

# BRIQ

Belt & Road Initiative Quarterly



# The Common Course Towards the Maritime Silk Road

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# BRIQ

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**Graphic Design** • Mehmetcan Őztrk

**Editorial Office** • Aksaray Mah. Cerrahpařa Cad. No: 5 D: 9 Fatih-İstanbul +90 (212) 586 72 31

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## Principles of Publication

At a time when US ambitions for a unipolar world order have lost their appeal, a new order is taking shape thanks to the multipolarization of world politics and the acceleration of cooperation between developing countries, rejecting the globalism of imperialist states. Under these conditions, the new agenda of global cooperation should respond to the needs and aspirations of developing countries seeking joint development and solidarity under the guidance of public-driven projects. In particular, the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) -put forward in 2013 by Xi Jinping, President of the People's Republic of China- provides a suitable opportunity and a sound foundation for the implementation of this new agenda of global cooperation.

BRI is an epoch-making move to re-implement the concept of the Silk Road, which dates back 2,000 years, to a time when China was immensely contributing to global prosperity and the development of trade and cooperation. The revival of this concept entails a much more comprehensive approach that also incorporates rail and sea transport, and digital systems.

BRI proposes to bring together over 60 countries across Asia, Europe, Africa, and Latin America –together accounting for nearly half of the world's gross domestic product– for prosperity and development at the initiative of China. Unlike the Western-centered world order, BRI seeks peaceful collaboration for improving global trade and production towards common goals for humanity. It firmly rejects crude imperialist exploitation. Two thousand years ago, the Silk Road was a conduit for the flow of gunpowder, spices, silk, compasses and paper to the world. Today, it offers artificial intelligence, quantum computers, new energy and material technologies, and space-age visions to developing countries. In addition, the New Silk Road provides incentives and opportunities for the development and implementation of bio-economic schemes in stakeholder countries against the threat of climate change and other environmental threats that bring the entire ecosystem to the brink of extinction.

Turkey has a significant role –real and potential– in accelerating South-South cooperation. Turkey is conveniently located as Asia's farthest outpost to the West. It assumes a critical position as a pivotal country on BRI's North-South and East-West axes. However, China's development and BRI's contribution to the future of humanity have remained to a large extent underrecognized and superficially evaluated in Turkish academia, media, and politics. This is mainly because Turkey's academics, media professionals, and policy makers have been observing China using Western sources. In the same manner, China and BRI's other potential partners have been viewing Turkey through a Western lens.

BRIQ has committed itself to developing an in-depth understanding of the present era, with a particular emphasis on the new opportunities and obstacles on the road to the New Asian Century.

BRIQ assumes the task of providing direct exchange of views and information among Chinese and Turkish academics, intellectuals, and policy makers. In the meantime, this journal will serve as a platform to bring together the intellectual accumulation of the whole world, especially developing countries, on the basis of the Belt and Road Initiative, which presents a historic opportunity for the common future of humanity.

BRIQ is also devoted to publishing research and other intellectual contributions that underline the transformative power of public-driven economies, where popular interests are upheld as the basic principle, ahead of individual profit. The fundamental tasks of BRIQ are to demonstrate how BRI can contribute to the implementation of this public-driven model, and to help potential BRI partners -including Turkey- to realize their real potential.

BRIQ stands for the unity of humanity and a fair world order. It will therefore be a publication for the world's distinguished intellectuals, especially those from Eurasia, Africa, and the Americas: the defenders of a new civilization rising from Asia on the basis of peace, fraternity, cooperation, prosperity, social benefit and common development.

## Submission Guidelines

BRIQ features a broad range of content, from academic articles to book reviews, review essays, interviews, news reports, and feature articles.

The Editorial Board can issue calls for papers for special issues and invite authors to contribute manuscripts; however, it also welcomes unsolicited submissions.

Submissions are invited in English or Turkish. All submissions are to include a short biography (150-word limit) and should be sent as Microsoft Word attachments to [briq@briqjournal.com](mailto:briq@briqjournal.com) Articles or other content that have been previously published or are under review by other journals will not be considered for publication.

BRIQ follows American Psychology Association (APA style, 6<sup>th</sup> edition, <https://www.apastyle.org>) and uses American English spelling.

BRIQ applies a double-blind review process for all academic articles.

Academic articles should be between 5000 and 9000 words in length, including abstracts, notes, references, and all other content. Please supply a cover page that includes complete author information, and a fully anonymized manuscript that also contains an abstract (200-word limit) and five keywords.

Book reviews should not exceed 1,000 words; review essays covering two or more works can be up to 3,000 words.

News reports consisting of brief analyses of news developments should not exceed 1,500 words; feature articles combining reporting and analysis can be up to 3,500 words.

Please contact the Editorial Board for interview proposals.

# EDITORIAL

“Belt” and “Road”: The combination of these concepts, with a deeper connotation than their individual meaning alone, is used to describe the 21<sup>st</sup> century's greatest collaboration initiative. The Belt represents "economic corridors", and the Road represents land routes, railways, and sea routes. Therefore, “Belt and Road” involve the integration of all these corridors and routes. It would not be wrong to claim that the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) has become one of the two main policies competing with each other in international relations. BRI promotes peace, cooperation, and shared development against the imperialist policy that increases inter-state conflicts and provokes war.

In the present era, the USA, has been engaging in provocations and conspiracies in every strategic point of the sea and waterways, especially in the Eastern Mediterranean and the South China Sea. US attempts at undermining Turkey's rights and interests in the eastern Mediterranean does not only concern Turkey, but they also target the interests of China, Russia, and Iran, directly or indirectly. Similarly, US attempts at undermining China's sovereignty rights in the South China Sea are related not only to the interests and rights of China, but also to the interests of Turkey, Russia, and Iran. A similar situation goes for US attempts at confining Iran to the Persian Gulf through sanctions and military threats. Developing countries, suffering from problems created by Atlanticist globalization, must find common solutions to the common threat. In this connection, BRI has already made significant progress in building solid cooperation between Asia, Europe, and Africa. Significant collaborations over BRI have been established not only between China and neighboring countries in the region, but also among several countries across Africa and Europe. Among these, the most important one is the memorandum of understanding signed between China and Italy in March 2019. As a result, Italy has become the first major European country and G7 member that joined BRI.

