

**DIPLOMACY OF THE PROJECT
“ECONOMIC BELT OF THE GREAT SILK ROAD”
IN MODERN FOREIGN POLICIES OF CHINA**

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Hasparian Ye., Karlyuk S. Diplomacy of the project “Economic belt of the Great Silk Road” in modern foreign policy of China. The authors consider the Chinese policies of promoting the Silk Road Economic Belt project as a means of expansion of China’s influence on the global scale in general and as a means to find new markets for its goods. China’s strategies to implement its project are viewed.

Key words: Eurasian cooperation, free trade economic areas, megaproject. Silk Road.

Гаспарян Є., Карлюк С. Дипломатія проекту «Економічний пояс Великого шовкового шляху» в сучасній зовнішній політиці Китаю. В статті розглядається політика просування Китаєм проекту «Економічний пояс Великого шовкового шляху» як засіб глобальної експансії і впливу Китаю як в цілому, так і задля пошуку нових ринків збуту своїх товарів. Пояснюється стратегія Китаю стосовно шляхів реалізації даного проекту.

Ключові слова: вільні торгові економічні зони, мегапроект, Шовковий шлях, євразійська співпраця.

Гаспарян Е., Карлюк С. Дипломатия проекта «Экономический пояс Великого шелкового пути» в современной внешней политике Китая. В статье рассматривается внешняя политика продвижения Китаем проекта «Экономический пояс Великого шелкового пути» как средство глобальной экспансии и влияния Китая как в целом, так и для поиска новых рынков сбыта своих товаров. Объясняется стратегия Китая относительно реализации данного проекта.

Ключевые слова: евразийское сотрудничество, мегапроект, свободные торговые экономические зоны, Шелковый путь.

The Silk Road Economic Belt project was presented by Xi Jinping in Kazakhstan in autumn 2013. At the same time, during his visit to the countries of Southeast Asia, the head of the People’s Republic of China

suggested to Association of South-East Asian Nations member-states the idea of joint construction of the “Sea Silk Road of the XXI century”. Both initiatives – the Silk Road Economic Belt and the Sea Silk Road – were united into the general strategic concept of China, entitled “One Belt – One Way”, whose implementation today is one of the main directions of the foreign economic and foreign policy of China.

This mega project covers most of Eurasia, attracting active economies of East Asia, developed European economies, and (among them) vast territories of countries with huge potential for development. According to official figures from China, 63% of the planet’s population lives in the megaproject, rich resources are concentrated, and the estimated economic scale may amount to \$21 trillion [6].

Within the framework of the project, the creation of three Trans-Eurasian “economic corridors” is envisaged: the northern (China – Central Asia – Europe), the central (China – Central and Western Asia – Persian Gulf and the Mediterranean Sea) and southern (China – South-East Asia – Indian Ocean).

Two new financial institutions were created in China to fund “One Belt – One Way” concept project: the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank and the Silk Foundation (2014) [5].

The Chinese megaproject is gaining popularity in the world. So, at the latest forum “One Belt, One Way” (May 2017), there were leaders from 29 countries in Europe, Asia, and Latin America [2]. However, some foreign experts consider this project very restrained, because its main goal is the construction of a new world transport infrastructure as the basis for “broad economic expansion of Chinese capital” [1, p.9].

The Silk Road concept expands the “strategic space” of security around China, stabilizes supply of energy resources, and provides economic security and a breakthrough policy of “strategic containment” of the People’s Republic of China. The Great Silk Road marked one of the fundamental vectors in promoting China to a new global role. It is anticipated that this “diplomatic brand” will combine logistics, energy, cultural and humanitarian projects, which together will contribute to the creation of a belt loyal to Peking states in the Eurasian space.

The concept of the “Silk Road Economic Belt” is designed for a long-term perspective – several next decades. At the present moment, its implementation has not yet become systematic, and today it is more like one of the vectors in promoting China to a new global role.

Nevertheless, the Chinese mega-project forced Russia to somewhat correct its strategy for the creation of the Eurasian Economic Union, a draft of which was presented by V. Putin in early 2015. Initially, this draft envisioned (including) creation of the Free Trade Area of the Eurasian Economic Union with China. But in a few months, Russia and the People’s Republic of China made a joint statement on cooperation in the combination of the construction of the Eurasian Economic Union and the Economic Belt of the Silk Road (that is, they committed themselves to supporting each other’s efforts to implement their own project) [4, p.9].

Its diplomacy is developing in an environment of sharp competition from a number of other countries. Yes, there is evidence that the construction of two maritime channels is planned for the Naval Silk Road: in Nicaragua (which will be an alternative to the Panama Canal) and in Thailand (in the narrow part of the Malay Peninsula, which will be an alternative to the existing route along the Malacca Strait) [2]. Of course, this will cause resistance from the states that are interested in preserving the current status quo.

Interestingly, the representatives of public diplomacy – first of all, the leaders of the western provinces and autonomous regions of the People’s Republic of China – are important “lobbyists” of this project. Far from the coast, internal territories have been the least successful in the years of reform. In order to equalize regional imbalances in the early 2000s, special program for the development of western regions was begun in China, including the construction of transport infrastructure. The launch of the Silk Road Economic Belt has significantly increased the need in logistics centers, highways, high-speed railways, and more. The Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region has proposed the creation of a free trade area on its territory focused on the states of Central Asia. A draft of the creation the Sino-Arab Free Trade Zone (in conjunction with the Arab Gulf Cooperation Council) was prepared in Ningxi Hui Autonomous Region. Similar projects not only contribute to the overall socio-economic growth

of the regions, but also, according to foreign experts, increase the political weight of their leaders in the Chinese nomenclature [3].

Diplomacy, which China uses as a tool for promoting its megaproject, is characterized by complexity and scope and allows to solve a number of important tasks: to expand the market for Chinese products, to increase the yuan's share in world trade (without thereby shifting the place of the dollar), to stimulate the development of the economy of China and its modernization, promote the development of China's internal provinces, create a recognizable positive brand associated with China, etc. The successful implementation of the Silk Road Economic Zone may lead to the creation of a new model of international relations in which China can turn from an object of globalization into its subject, the active creator of the new world order.

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