

**THE ROLE OF THE REPUBLIC OF UZBEKISTAN IN THE IMPLEMENTATION
OF BELT AND ROAD INITIATIVE****Tursunova Nargiza Sardor qizi****Abstract**

In this article, the author examines the history of the creation, the stages of the implementation of the Belt and Road initiative. And also considers the participation of the Republic of Uzbekistan in the implementation of BRI projects.

Keywords: Republic of Uzbekistan, China, Belt and Road initiative, cooperation, Silk Road.

Introduction

At present, along with the processes of regionalization, the processes of globalization are also important. To date, China is the largest trading partner of the Republic of Uzbekistan, in particular, in the first 5 months of 2023, the trade turnover increased and amounted to 4.93 billion [1]. Uzbekistan and China are equal members of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, established on June 15, 2001, one of the most influential and significant organizations in the world. The territories, population, and natural resources of the SCO countries largely exceed similar indicators of existing organizations. The areas of cooperation within the organization are very diverse, ranging from economic cooperation to the cultural sphere. One of the major projects that supported by SCO's is a large-scale project called "One Belt, One Road".

The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), proposed by China in 2013, aims to enhance global trade and stimulate economic growth across Asia and beyond by developing trade routes reminiscent of the ancient Silk Road. The initiative encompasses two main components: the Silk Road Economic Belt (land routes) and the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road (sea routes). Central to the success of the BRI are the countries of Central Asia, particularly the Republic of Uzbekistan. As a landlocked country with a strategic location in the heart of Eurasia, Uzbekistan plays a pivotal role in the implementation of the BRI.

The main Findings and Results

All 5 Central Asian states participate in the China—Central Asia—West Asia economic Corridor, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan confirmed their participation in the project at the III China—Central Asia Cooperation Forum, held in China in Shandong Province in June 2015. This corridor connects Xinjiang-Uygur The autonomous

region of China with the countries of the Persian Gulf, the Mediterranean Sea and the Arabian Peninsula has an international railway network.

The "One Belt, One Road" initiative is an actively developing project. It is represented by joint cooperation with 150 countries [2], including Asian, European and African countries. The project is aimed at implementation in five main areas:

1. "China — Europe" — through Central Asia and Russia;
2. "China — Persian Gulf" — through Central Asia;
3. "China — Southeast Asia, South Asia and the Indian Ocean".
4. "China — Europe" — through the South China Sea and the Indian Ocean;
5. "China — the South Pacific Ocean" — through the South China Sea [3].

The Central Asian region plays an important role in the implementation of the project, being located in the center of the mainland, connecting Europe and Asia. In addition, these countries have large resources. But at the same time, certain difficulties arise due to the peculiarities of the region, the countries of Central Asia still do not lag behind the major powers in the economic sphere. Thanks to the "One Belt, One Road" initiative, the spheres of cooperation between the countries are increasing and their economic potential is being revealed.

Along with other Central Asian countries, the Republic of Uzbekistan is also an active participant in the One Belt, One Road Initiative (OBOR), supporting cooperation in all areas. The Chinese side has provided preferential loans to Uzbekistan for the implementation of dozens of projects covering infrastructure, chemical industry, energy, water management, transport, communications and other areas. The disclosure of the transport potential of the Republic of Uzbekistan is one of the most important areas of cooperation between the countries. The construction of the China–Kyrgyzstan–Uzbekistan railway will further enhance the level of regional connectivity [4].

Uzbekistan's location has historically made it a key transit point for trade routes linking East and West. The ancient Silk Road passed through cities like Samarkand, Bukhara, and Khiva, making them vibrant centers of commerce and culture. This historical legacy positions Uzbekistan as a natural partner in the modern revival of these routes under the BRI framework.

The important role of Uzbekistan in the "One Belt - One Road" project is reflected in the strategic plans of the two countries and meets mutual strategic interests. Uzbekistan is a very close neighbor of China, a strategic cooperation partner, and the country occupies a priority place in diplomatic relations with China. If we talk about China, good relations with Uzbekistan open up new opportunities for establishing ties. In turn, the Republic of Uzbekistan is doing a lot

of work in relations with China. Diplomatic relations with the East are a good opportunity for the Republic of Uzbekistan to establish contacts with South Asia and the West.

Uzbekistan is uniquely situated to serve as a bridge between China and Europe. It shares borders with all other Central Asian countries, making it a central hub for regional connectivity. This geographic advantage is crucial for the overland routes of the Silk Road Economic Belt, facilitating the movement of goods across vast distances. From the perspective of Uzbekistan, the BRI could help open the corridor to the Persian Gulf, enabling expansion of commercial and trade routes for the country [5].

Uzbekistan is rich in natural resources, including natural gas, gold, uranium, and cotton. The development of transport and infrastructure networks under the BRI can enhance the extraction and export of these resources. This, in turn, can contribute to the diversification and growth of the Uzbek economy.