As the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic demonstrate, Atlanticist globalization and the socioeconomic implications of neoliberalism pose a great threat to the present as well as the future of humanity. Atlanticist globalization –contrary to its own claims– constitutes the major obstacle to free trade, development, and peace. Another important point to be noted here is that this situation is not only valid for developing countries, but also for all other countries in the world.

US sanctions against Turkey, China, Russia, and Iran undermine the interests of Europe, as well. For this reason, the gap between the USA and Europe is becoming larger in terms of the policies to be pursued in world affairs. This situation creates favorable conditions for the developing world to resist US pressures. The expansion of BRI by engaging Europe will help to buffer the aggressive policies of the USA.

Moreover, Turkey's resolution to protect its own rights and interests in the Eastern Mediterranean and Cyprus against US provocations directly contributes to the advancement of BRI. With its role as a strategic bridge between continents, Turkey's active participation is crucial for the construction of the West Asian feet of BRI. This being said, the positive effect of Turkey's participation is not limited to this role alone. Turkey's participation would also disrupt plans for restraining BRI within the borders of Asia.

In this context, partnership with China and Russia is of strategic importance for Turkey, because China and Russia have both technology and experience in producing energy resources in the Black Sea and Eastern Mediterranean Sea.

In the final analysis, one could argue that the “21<sup>st</sup> Century Maritime Silk Road” constitutes the most important component of BRI. The focus of maritime collaboration under BRI is on jointly building a safe and highly efficient transport corridor at ports along the Belt and Road line. Sovereignty on the seas is important for energy resources basins as well as for the use of resources within the sea and the sea bottom. Another factor as important as this one is the fact that up to 90% of the world's trade is conducted through seaways. Controlling the seas and the waterways have gained much more importance today than in the previous ages.

The 21<sup>st</sup> century will be the century of the sea as well as the Asian century.

**FIKRET AKFIRAT**

*Editor-in-Chief*

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**Russian Strategist  
Dr. Alexander DUGIN:**

# "The Belt and Road Initiative: A Eurasian Road"



*Alexander Dugin (b. 1962) is a Russian philosopher and activist. As a founder of the Russian Geopolitical School and the Eurasian Movement, Dugin is considered as one of the most important exponents of modern Russian conservative thought in the line of slavophiles. He earned his PhD in Sociology, in Political sciences, and also in Philosophy. During six years (2008 – 2014), he was the head of the Department of Sociology of International Relations in Sociological Faculty of Moscow State University. His publications include more than sixty books such as Foundations of Geopolitics, Fourth Political Theory, Theory of Multipolar World, Noomakhia (24 volumes), Ethnosociology. The influence of Dugin's thought on modern day Russia (including political leaders) is recognized by not only his followers but also his philosophical and political opponents. His ideas are sometimes judged controversial or nonconformist but almost all agree that they are inspiring and original.*

*E-mail: [dugin@rossia3.ru](mailto:dugin@rossia3.ru)*

"We need to liberate ourselves, all the peoples, Turkish people, Russian people, Chinese people, European people, American peoples, from this international liberal swamp. We need to liberate ourselves from the totalitarian discourse constructed on the 'self-evident' dogma that only liberalism can be accepted as a universal ideology, that only Western values should be assimilated as something universal. With the growth of China and Putin's insistence on defending and strengthening Russian sovereignty, the Belt & Road Initiative was transformed into something new in the last two years. It now represents a strategy to secure Chinese and Russian independence, working together, in alliance. Now, we can speak about the Russian-Chinese alliance as a geopolitical alliance opposed to the Atlanticist world order. Nation-states cannot independently establish, secure and keep real sovereignty. We need to oppose this global pressure together. Above all, on the present stage, we need to establish a multipolar alliance between all the powers, all the states, all the countries and civilizations fighting for their independence. That is the logical continuation of decolonization. Decolonization is not finished; it has just started."

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**Alexander Dugin**  
answers the questions of Fikret Akfırat, Editor-in-Chief of BRIQ.

*Fikret Akfırat: The July 19 edition of the Turkish newspaper Milliyet features an op-ed by United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, where he expresses the following view: "Above all, we cannot return to the system that has caused the current crisis. What we need is to build a better system that allows for the growth of societies and economies with greater sustainability, inclusivity, and gender equality". What kind of a New World Order do you think humanity needs? What is to be done to achieve such a goal?*

**Alexander Dugin:** I think that these are purely senseless words. Not real thoughts. The current crisis is a logical result of the decay of the

global liberal system, clearly under the leadership of the West. That is the way it all unfolds. It is a kind of liberal hegemony doubled by geopolitical unipolarity. So, the crisis is caused by Western liberalism and the unipolar Western system.

We are all in some sense "the West". In a sense, the modern western liberal civilization was a path to follow for all other societies. And I think that the problem with this present-day crisis is precisely the direct consequence of the impossibility to overcome the coronavirus on a global scale through the western-liberal international institutions that have proved utterly ineffective.

This economic crisis, the fall of general demand, the crash of oil prices and the beginning of a real civil war in the US, represent a clear sign

of the end of the western-centred world. It is a double-faced crisis. On one side, we see liberalism as a historical social vision, as a philosophy. It is not only economic liberalism, the defense of free market or political liberal democracy, parliamentarianism and so on. It is also the metaphysical understanding of the nature of humankind as a mass of individuals. For liberalism, the man is equal to the individual. That is the basis of all liberal ideology as well as progress, understood as accumulation of liberty. More and more liberty, more and more progress in the eyes of liberals themselves is just the same as the progress and growth of liberalism. With this growth of liberalism, the West affirmed its own hegemony, its own domination.

