Partnership, comes across as clearly opposed to the US's more protectionist approach recently. While prominent figures such as Mario Draghi, President of European Central Bank, publicly suggesting the threats of taking a protectionist approach (Speciald, 2017). This space allows China the room to grow into more of a global superpower. It is expected that this project will remain in news headlines for the coming months and years. However, it is precisely yet to be seen how this scenario will develop.

Russia still views Central Asia as its sphere of influence or, any other word, its backyards. However, Russia was weakened by internal strife and could not maintain a strong grasp of Central Asia's states, while China grew to be more powerful and wealthier. Hence it began to court the new Central Asian states. However, China was keenly aware that Central Asia is part of Russia's sphere of influence. Therefore, it is must be tread carefully on improving ties with Central Asian countries while not just at the cost of Sino-Russian relations.

Although China's rise especially economically move into the region was viewed with suspicion by some scholiasts, it was also viewed with some relief by others as it offers relief from a monopoly controlled by Russia. During most of the Cold War, everything from the political and economic systems was determined by the Russian in the region (Alexandrov, 1999: 57). There is no doubt that the local populace's interests in Central Asia were often sidetracked to the Russians' interests or the leadership in Moscow. In the 1990s, after the end of the Cold War, the region's dynamics and system in place still ensured that the Central Asian states would still be under Russia's complete control. However, the last decades has shown, Central Asian states' economies are shaped more towards Chinese influence rather than Russia's.

While some projects have already been completed, others have stalled. Neither Tajikistan nor Turkmenistan attended the Belt and Road Forum (BRF) in 2017. However, Tajikistan, attended to the following BRF in 2019. China's investment in Central Asia has been severe, there has been a rapid increase in trade between the regional countries and China over the last few years. Despite Beijing and Moscow's claim the EEU and the BRI can be connected one to another, how in detail in order to achieve that air of cooperation or competition is never wholly explained so far (Putz, 2017).

Some recommendations are provided here for China's BRI projects. Firstly, Chinese policymakers or planners for the BRI should better define the ultimate goals of the BRI. Secondly, although China's economy is growing day by day, there is no guarantee that economic growth will continue in the future. Therefore, China must share investment risk with other countries in Central Asia and generally with partner countries. Lastly, Beijing should put further effort into improving its relations with the great powers in the region by promoting China's national interests internationally accepted by other powers and focusing more on cooperation with other countries (Pop, 2016).

References

- Alexandrov, Mikhail. (1999). *Uneasy Alliance: Relations Between Russia and Kazakhstan in the Post-Soviet Era, 1992-1997*. Greenwood Publishing Group.
- “Ambassador Talks China-Uzbekistan Milestone.” *China.Org.Cn*, http://www.china.org.cn/opinion/2012-01/21/content_24437462.htm (21 Jan. 2012).
- Blank, Stephen. (2017). “Russian Anxiety About Central Asia Becomes Palpable.” *Eurasia Daily Monitor*. 14 (39), <https://jamestown.org/program/russian-anxiety-central-asia-becomes-palpable/>.
- . (2008). “The Strategic Importance of Central Asia: An American View.” *The US Army War College Quarterly: Parameters*. 38 (1), 73–87.

Callaghan, Mike; Paul Hubbard. (2016). “The Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank: Multilateralism on the Silk Road.” *China Economic Journal*. 9 (2), Routledge, 116–39. *Taylor and Francis+NEJM*, doi:10.1080/17538963.2016.1162970.

“China, Uzbekistan to Deepen All-around Cooperation.” *CHINA DAILY*, http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2013xivisitcenterasia/2013-09/08/content_16952894.htm (8 Sept. 2013).

“China-Kazakhstan Relations Grow Stronger.” *CHINA DAILY*, http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/cndy/2007-10/15/content_6173531.htm (15 Oct. 2007).

Dave, Bhavna; Yuka Kobayashi. (2018). “China’s Silk Road Economic Belt Initiative in Central Asia: Economic and Security Implications.” *Asia Europe Journal*. 16 (3), 267–81. *Springer Link*, doi:10.1007/s10308-018-0513-x.

Dilleen, Connor. “China’s Belt and Road Initiative in Central Asia: Insurmountable Obstacles and Unmanageable Risks?” *The Strategist*, <https://www.aspistrategist.org.au/chinas-belt-road-initiative-central-asia-insurmountable-obstacles-unmanageable-risks/> (28 June 2017).

Duarte, Paulo. (2018). “China in the Heartland: The Challenges and Oppurtunities of OBOR for Central Asia.” *China’s Belt and Road Initiative and Its Impact in Central Asia*, edited by Marlene Laruelle, the George Washington University: Central Asia Program, 11–20.

Garlick, Jeremy. “Central Asia and Uzbekistan Are Crucial for China’s Belt and Road Initiative.” *CHINA DAILY*, http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/opinion/2016-06/22/content_25800443.htm (22 June 2016).