Uzbekistan has prioritized the development of its infrastructure to better integrate into the BRI. Significant investments have been made in upgrading roads, railways, and logistics centers. Projects such as the Angren-Pap railway, which links the Ferghana Valley with the rest of Uzbekistan, and the construction of new highways, are key examples of efforts to improve internal and regional connectivity.

The BRI has the potential to significantly boost trade and investment flows between Uzbekistan and other participating countries. Enhanced connectivity reduces transportation costs and times, making Uzbek products more competitive in international markets. Furthermore, the influx of Chinese investment in infrastructure projects stimulates local economic growth and job creation.

Chinese companies have been actively involved in various sectors of the Uzbek economy, including telecommunications, energy, and manufacturing. This collaboration facilitates the transfer of technology and expertise, fostering industrial modernization and technological advancement in Uzbekistan.

The BRI has strengthened Uzbekistan's bilateral relations with China. High-level exchanges and cooperation agreements have been signed, covering various fields such as trade, investment, security, and cultural exchange. This deepening relationship is mutually beneficial and promotes regional stability.

Uzbekistan's active participation in the BRI enhances regional cooperation among Central Asian countries. Joint infrastructure projects, such as the China-Kyrgyzstan-Uzbekistan railway, not only improve connectivity but also foster economic integration and political collaboration

within the region.

Thus, in the field of trade and economic cooperation, China is one of Uzbekistan's leading trading partners and a leading investor in the country's economy. Thus, in the period 2017-2022, the total volume of bilateral trade increased 1.85 times from \$4.75 billion (in 2017) to \$8.9 billion (in 2022). In 2020, there was a slight decrease in mutual trade against the background of the coronavirus pandemic, but in 2021, the volume of bilateral trade reached \$7.45 billion, and in 2022 – \$8.92 billion. At the same time, exports amounted to \$2.52 billion, and imports – \$6.4 billion. In January-March of this year, mutual trade amounted to \$2.32 billion. (exports – \$334.1 million, imports – \$1.99 billion). [6]

Uzbekistan's cooperation within the framework of the OPOP project is actively continuing and new goals and objectives are being defined. For example, a number of contracts and agreements were signed for 2023-2027. The agreements covered many sectors and spheres, including education (development of secondary schools), politics (cooperation between the Foreign Ministries of states), agriculture. A protocol regulating the establishment of the Uzbek-Chinese intergovernmental Cooperation Committee was signed.

In addition, important economic agreements were signed providing for an increase in the production of electric vehicles, the creation of a logistics center, and the expansion of telecommunications infrastructure.

On October 17-19, 2023, President of the Republic of Uzbekistan Shavkat Mirziyoyev visited China to participate in the Central Asia–China summit, during which prospects for cooperation for 2023-2027 were discussed and 41 agreements were signed. During the visit, an exhibition of Uzbek-Chinese cooperation was held, new joint projects were launched:

- The Republic of Uzbekistan is interested in the comprehensive development of the Green Silk Road, as environmental issues are very important for all Central Asian countries. Uzbekistan is planning to hold the Samarkand International Climate Forum. Therefore, the state supports the integration of these two initiatives: the "Green Silk Road" and the "Green Central Asia".

- It was proposed to launch a Global program for the development of "green" culture within the framework of the "One Belt, One Road" initiative, which provides for the holding of ethno-ecological festivals, forums, presentations and other events with the participation of well-known public figures, representatives of science, business and culture.

- Bringing the trade turnover to \$ 20 billion.

- Opening branches of leading Chinese universities in Tashkent – Tsinghua University and

Peking University.

- Creation of a "roadmap" for the implementation of the initiatives put forward.

Thus, the "One Belt, One Road" strategy and its implementation contribute to strengthening the power, economic and political superiority of the People's Republic of China. The countries of Central Asia also get the opportunity for economic development, expansion of partnership with the participating states of the project in various industries.

Despite the numerous benefits, the implementation of the BRI in Uzbekistan faces challenges. The financing of large-scale infrastructure projects often leads to increased debt levels, raising concerns about financial sustainability. Additionally, environmental considerations must be addressed to ensure that development does not come at the cost of ecological degradation.

Maintaining political and social stability is crucial for the successful implementation of the BRI. Uzbekistan has undertaken significant reforms to improve governance and create a more favorable business environment. Continued efforts in this direction are essential to attract and retain foreign investment.

Conclusion

Uzbekistan's strategic location, rich resources, and commitment to infrastructure development make it a key player in the Belt and Road Initiative. The BRI offers significant opportunities for economic growth, technological advancement, and regional cooperation. However, careful management of financial, environmental, and political challenges is necessary to fully realize the potential benefits. As the initiative progresses, Uzbekistan's role will be central to its success, contributing to the revival of the ancient Silk Road in a modern context.

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