In order to be more modern, developed and prosperous you are obliged to be more liberal, more liberal democratic, to have more open society, more civil society. In that global context, the West itself has secured or thought to secure for itself a kind of leading role, a pattern to follow. The history of the West is presumed to be equivalent to the universal destiny of humanity. On this ideological level liberalism is thought of as a necessary universal ideology that must be adopted by all. If you resist you will be put among “rogue countries” with all the consequences, war and regime change operations.

The political ideology of globalist liberalism is paired with other aspects, with the geopolitical, economic and political leadership of Western countries and above all that of the US. So, we have on one side ideological unipolarity with the domination of liberals. On the other side, we have the geopolitical, military, political, strategic and economical unipolarity of the West.

### The Crisis of Unipolar System

*The crisis, which we are speaking of, is precisely the crisis of this unipolar geopolitical/ideological system.* When United Nations Secretary-General Guterres says that “we should build a better system” and immediately after refers to the “growth of societies and economies”, he rests totally inside the liberal paradigm. Economic growth is the key measure to define the success of economic activity in liberal theory. The concept of economic growth is thus purely liberal. That is the system we already have. But Guterres, just one line before, affirmed that “we need to build a better system”. Guterres proposes to cure the crisis, created by liberalism, with more liberalism, with “more growth of economy” On the other hand, the concept of “greater sustainability” is the thesis developed by the Club of Rome<sup>1</sup>. The very idea of sustainable development is promoted by left liberalism and it means that the rich should take care of the poor in order to avoid proletarian revolutions and all kinds of social protests. That is the Fabian society<sup>2</sup> style of political agenda. Finally, the same Club of Rome who pretended to promote sustainable development insisted on the reduction of human population on the planet, stressing the limits of growth. So Guterres should choose *either* economic growth (the classical liberal thesis) *or* the Club of Rome’s brand of sustainability.

**Liberal anti-racism itself is Western-centric and profoundly racist. The Other for the West belongs to its own unconsciousness. It is pathogenic and pathological.**

1 Editor’s Note (Ed. N.). Founded in Italy in 1968, the Club of Rome is a think tank.

2 Ed. N. The Fabian Society is a UK-based movement that seeks to achieve the principle what they call “democratic socialism” through incremental and reform, rather than revolutionary methods.

Next point: *inclusivity*. The main problem with inclusivity is the fact that Western culture cannot imagine an “Other” outside of itself. The Western Cartesian subject<sup>3</sup> considers the “Other” as its own unconsciousness. According to Lacan<sup>4</sup>, *it is some entity, some unconscious subject*<sup>5</sup> that lives inside the Western man. So, when we speak about inclusivity with western man, he naturally means precisely this kind of inclusivity – i.e. concerning his own unconscious self. This psychoanalysis helps us to understand why the West is so deeply racist. It is racist including when it obliges all to fight racism – it is obligatory because of the fact the West itself has decided to do that... So liberal anti-racism itself is Western-centric and profoundly racist. The Other for the West belongs to its own unconsciousness. It is pathogenic and pathological.

Finally, *gender equality*, which is perhaps the most senseless point. To obtain to real gender equality, we need to destroy the gender as such. Because the relations between man and woman are based on asymmetry, i.e. precisely on the *absence of the equality*, on the non-equality, and non-equivalence, to use the terms of Jacques Lacan. To proclaim gender equality is to destroy man and woman as such. It was realistically described in the “Cyborg manifesto” of the famous modern feminist Donna Haraway.

So, what do we have in Guterres’ statement that “We need the better system” That means we

need more liberalism for economic growth, and at the same time we need to impose more limits on economic growth in line with the Club of Rome’s concept of sustainability, more inclusivity of the unconscious Other (that means we need a more ego-centric, western-centric racism, that totally absorbs its own psychic diseases – capitalist neurosis or post-modernist psychosis) and we need to destroy the gender. The words of UN Secretary-General, Guterres, are thus extremely senseless and deeply contradictory. That is an idiotic speech of someone who does not understand a bit of the meaning of the concept of words. People like that try to build a better system based on the premises of the existing one. How can one cure liberalism in decay with more liberalism, adding with elements of Deleuzian<sup>6</sup> far-left post-modernism and cyberfeminism<sup>7</sup>?



UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres. Headquarters of the UN / New York. (Xinhua, 2020)

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- 3 Ed.N. It is the philosophy of Descartes, based on the thinking self. And it is also associated with his dictum "I think, therefore I am".
  - 4 Ed.N. Jacques Lacan was a French psychoanalyst and psychiatrist.
  - 5 Ed.N. According to the psychoanalytic theory, the unconscious mind is a structure that is deeper than the conscious mind, in an invisible region, that is related to any mental content or process that the individual is not aware of. According to Lacan, the unconscious mind is the personal history that determines the life of a person, it is a kind of memory, and is the consciousness that the person is not aware of.
  - 6 Ed.N. The French postmodern thinker, Gilles Deleuze suggests that everything is different, no two things are the same, so there is no identity.
  - 7 Ed.N. It is the feminist approach with regard to the relationship between women and technology, particularly between women and internet.

**The problem is not Guterres, personally. The problem is the global liberal elite desperately insisting on curing all the logical disasters and crises proceeding from liberalism with more liberalism, mixed with extravagant post-modernist concepts.**

It follows that we need to mix liberalism with elements of Fabianism, anarchism and cultural Marxism. To hear Guterres is the same as to be put in some psychiatric clinic. What he describes is the symptom, not correctly formulating the problem or speaking of a diagnosis or cure.

The problem is not Guterres, personally. The problem is the global liberal elite desperately insisting on curing all the logical disasters and crises proceeding from liberalism with more liberalism, mixed with extravagant post-modernist concepts.

I think we are already in this new world order if we follow the description of Guterres. If we understand the new world order as the continuation of liberal globalization, we need not to improve and embellish it, but instead to get out of it, get rid of it – of all these idiots: Guterres, United Nations officials, and global liberal elites. They try to cure us with poison, to cure all the crises made by domination of liberal ideology with more liberalism. We need to liberate ourselves, all the people, Turkish people, Russian people, Chinese people, European people, American peoples, from this international liberal Swamp.

