

CHINA'S NEW SILK ROADS IN CENTRAL ASIA – POLICY MEANS, STRATEGIES AND ACTORS OF THE ONE BELT ONE ROAD INITIATIVE

The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), first announced by the President of the People's Republic of China in 2013, is both a continuation of strategy of China's deeper integration with international community as well as a new pattern in Chinese economic and foreign policies. The BRI advocates a construction of the landline and maritime transportation routes linking China with Europe, but also with Africa and South-East Asia. The landline connection assumes the pivotal role of Central Asian republics of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan as transit states for Chinese goods heading European Union (EU).

In order to give the BRI the impetus, China invested in it a total of USD 1 trillion, making the BRI the largest project ever launched by a single country. Nonetheless, the new paradigm of the BRI is not its budget; it is rather the ethnic, political and economic diversity of its 68 transit and recipient states, representing different cultures, interests, and economic priorities.

The main **objective of this project** is to identify policy means and strategies that China uses to conduct its dialogue on the BRI in Central Asia and to implement the BRI in the region. The analysis of how Beijing develops its dialogue on the BRI with Central Asian states and how Central Asia responds to it contribute to our better understanding of the Initiative means and narrative that may be also used beyond the region. This project uses a bottom-up approach to understanding the BRI strategy. Instead of focusing on the PRC's policy papers and statements on the BRI, it focuses on how China implements the BRI, how it is received in Central Asia, and how the region responds to it.

Two main **research questions** of this project are: **How has Chinese strategy concerning the BRI been different from other forms of cooperation with Central Asia? And how does Chinese BRI strategy relates/coexists to other forms of China – Central Asia economic integration?**

To obtain the best results, the **research methods** are based on two main pillars. The first is an analysis of literature, publications, documents and reports concerning the BRI initiative both in their electronic and printed versions (this applies particularly to Chinese governmental documents, which often are not available online). The second pillar are meetings and interviews with American, European, Central Asian and Chinese researchers, politicians, diplomats, experts and businessmen. This approach to the research allows to combine the theory of the BRI with its implementation in Central Asia and thus to achieve the best and innovative results.

The **main reason** to undertake research on the BRI is a lack of thorough analysis concerning this flagship economic mega-project of the Republic of China in Central Asia – scarcely populated, poorly developed yet crucial the BRI success in reaching the EU. The implementation of the BRI in all transit and target states will change the economic (and political) landscape of Eurasia consolidating Chinese influence in majority of states and setting the new transportation routes. The BRI will also have a profound influence on the European Union, particularly Poland, which has been Chinese “gateway” to Western Europe and which, as one of the first European countries to do so, has already opened direct railway connection with China as a part of the Belt and Road initiative.