Goble, Paul. (2016). “China Quietly Displacing Both Russia and US From Central Asia.” *Eurasia Daily Monitor*. 13 (140), <https://jamestown.org/program/china-quietly-displacing-both-russia-and-us-from-central-asia/>.

Guo, Martin. “2016-2017 China National Image Global Survey.” *KANTAR*, <https://www.kantar.com/inspiration/society/2016-2017-china-national-image-global-survey> (11 Jan. 2018).

Habib, Benjamin; Viktor Faulknor. “The Belt and Road Initiative: China’s Vision for Globalisation, Beijing-Style.” *The Conversation*, <http://theconversation.com/the-belt-and-road-initiative-chinas-vision-for-globalisation-beijing-style-77705> (16 May 2017).

Hao, Tian. (2018). “China’s Conditional Aid and Its Impact in Central Asia.” *China’s Belt and Road Initiative and Its Impact in Central Asia*, edited by Marlene Laruelle, the George Washington University: Central Asia Program, 21–34.

Hillman, Jonathan E. “China’s Belt and Road Initiative: Five Years Later.” *CSIS*, <https://www.csis.org/analysis/chinas-belt-and-road-initiative-five-years-later-0> (25 Jan. 2018).

Hornby, Lucy; Charles Clover. “China’s Great Game: Road to a New Empire.” *FINANCIAL TIMES*, <https://www.ft.com/content/6e098274-587a-11e5-a28b-50226830d644> (12 Oct. 2015).

Jaborov, Safovudin. (2018). “Chinese Loans in Central Asia: Development Assistance or ‘Predatory Lending’?”. *China’s Belt and Road Initiative and Its Impact in Central Asia*, edited by Marlene Laruelle, the George Washington University: Central Asia Program, 34–41.

Kembayev, Zhenis. (2020). “Development of China–Kazakhstan Cooperation.” *Problems of Post-Communism*. 67 (3), Routledge, 204–16, doi:10.1080/10758216.2018.1545590.

Kirişci, Kemal; Philippe Le Corre. “The New Geopolitics of Central Asia: China Vies for Influence in Russia’s Backyard.” *Brookings*, <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/order-from-chaos/2018/01/02/the-new-geopolitics-of-central-asia-china-vies-for-influence-in-russias-backyard/> (2 Jan. 2018).

Koparkar, Rashmini. “Belt and Road Initiative: Implications for Central Asia.” *Vivekananda International Foundation*, www.vifindia.org, <https://www.vifindia.org/article/2017/june/14/belt-and-road-initiative-implications-for-central-asia> (14 June 2017).

- Kubalkova, Petra G. (2015). "Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank." *China Quarterly of International Strategic Studies*. 01 (04), World Century, 667–85. *worldscientific.com* (Atypon), doi:10.1142/S237774001550027X.
- Kurbanov, Sabir. (2018). "The Importance of Anticorruption, Trade, and Investment Climate Reforms in Central Asia in the BRI Context." *China's Belt and Road Initiative and Its Impact in Central Asia*, edited by Marlene Laruelle, the George Washington University: Central Asia Program, 86–97.
- Lai, Hongyi. (2009). "China's Oil Diplomacy in Asia". *Asian Energy Security: The Maritime Dimension*, edited by Hongyi Lai, Palgrave & Macmillan, 27–47.
- Lain, Sarah. "China's Silk Road in Central Asia: Transformative or Exploitative?" *FINANCIAL TIMES*, <https://www.ft.com/content/55ca031d-3fe3-3555-a878-3bcfa9fd6a98> (27 Apr. 2016).
- Lakatos, Artur; András Kosztur (2017). "Global Politics, Regional Competition: Great Power Politics in Central Asia". *Hiperboreea Journal*, 4 (1), Persée - Portail des revues scientifiques en SHS, 61–76. *www.persee.fr*, doi:10.3406/hiper.2017.927.
- Lukonin, Sergey. (2017). "Redefining Russia's Pivot and China's Peripheral Diplomacy." *China-Russia Relations and Regional Dynamics, From Pivots to Peripheral Diplomacy*, edited by Lora Saalman, Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, 3–14. *JSTOR*, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep24507.8>.
- Madiyev, Oybek. (2017). "Why Have China and Russia Become Uzbekistan's Biggest Energy Partners? Exploring the Role of Exogenous and Endogenous Factors." *Cambridge Journal of Eurasian Studies*. 1, 1–30. *DOI.org* (Crossref), doi:10.22261/QYJ7IT.
- Mariani, Bernardo. (2013). "China's Role and Interests in Central Asia." *Safer World*.
- Masoud, Fahim. "Central Asia: A Region of Strategic Importance to China." *International Policy Digest*, <https://intpolicydigest.org/central-asia-region-strategic-importance-china/> (13 Mar. 2014).
- Monan, Zhang. "Promoting Cooperation for the 'Belt and Road Initiative.'" *China-US Focus*, <https://www.chinausfocus.com/finance-economy/promoting-cooperation-for-the-belt-and-road-initiative> (19 May 2017).
- Naarajärvi, Teemu. (2012). "China, Russia and the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation: Blessing or Curse for New Regionalism in Central Asia?" *Asia Europe Journal*, 10 (2), 113–26.
- Oresman, Matthew. (2007). "Repaving the Silk Road: China's Emergence in Central Asia." *China and the Developing World: Beijing's Strategies for the Twenty-First Century*, edited by Joshua Eisenman, Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data, 63–83.
- Pantucci, Raffaello; Qingzhen Chen. (2015). "The Geopolitical Roadblocks One Belt One Road': China's Great Leap Outward." *European Council on Foreign Relations*, 11–13.
- Payne, Jeffery S. (11 Aug. 2016). "The G.C.C. and China's One Belt, One Road: Risk or Opportunity?" *Middle East Institute*, <http://www.mei.edu/publications/gcc-and-chinas-one-belt-one-road-risk-or-opportunity>.
- Peyrouse, Sebastien. (2017). "The Evolution of Russia's Views on the Belt and Road Initiative." *Asia Policy*, 24, National Bureau of Asian Research (NBR), 96–102.
- Pop, Irina Ionela. "Strengths and Challenges of China's 'One Belt, One Road' Initiative." *CGSRS / Centre For Geopolitics & Security in Realism Studies*, <http://cgsrs.org/publications/46> (9 Feb. 2016).
- "President Xi Jinping Delivers Important Speech and Proposes to Build a Silk Road Economic Belt with Central Asian Countries." *Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China*, https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/topics_665678/xjpfwzysiesgjtfhshzzfh_665686/t1076334.shtml (7 Sept. 2013).
- Putz, Catherine. "What's Next for the Belt and Road in Central Asia?" *THE DIPLOMAT*, <https://thediplomat.com/2017/05/whats-next-for-the-belt-and-road-in-central-asia/> (17 May 2017).