We need to liberate ourselves from the totalitarian discourse constructed on the “self-evident” dogma that only liberalism can be accepted as a universal ideology, that only Western values should be assimilated as something universal. They try to improve technical functional problems of their system with the

same approach. We need real alternatives to Guterres, to the United Nations, to liberalism, to western modern technological civilization. It is the civilization of hell. We need to find the way out of it, not to go deeper in it.

### The Belt & Road Initiative: United Eurasianist Initiative

**Fikret Akfırat:** *Your portrayal of Eurasia and Eurasianism connotes something more than a mere geographical description. It also extends to the political alliance of all those opposed to the Atlanticist world order. In this regard, how would you interpret the China-proposed Belt & Road Initiative from a Eurasianist perspective?*

**Alexander Dugin:** The Belt & Road Initiative had started as a kind of Atlanticist project, conceived by the Chinese elite with the help of American globalists. Initially, the idea was to create a direct tie between China and Western Europe, linking together all coastal areas in order to avoid Russia, to encircle it and cut its access to the warm seas. This is traditional geopolitics of Atlanticists. The Belt & Road Initiative started precisely as such. China considered it a very good opportunity to develop and secure its markets as well as to promote its own political and economic interests outside of China. Western globalist elites supported that, because the project *excluded* Russia.

But many things have changed in recent years. First, China became so powerful, so independent, so sovereign that it began to represent a new challenge to the globalists themselves, to the West. China became the second pole. Observing China becoming more and more independent, a part of the globalist/western elite started to oppose China. We see this with Huawei, with Trump’s campaign to get all Chinese assets out of the US, with the mutual closure of consulates in USA and in China. We see economic war with

**Little by little China came to the conclusion that Russia is to be included in the Belt & Road Initiative, making it a united *Eurasianist* initiative. So, the whole project started to become a “Eurasian road”.**

China. These changes have reshaped the Belt & Road Initiative in a new geopolitical context.

Little by little China came to the conclusion that Russia is to be included in the Belt & Road Initiative, making it a united *Eurasianist* initiative. So, the whole project started to become a “Eurasian road”. Initially it was conceived as an Atlanticist project, trying to encircle with a “cordon sanitaire”<sup>8</sup> – in geopolitics a “cordon sanitaire” is viewed as an important tool to separate Russia from neighboring countries – but with the growth of China and Putin’s insistence on defending and strengthening Russian sovereignty, the Belt & Road Initiative was transformed into something new in the last two years. It now represents a strategy to secure Chinese and Russian independence, working together, in alliance. That was confirmed by a recent Russian and Chinese agreement.

So, the meaning of the Belt & Road Initiative has drastically changed and we can now speak about the Russian-Chinese alliance as a geopolitical alliance opposed to the Atlanticist world order, to its unipolarity.

Initially the BRI was supported by the West, but now, it is rather under attack. The West tries to use Japan and India in order to reduce the importance of the project, and even by trying to directly sabotage it sometimes.

### Cooperation Is the First Against Atlanticist Globalization, Rivalry Is Secondary

**Fikret Akfırat:** *Many of your publications point to the need for Russia to cooperate with China, Turkey and Iran against Atlanticist globalization. However, there are also those, from various circles, who argue against your view that: “Historically speaking, Russia, Turkey, Iran and China are geopolitical rivals. They all possess contradicting national interests and geostrategic goals.” How can one accommodate these countries’ interests and reconcile their diverging goals?*

**Alexander Dugin:** Every State, taken as such, is a rival to other States. That is the very foundation of the Nation-State, an egoistic and realistic attitude. So, from the realist point of view, rivalry, competition and conflicts are always possible. We could never exclude them a priori. They are a logical consequence of the very principle of sovereignty.

On the other hand, Atlanticist globalization and Western hegemony are not a realist paradigm at all. Liberalism insists that western values, the western system should dominate the world and that all national countries, nation-states should recognize international organizations led by liberals, as higher authorities. Liberalism in International Relations is precisely the idea that each country should overcome its national interests and follow a liberal agenda. Otherwise, liberals affirm that there will be war. Using the argument of rivalry, liberals try to impose their own rule on all countries.

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<sup>8</sup> Ed.N. The concept of “Cordon sanitaire” (security belt) was coined by the French Prime Minister Georges Clemenceau at the end of the First World War. Russia lost its western region, including Ukraine, Poland, Finland, and Belarus, with the Brest-Litovsk (1918) agreement signed at the end of the First World War. This region was seen by the West as a “shield” between Soviet communism and Western capitalism, and was referred to as a “security belt” in the interwar period.



The Second Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation Beijing. (Xinhua, 2020)

When states such as Russia, Turkey, Iran and China wanted to oppose this liberal pressure, to this model of globalization led by the West, they initially failed to rely only on the realist paradigm – competing with each other or trying to avoid liberalism alone. That strategy to secure sovereignty is doomed.

**Russia, Turkey, Iran, China and other countries including India, Pakistan and many other Arab countries, African countries, and Europe itself can secure real independence only by way of creating a kind of geopolitical Eurasian alliance, a multipolar alliance.**

No single nation-state can effectively resist the Atlanticist globalization alone. Russia, Turkey, Iran, China and other countries including India, Pakistan and many other Arab countries, African countries, and Europe itself can secure real independence only by way of creating a kind

of geopolitical *Eurasian alliance*, a multipolar alliance in order to liberate all countries from this Atlanticist globalization, resisting the pressure of liberal hegemony.

Russia alone could not play the role of an alternative pole to globalization and neither can China, not to mention Turkey and Iran who are regional powers. They are very strong, but regional. I think that only by working together can Russia, Turkey, China, Iran and other great countries establish a truly multipolar world order.

Currently, we are still in a unipolar world order. People like Guterres, when they are recognizing today's growing problems, are still in the same globalist liberal unipolar hegemonic paradigm. They still think in terms of a unipolar world.

