

**"ONE BELT, ONE ROAD»: MEGAPROJECT VIEW
FROM UZBEKISTAN**



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МЕГОПРОЕКТ "ОДИН ПОЯС — ОДИН ПУТЬ": ВЗГЛЯД ИЗ УЗБЕКИСТАНА

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Аннотация: На рубеже веков товарооборот между Европой и Азией стал стремительно расти, что потребовало новых логистических и инфраструктурных путей для более быстрой и менее затратной доставки товаров из одной части континента в другую. «Один пояс – один путь» - это самый глобальный экономический проект КНР: страна активно продвигает данный проект, он является её главным внешнеполитическим приоритетом. Проект "Один пояс — один путь" является открытым для всех стран, международных и региональных организаций, а также создает основу для экономического сотрудничества КНР с заинтересованными странами. Предполагается, что основные маршруты "Экономического пояса Шелкового пути" будут проходить: - из Китая через Центральную Азию, Россию до Европы (до Балтийского моря); - из Китая через Центральную Азию и Западную Азию к Персидскому заливу и Средиземному морю; - из Китая в Юго-Восточную Азию, Южную Азию, к Индийскому океану. - из морских портов Китая через Южно-Китайское море до Индийского океана и дальше до Европы;

Цель статьи – рассмотреть причины создания, направления, маршруты, недостатки экономического пояса Нового Шёлкового пути и транспортного шёлкового пути современности.; проанализировать, насколько выгодно для других государств принимать участие в данном проекте. Результатом статьи является описание механизмов действия КНР и определение жизнеспособности проекта в целом.

Ключевые слова: КНР, Центральная Азия, «Один пояс - один путь», проект, инициатива, шёлковый путь, транспорт, мировая экономика.

The "One Belt, One Road" concept is an international initiative of China to improve existing and create new trade and transport corridors connecting more than 60 countries of Central Asia, Europe and Africa, which is designed to promote the development of trade relations between them and China. The idea of forming the "Silk Road Economic Belt" was put forward by Chinese leader Xi Jinping and was first voiced during his speech in Astana during a state visit to Kazakhstan in September 2013. The "One Belt — One Road" Forum was first held in 2017. Its goal is to strengthen the mechanisms of interstate cooperation through the development of land and sea routes. On April 25–27, 2019, the Second International Forum 'One Belt, One Road' took place in Beijing. Over the past seven years, China's initiative has become an integral part of the agenda of global development. Today, it brings together over 60 countries in Asia, Europe and Africa with a

population of 4.4 billion people. The main topics of the ‘One Belt, One Road’ initiative have been included in documents of the UN, G20 and APEC summits, and other organizations.

During a press conference in Beijing last year, Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi shared positive forecasts regarding the implementation of the "One Belt, One Road" project. Even now, according to statistics, despite widespread restrictions, both investments and the trade turnover associated with the project are growing. According to him, in the first quarter of this year, China's investment in the country's initiative "One belt, one road" increased by 11.7%, while turnover increased by 3.2%. "In the midst of a major failure in international air transport, the number of flights and freight traffic on the route to the regular freight rail transport "China-Europe" in the four months of 2020 increased by 24% and 27% compared to the same period last year, respectively. Almost 8 thousand tons of protective materials were delivered. Wang Yi stated that "over the past seven years, China's direct investment in the countries of the Belt and Road initiative has exceeded \$ 110 billion, and the total volume of China's trade with countries located along the Belt and Road has reached \$ 7.8 trillion. More than two thousand joint projects have been launched."

The Republic of Uzbekistan supported the Belt and Road initiative from the very beginning. Our engagement in the project was an important step in terms of achieving priority goals of sustainable economic development and the implementation of important transport and infrastructure projects that might have a positive impact on the whole of Central Asia. The official Tashkent's position on the Chinese Belt and Road initiative goes in hand with priorities on the further strengthening the all-round strategic cooperation between Uzbekistan and China. China ranks among Uzbekistan's leading trade, economic and investment partners. In 2020, gross trade turnover between the two countries grew by 35% and reached 8.42 billion USD. At the meeting, Xi Jinping emphasized that China sees Uzbekistan as its important strategic partner and is willing to work together to ensure peace and stability in Central Asia, to achieve overall growth and well-being of the two nations. According to the leader of the PRC, President Uzbekistan ranks among the founders of the Belt and Road Initiative. The attention paid to the participation of Uzbekistan in the forum suggests the high level of relations between the two states.

In his speech at the international forum, the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan put forward several important initiatives aimed at strengthening the connectivity in Central Asia, addressing food security problems, meeting social needs of the population, and developing cultural, humanitarian and tourist ties.