Ruixue, Zhu, et al. (2016). "Background and Strategic Significance of the 'Belt and Road Initiative' of China." *Science and Education Publishing*. 4 (3), 49–53. *Zotero*, doi:10.12691/jbe-4-3-2.

Sharma, Raj Kumar. "Central Asia Warily Welcomes China's Belt and Road Initiative." *Nikkei Asia*, <https://asia.nikkei.com/Viewpoints/Raj-Kumar-Sharma/Central-Asia-warily-welcomes-China-s-Belt-and-Road-Initiative> (24 May 2017).

Sheives, Kevin. (2006). "China Turns West: Beijing's Contemporary Strategy Towards Central Asia." *Pacific Affairs*. 79 (2), 205–24.

Speciald, Alessandro. "Draghi Says Protectionism Is a Threat to Global Economic Growth - Bloomberg." *Bloomberg*, <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2017-08-25/draghi-says-protectionism-is-a-threat-to-global-economic-growth> (25 Aug. 2017).

Strachota, Krzysztof; Aleksandra Jarosiewicz. "China vs. Central Asia The Achievements of the Past Two Decades." 45, *OSW Centre for Eastern Studies*, <https://www.osw.waw.pl/en/publikacje/osw-studies/2013-11-04/china-vs-central-asia-achievements-past-two-decades> (4 Nov. 2013).

Sutter, Robert G. (2012). *Chinese Foreign Relations: Power and Policy Since the Cold War*. Rowman & Littlefield.

Swanström, Niklas. (2017). "Redefining Russia's Pivot and China's Peripheral Diplomacy." *China-Russia Relations and Regional Dynamics, From Pivots to Peripheral Diplomacy*, edited by Lora Saalman, SIPRI, 3–14.

Toktomushev, Kemel. "The Silk Road Economic Belt's Impacts on Central Asia." *China-US Focus*, <https://www.chinausfocus.com/finance-economy/the-silk-road-economic-belts-impacts-on-central-asia> (8 May 2015).

"Uzbekistan to get US\$26.3m Chinese equipment for electricity project." *UZ DAILY*, <https://www.uzdaily.uz/en/post/4912> (2 Dec. 2009).

Wu, Hsiu-Ling, and Chien-Hsun Chen. (2004). "The Prospects for Regional Economic Integration between China and the Five Central Asian Countries." *Europe-Asia Studies*. 56 (7), [Taylor & Francis, Ltd., University of Glasgow], 1059–80.

Yuan, Jing-Dong. (Nov. 2010). "China's Role in Establishing and Building the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO)." *Journal of Contemporary China*. 19 (67), Routledge, 855–69. *Taylor and Francis+NEJM*, doi:10.1080/10670564.2010.508587.

Yuldasheva, Guli. (2017). *The Role of Iran and the United States of America in Geopolitics of Central Asia*. Edited by Andris Sprūds and Diāna Potjomkina, *Open WorldCat*, <http://liia.lv/en/publications/the-role-of-iran-and-the-united-states-of-america-in-geopolitics-of-central-asia-619>.

Zimmerman, Thomas. (2015). *The New Silk Roads: China, the US, and the Future of Central Asia*. Center on International Cooperation.