Alone we could not put an end to unipolarity. When there is a unipolar liberal world order, there is no real sovereignty for nation-states. Nation-states cannot independently establish, secure and keep real sovereignty. We need to oppose this global pressure together. Maybe, Turkey, Russia, Iran and China are geopolitical

rivals, but that is of secondary importance. We need to put this rivalry to the side.

There is a more pressing conflict. It is precisely that either the global world order will remain unipolar with some adjustment or that it will be multipolar and full scale multipolarity will arrive. If we live in a multipolar world order without any unique hegemon, we could exit this liberal agenda and also the domination of liberalism and all its ideological impositions: human rights, individualism, technological development, and artificial intelligence.

Now we are in front of a choice that will seal our destiny. If we choose multipolarity on the ideological level, this means that neither human rights nor gender or other equality nor technological development will be considered anymore as obligatory for everybody. Everybody will be free to follow its own values: Russia could follow its own traditions. Turkey, China and Iran, all these countries can follow their own traditions and pursue their interests.

Only after creating and securing a multipolar world order could we speak about geopolitical rivalry between these countries and great civilizations – *not before*. If we stress this inter-state rivalry, all of them being under attack by globalism, Atlanticism and western hegemony will win and we will fail. Consequently, we will go deeper into western liberal hegemony. Now this hegemony is in deep crisis and that is a great opportunity for all of us, to get out of this, to step aside when it dies.

**First, on the present stage, we need to establish a multipolar alliance between all the powers, all the states, all the countries and civilizations fighting for their independence.**

First, on the present stage, we need to establish a *multipolar alliance* between all the powers, all the states, all the countries and civilizations fighting for their independence. Independence and real sovereignty, geopolitical sovereignty should be obtained first and only afterwards should we speak of geopolitical rivalries. But for globalist liberals, the picture is quite opposite. They say “Russia! You are a Christian country different from Islamic Turkey. Turkey! You are a Sunni country and you, Iran is Shiite country. So, all of you should fight among yourselves. China! You are a great economic power: you can beat Russia, which is economically weak but military dangerous and so on”. They try to divide and rule.

We need to unite and to create a new paradigm of the global world order based on multipolarity and we should do that *together*. Only then can we evaluate balances, interests and eventually certain disagreements. I think we could easily agree on cooperation instead of rivalry.

Yes, we have some different and sometimes contradictory interests and geostrategic goals, but we could always find a kind of solution when there is no direct involvement of Western liberal hegemony. We could somehow manage these contradictions.

For example, Russian and Turkish military troops are patrolling together in the North-Eastern part of Syria. That doesn't prevent us from having some disagreements on the issue of Libya or Idlib, but nevertheless we are overcoming these local problems. So, we could repeat that approach in many situations. But when there is a third power, US or globalists, they immediately create new points of conflicts. With them all conflicts seem to be inevitable, but without them we almost always find solutions. I think that sometimes having divergent goals does not cancel the necessity to create a geopolitical alliance

between Russia, Turkey, Iran and China in order to promote a multipolar world order. Only after could we concentrate on solving our secondary problems. Not before.



*Soldiers take part in the joint patrol of Turkish and Russian troops in Idlib. (Mustafa Kayal Xinhua)*

### Russian-China Alliance for A Multipolar World Order

**Fikret Akfırat:** *What is the role of Russia, Turkey, Iran, and China in building a multipolar world order, taken individually as well as in terms of their relationships among themselves?*

**Alexander Dugin:** Today we see that outside of the Western world: we already have two alternatives, almost fully formed poles, not yet totally complete, not yet totally perfect but already something very concrete. I mean China and Russia.

Economically speaking, China is already a pole; in strategic terms, it is growing at a very high speed and I think it will soon become real and a totally independent pole in all senses.

We also have Russia, which is economically weak in relative terms, but is rich natural resources. The decisive argument is its huge nuclear military power. Russia is almost a pole.

We already have more than two poles, including the West, obviously: the USA and NATO States. China is almost a perfect one and Russia is another, very powerful both militarily and geopolitically. There is also the West.

We see at the same time that the Western pole, which was recently unique and most powerful, now is in a very deep crisis. It is still greater and more powerful than China and Russia, but not more powerful than the Russian and Chinese poles taken together.

The US is much more powerful than China or Russia separately, but summing up the powers of Russia and China, the equation is somehow different. That creates a global situation where everything depends on the Russian-Chinese alliance. That is the key factor. If this alliance will manage to go on, to develop, there will very soon be full-scale multipolarity.

With the Russian-China alliance, we get a multipolar world order. This multipolar world order will provide Iran and Turkey as well as other Islamic countries with the opportunity to build an Islamic civilization. It is up to Turkey, to Iran, to Arab countries, to Pakistan, to all other Islamic societies to find the form for it. There may be different centers of powers, some united structures, or maybe various spheres such as Shiite, Sunni, Arab and so on. That will be a kind of composed pole – differentiated ideologically, religiously, psychologically and so on. But I think that Muslim society is ready for that, in spite of many divergencies and rivalries.

But without Russia and China, I think that the Islamic pole cannot be created: Islamic countries are too weak and too divergent for that. Today, there are too many contradictions that prevent the Islamic world from uniting and representing a real alternative pole to the Western one. Islamic society, Islamic civilization very badly needs Russia and China, not because of



*The national flags of China and Russia are seen on Red Square. (Xinhua, 2020)*

Christianity or a Chinese form of national communism but rather for their geopolitical power that can counterbalance the Western powers. The Russian-Chinese alliance is the key element, central to creating a multipolar world order. But I think that Islamic civilization –as well as India, Latin America and maybe Africa– should play a very important role in that.