The official Tashkent is interested in maximizing transport opportunities in Central Asia and in establishing the economic corridor ‘China - Central Asia - West Asia’. In this context, the construction of the Uzbekistan-Kyrgyzstan-China railway will bring benefit to all project participants, as it will intensify trade, create new jobs, attract tourists and generate transit income. The prospects for this project are suggested by the Kashgar-Irkeshtam-Osh-Andijan-Tashkent automobile corridor, which for the first time allowed motor carriers from Central Asia to directly reach China. The construction of the Mazar-e-Sharif-Kabul-Peshawar railway is also important for facilitating access to the southern seaports. Uzbekistan is working on this project jointly with Afghanistan, Kazakhstan, Pakistan and Russia. In this direction, there is a main road between Mazar-e-Sharif and Kabul. Uzbekistan and Tajikistan extended a power line to the capital of Afghanistan. In the future, this direction can be extended to India.

To ensure financing of the above transport and infrastructure projects, the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan initiated a ‘Financial Dialogue for Central Asia’. The main purpose of the dialogue is to implement ambitious infrastructure projects in cooperation with financial institutions of the PRC - the Asian Bank for Infrastructure Investments, the Great Silk Road Fund, other major international development institutions, as well as with the private sector. In the current conditions, it

is important to start such a dialogue and make it inclusive and transparent. Moreover, along with the technical and economic aspects, it is vital to pay special attention to social and political issues.

Transport communications not just address problems of connectivity, but also create new jobs, develop trade and stimulate growth. In addition, transport corridors passing through Afghanistan might be a powerful incentive for the soonest termination of many-year confrontation in the country. New communications, firstly, would connect the neighbours of Afghanistan. Common economic interests would arise between them. That would create the enabling environment for peace and harmony in the region. Secondly, all opposing groups would quickly realize that, in contrast to war, peace and trade, while benefiting well, are the vital conditions for development.

Uzbekistan has set a goal to develop smart agriculture and create a joint centre for agricultural innovation. Ensuring food security in a changing climate is one of the most pressing problems in the world. The United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization lists soil degradation, water scarcity, and outdated farming approaches as main threats to food security in the Central Asian region. In these conditions, it is especially important to ensure the introduction of the latest technologies that sustain the conservation of water resources, increase the fertility of plants and their resistance to diseases. In this field, it would be advisable to cooperate with China and other partners who have achieved considerable results in this area. The expertise of provinces of China is interesting from the practical point of view with their boosting high-tech agricultural zones. In the future, such regions of China might become partners of Uzbekistan in creating an agricultural innovation centre.

The human resources development assumes a better use of research and humanitarian potential. The soonest implementation of the latest achievements of science and technology in all areas of life is the most important condition for ensuring sustainable economic growth, improving the living standards of the population and high competitiveness of the country. In this context, the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan proposes building a whole system of cooperation in priority areas of research and innovations, within the framework of the One Belt, One Road initiative. This work cannot be done alone, because research in leading areas of scientific and innovative activity requires significant financial and other resources. Their scope is often huge even for developed countries. Cooperation within the framework of the Belt and Road initiative creates unique prerequisites for accelerating scientific and technological progress, follow-up establishment of joint technology parks, science and innovation clusters and venture companies, for pooling funds and opportunities of different countries.

Currently, as part of the Belt and Road initiative, China is implementing an action plan of cooperation in technology and innovation. There are four major joint initiatives with partners relating to scientific, technical and humanitarian exchange, to the creation of joint laboratories, establishment of technology parks and promotion of cooperation in the field of technology transit. These and other issues can be addressed through the establishment of training and production centres, and with the involvement of the headmost universities of the Great Silk Road states. The new Alliance of Universities of the Great Silk Road, which covers 151 universities from 38 countries of the world, might play a key role in this process. The development of tourist exchange. To achieve tangible results in the field of tourism, President Uzbekistan proposed creating the Great Silk Road International Tourism Association in Samarkand and hold annual One Belt, One Road tourism forums.

Uzbekistan possesses ample potential for tourism development. There are over 7,400 cultural heritage objects in Uzbekistan, 209 of which are included in the UNESCO World Heritage List. Along with that, there are 11 national natural parks and state reserves, 12 reserves, 106 museums and other objects capable of attracting the attention of tourists. Active cooperation with the member states of the One Belt, One Road initiative opens up many opportunities for Uzbekistan. 60 countries of the initiative rank among the largest ‘suppliers’ of tourists. According to the World

Tourism Organization, over 20% of all funds spent by tourists around the world account for China, Chinese tourists. In 2017, they spent on travel 250.6 billion USD. Experts estimate that by 2021, the number of Chinese tourists worldwide will reach 200 million, and their expenses - 429 billion USD. According to the State Statistics Committee of Uzbekistan, at the end of 2020, the volume of mutual trade turnover exceeded \$ 8.6 billion, and in the first quarter of 2021 amounted to \$ 2 billion. There are 1,652 enterprises with Chinese investments in Uzbekistan, including more than 120 enterprises with 100% Chinese capital. Over the past 10 years, the total volume of attracted Chinese investments and loans has exceeded \$ 10 billion.

Summing up, it is worth reiterating that the cooperation of Uzbekistan with the Belt and Road states is multifaceted and has not yet been fully implemented. The targeted initiatives put forward by the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan in the field of transport, innovation and education can raise Uzbek-Chinese relations to a new level, and foster the follow-up cooperation to address the most pressing problems that impede sustainable economic growth and development within the framework of the One Belt, One Road.

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