**Now, everything starts with China and Russia as well as the Belt & Road Initiative which present themselves as a symptom of this multipolarity. I think that Islamic civilization is another symptom, whose main representatives are Iran and Turkey as well as the Arab world.**

If the current unipolarity is collapses along with the hegemonic liberal world order, other civilizations, other types of societies could find the opportunity to affirm themselves as new and independent, sovereign poles. Now, everything starts with China and Russia as well as the Belt

& Road Initiative project, which present themselves as a symptom of this multipolarity. I think that Islamic civilization is another other symptom, whose main representatives are Iran and Turkey as well as the Arab world.

I think that we are approaching the moment of the real multipolarity and that is precisely what the unipolar political liberal globalist elites do not desire. They try to find ways to avoid this necessity. Nobody among them could accept multipolarity because that would be the end for their ideological, economic, strategic, political, cultural and diplomatic domination. They will lose their dominant position in education, in culture, in technology and so on. Now, the course of history is still somehow controlled by the West, but Western elites understand more and more that the West cannot lead the world anymore. They try to transmit this mission to Artificial Intelligence. They can use the other tricks or – very probable – start new wars or promote color revolutions.

I think that life on earth is now at stake. Human nature itself is about to be replaced by some kind of post-human, post-living species. That is the real goal of the globalist world order. We need to understand it clearly and we need to resist against that threat in order to save humanity from this coming plague, because the liberal post-modern West became a kind of plague for the civilization, for all of us, for Russians, for Chinese, Iranians, Turks and for everybody else.

### Western Civilization Tries to Involve All of Humanity in This Process of Suicide

**Fikret Akfırat:** *In one of your articles, where you evaluate Samuel Huntington’s “clash of civilizations”, you argue: “If there must be a ‘clash’ of civilizations, it has to be a clash between the West and the ‘rest of the world’. And*

*Eurasianism is the political formula which suits this 'rest'." You also emphasized the need for mobilizing a united front of civilizations against globalism, which you portray as the common enemy. How do you define points of divergence between the Western civilization and the rest of the world?*

**Alexander Dugin:** First of all, we need to develop a deeper understanding of what Western civilization really is. Western civilization was born when the West cut ties with its real traditional values. *Western civilization is based on an act of castration or suicide.* The West has cut its ties with Christianity, with Greco-Roman culture.<sup>9</sup>

With the Enlightenment, the West entered a totally artificial civilization based on wrong ideas – such as progress, materialism, technology, capitalism, selfishness and atheism. That was the Enlightenment – Luciferian pride,<sup>10</sup> the war against the Heaven. That coincides with Western colonial expansion. Colonialism was a kind of projection of the same disease on the global scale. No civilization concentrated so much effort on the material aspect of life as the West. The Chinese discovered the powder long ago but used it in order to make beautiful fireworks. It was a kind of cultural and artist phenomena. When Europeans discovered the same gunpowder, they started immediately to kill each other and all other peoples. Western hegemony is based on disease so we should recognize the Western civilization of modernity as the pathology.

Modernity is the problem, not the Western Antiquity or Middle Ages. During the Middle

**Western civilization, Islamic civilization, Chinese civilization, Indian civilization and many others have long coexisted. The problem began with modernity, with the so-called era of geographical discoveries, with colonization.**

ages all civilizations were more or less the same. Western civilization, Islamic civilization, Chinese civilization, Indian civilization and many others coexisted. The problem began with modernity, with the so-called era of geographical discoveries, with colonization. The modern West started to occupy the planet, conquering all of humanity. The problem is the modern Western civilization that has created a kind of asymmetry between the Master and the Slave (as Hegel put it in his "Phenomenology of Spirit"). The Master was the modern West. All the humanity, all the Rest was considered to the Slave and the tool of total domination was precisely *material power*. That was a great catastrophe.

That Western expansion in the era of great geographical discoveries has destroyed the fragile balance between civilizations. This racist, colonial, imperialist nature of the West still exists in this century. Liberalism, an idea of universality of so-called human rights, gender equality and other stupidities are elements of a new version of the same racist, colonial, imperialist ideology. The West tries to impose its own values as something universal including when they criticize their own past.

<sup>9</sup> It refers the mixture of the ancient Greek and the Roman culture.

<sup>10</sup> Lucifer is a name, generally used for describing the Devil. Luciferianism is an atheistic philosophy of recognizing Lucifer, name of the Devil before being expelled from the paradise, as a symbol. They believe that people should make their own way by themselves and they reject to believe in god or any imaginary creature. The war against angels seems as a rebellion of Lucifer together with some angels against the god. It is believed that the angel Michael, one of four main archangels, sent rebellious angels away from the paradise and therefore Lucifer is also recognized as a fallen angel. In Islamic mythology, Lucifer is known as Iblis, Harut or Marut.

Modernity began with criticism of Europe's past and present. Post-modernity tries once more to cut the ties, this time with Modernity just like the way modernity has done with pre-modernity, with the classical medieval phase in Western history. It is not new; it is a continuation of the long-lasting suicide but Western civilization tries to involve all of humanity in this process of suicide.



*Migrants and refugees, wanted to cross into Greece are seen behind a wired fence. (Dimitri Tosidis/ Xinhua, 2020)*

This homicide, killing of the Other, transforming it into a “lesser self” is precisely what the modern liberal globalist West brings to all other peoples. But it is evident that the Rest, all non-Western civilizations, reject this pathological Western liberalism along with LGBT+ norms, the pretended optionality of the genders, this techno-centric, highly anti-humanist or post-humanist ways of developing technology and industry, this intolerant and totalitarian “cancel culture”.

All the (non-Western) Rest that has its own civilizational basin should be united against globalism. That is the logical continuation of decolonization. Decolonization is not finished; it has just started.

And now, we experience the next wave of colonization. We are colonized with Western patterns, with Western technologies, with Western values, with Western democracies, with Western market procedures, with Western education, with Western politics of so called “liberal democracy”. All that is imposed on us as something universal, but this is pure ethnocentrism.

Now, this Western civilization is in clash with all others who do not recognize themselves within Western destiny, Western history. That is the crucial moment. It is not only the manifestation of mere secondary differences between civilizations. Before the beginning of expansion of the modern West on the global scale, there were different civilizations that co-existed – more or less peacefully and harmoniously. I agree that there were some conflicts and wars and so on, but they were more or less local. The real genocidal war arrived with modernity when humans started to use technology in order to exterminate each other.

### Nihilism of Modern Western Civilization

But pacifism is illogical. To dream of a world without wars is the same as to dream of man without humanity. It is possible only in a totally inhuman society. War is very bad; we need to avoid it but war is always possible. We need to reduce its probability but not to try to destroy war as such because in order to do that, we would need to destroy humanity itself. I think that the real divergence is not so much between Western civilization and the rest of the world but between modern Western civilization and the rest of the world. That is the real divergence between two fundamental kinds of civilization. Modern Western civilization in its present globalist liberal stage is in reality an anti-Western,

completely nihilistic kind of civilization. It has destroyed its own identity and tries to destroy the identities of others in the same way.

But to fight against post-modern Western civilization, we have many allies in the West because not all Western people share the same liberal ideology, the perverted and morbid values of the global liberal elite. There are protests against these elites, the rise of populism, the growth of the revolutionary populist movement. Trump himself is the symptom of these anti-globalist tendencies growing inside of American society.

I think that we need deep analysis of the origins of modern Western civilization. Critical deconstruction of the present stage of the civilization will lead us to the clear conclusions that we need. The deconstruction in question does not mean total destruction of Western civilization, but rather reduction of its universalist pretensions to realist proportions, to natural historical limits. We need to reduce the West to its organic borders. It is just one of the many regions of humanity – nothing but a Province.

The Rest should defend and resurrect the plural identities proper to non-Western regions, to other Provinces of humanity. We should restore and develop our own traditions - Islamic traditions, Chinese traditions, Russian traditions, Christian traditions, without any regard for what the liberal human rights activists of Soros or color revolution promoters or

some Internet cancel culture activists will say. Nobody cares: their opinion can signify something only in their zones of influences – strictly inside the West.

The Western liberals are free to judge their own society; we could judge our own. The Rest should now come to the final clash. But this clash against Huntington will not be between civilizations but between a civilization that still pretends to impose its own historically and geographically limited values and foundations, principles as something universal, and the World that consists of multiple civilizations.

We should put an end to the expansion of Western liberal globalization and reduce the West to its due space. Afterwards we should begin the mission of Renaissance, reconstruction, and reformation of our destiny. And from that Renaissance we can deduce the necessary clash between reborn civilizations. They could prosper and develop based on dialogue, cooperation, and mutual recognition, without necessarily fostering conflict. There is only one real clash of civilizations that is inevitable: the clash of humanity and this aggressive, today liberal but always racist West.

**Fikret Akfırat:** *Thank you very much for your time, Dr. Dugin. Is there anything else that you would like to add?*

**Alexander Dugin:** I have nothing else to add. Thank you for your attention. 🙏

# The Global Status Quo and Future of Maritime Cooperation Under the Belt and Road Initiative



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**CHENG ENFU**

Prof.  
Chinese Academy of Social Sciences

**LI JING**

Lecturer  
Chinese Academy of Social Sciences

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*Prof. Cheng Enfu was born in 1950 in Shanghai. He is a professor at the Chinese Academy of Social Science (CASS), member of Presidium of Academic Divisions, Vice Director and Professor in Chief of Academic Committee of CASS, and Director of Institute of Economic and Social Development at CASS. He also serves as Dean of School of Economics at Shanghai University of Finance and Economics and as a professor at Shandong University. He is member of 13th National People's Congress Education, Science, Culture and Public Health Committee. He serves as editor-in-chief of international journals such as International Thoughts Review, World Political Economy Review and also Political Economics Research, Shanghai School of Economics Quarterly. At the same time, he is the Chairman of the World Association for Political Economy, the President of Chinese Association of Foreign Economic Theory, a professor emeritus at St.Petersburg University, Russia and Russian University of Economics and Law. He has many publications including more than 30 books and 600 articles in almost ten countries and gave hundreds of interviews to many countries.*

*E-mail: 65344718@vip.163.com*

*Li Jing is a post-doc at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences. She received her PhD in International Political Economy from the School of International Studies, Renmin University of China in 2017. After graduation, she worked as a lecturer in Jiangxi Normal University by 2019. Her research interest includes global governance and EU studies. In the past few years, she has published several research papers in leading academic journals of China. Her representative works include "Impact of EU's Normative Power on the G20 Process", "A Study of Sino-Russian Natural Gas Cooperation from the Perspective of Interstate Transaction Costs".*

*E-mail: lijingruc2014@163.com*

## ABSTRACT

The sudden outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic in late 2019 has severely impacted the world economy. Many countries, especially developing countries, are encountering great difficulties. Faced with a period of major changes rarely seen in a century, China has re-asserted its adherence to peaceful development, mutual benefit and win-win cooperation in this environment. China is willing to work with partners to build the “Belt and Road” into a road of cooperation to meet challenges; a road to safeguard people’s health and safety; a road to economic revival and social recovery; and a road to growth that unlocks development potential (Xinhua net, 2020). Driven by China, the “Belt and Road Initiative” (hereinafter referred to as “BRI”) is moving forward steadily. This article focuses on the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Maritime Silk Road and analyzes the future of maritime cooperation under the BRI by reviewing its basic contents, construction highlights, and challenges.

**Keywords:** Belt and Road; blue economic passage; ice silk road; maritime silk road; port construction

### The Contents and Characteristics of Maritime Cooperation under the BRI

In September and October 2013, during his visit to Central and Southeast Asian countries, Chinese President Xi Jinping raised the initiative of jointly building the Silk Road Economic Belt and the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Maritime Silk Road, which attracted great attention from the international community. After the “Belt and Road Initiative” (BRI) was proposed, its scope has been refined and clarified gradually. In 2015, the Chinese government issued *The Vision and Actions on Jointly Building the Silk Road Economic Belt and the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Maritime Silk Road*, which suggests promoting policy coordination, connectivity of infrastructure and facilities, unimpeded trade, financial integration and people-to-people bonds, adhering to the principle of achieving shared growth through consultation and collaboration in propelling the Belt and Road’s construction.

Moreover, it states that the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Maritime Silk Road is designed to go from China’s coastal ports across the South China Sea to the Indian Ocean, extending to Europe in one

route, and from China’s coastal ports across the South China Sea to the Pacific Ocean in the other. At sea, the Initiative focuses on jointly building smooth, secure and efficient transport routes connecting major sea ports along the Belt and Road. The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor and the Bangladesh-China-India-Myanmar Economic Corridor are closely related to the BRI, and therefore require closer cooperation and greater progress (Xinhua net, 2015a). On this basis, the openness of China’s economy will be improved in an all-round way.

In order to further deepen maritime cooperation with countries along the Road, in 2017, the Chinese government issued *The Vision for Maritime Cooperation under the Belt and Road Initiative* (hereinafter referred to as the Vision) to expound the core idea of building the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Maritime Silk Road to the international community. *The Vision* points out that China advocates for the Silk Road Spirit, i.e. “peace and cooperation, openness and inclusiveness, mutual learning and mutual benefit”, and that China adheres to certain cooperation principles: “shelving differences

and building consensus; openness, cooperation and inclusive development; market-based operation and multi-stakeholder participation; joint development and benefits sharing<sup>7</sup>. On this basis, *The Vision* proposes to focus on the construction of three blue economic passages. Supported by the coastal economic belt in China, ocean cooperation will focus on building the China-Indian Ocean-Africa-Mediterranean Sea Blue Economic Passage, by linking the China-Indochina Peninsula Economic Corridor, running westward from the South China Sea to the Indian Ocean, and connecting the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor and the Bangladesh-China-India-Myanmar Economic Corridor.

Efforts will also be made to jointly build the blue economic passage of China-Oceania-South Pacific, travelling southward from the South China Sea into the Pacific Ocean. Another blue economic passage is also envisioned leading up to Europe via the Arctic Ocean. Focusing on building a blue partnership of mutual benefit and win-win cooperation, *The Vision* points out that the cooperation focus of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Maritime Silk Road is on a path of green development, ocean-based prosperity, maritime se-

curity, innovative growth and collaborative governance together (Xinhua net, 2017a). Under the guidance of *The Vision*, China has implemented a series of cooperation projects with countries along the Maritime Road, whose overall progress has been smooth.

**The total trade volume of goods with countries along the Belt and Road now exceeds 7.8 trillion US dollars.**

Since its inception, the BRI has conceived of development from point to line and from line to surface, and has made remarkable achievements. As of the end of July 2019, China has held two Belt and Road Forums for International Cooperation. The first Belt and Road Forum was held on 14 and 15 May 2017 in Beijing with a wide attendance of 29 heads of states and governments, more than 130 countries and 70 international organizations. During these forums, China has signed 195 inter-governmental cooperation agreements with 136 countries and 30 international organizations. The range of regions involved has been extended from Asia and Europe to Africa, Latin America, the South Pacific and other regions. The total trade volume of goods with countries along the Belt and Road now exceeds 7.8 trillion US dollars (Belt and Road Portal, 2019a). From infrastructure to the improvement of people's livelihood, from trade to cultural exchanges, the BRI has greatly benefited the world and won widespread praise. The achievements of the BRI are inseparable from the characteristics of the initiative itself. Specifically, it mainly includes the following two aspects.

Firstly, the BRI is a public good that China has provided to the world in the context of profound changes at home and abroad, and it aims to promote the in-depth development of inter-



(CGTN, 2019)

national cooperation. Having been subjected to foreign aggression and poverty for more than a century, China knows full well the importance of development and stability. China hopes that its own development and that of its neighbors will complement each other, and welcomes its neighbors to board the fast train of its development so that they can share more from China's development (Xinhua net, 2015b).

**All countries willing to join the BRI, no matter big or small, strong or weak, rich or poor, are all equal builders.**

Under the guidance of this concept, the BRI has been adhering to the principle of achieving shared growth through consultation and collaboration since its inception, which makes it non-competitive and non-exclusive. All countries willing to join the BRI, no matter big or small, strong or weak, rich or poor, are all equal builders. The Belt and Road Initiative emphasizes equality, mutual benefit and win-win cooperation, instead of “dependence”, “core and periphery” or other relations that are common in traditional international cooperation, making it an innovation and development of relations between countries under the Westphalian system.

Secondly, the BRI is a concrete manifestation of the implementation of a community of a shared future for mankind. In the process of advancing the construction of the Belt and Road, China respects the diversity of countries along the Road in terms of stages of development, historical traditions, cultures and religions, customs, etc. Meanwhile, China neither imposes its own ideology and social system on others, nor engages in closed mechanisms, let alone geopolitical or military alliances. As

an open and inclusive community of interests, the BRI abandons zero-sum thinking, insists on promoting mutual benefit and win-win cooperation on the basis of multilateralism, and emphasizes the “gradual, procedural, consultative and long-term nature” of cooperation (Sun, 2020), thereby broadening the content of traditional international cooperation and realizing inclusive development. These measures coincide with the inherent requirements of a community of a shared future for mankind.

### Highlights of Maritime Cooperation under the BRI

Since 2013, the BRI has achieved remarkable progress in policy coordination, the connectivity of infrastructure and facilities, unimpeded trade, financial integration and people-to-people bonds, and a number of landmark achievements have been established. Whether it is for China itself or for the development of the world trade, maritime cooperation under the BRI is of great significance.

International shipping is the most important mode of transportation in international trade. This being said, more than two thirds of the total volume of international trade is transported by sea. Sea transportation undertakes nearly 90% of China's foreign trade cargo transportation, 95% of imported crude oil and 99% of imported iron ore (Xinhua net, 2014). Among China's exports to the Belt and Road countries, water transportation accounts for the highest share. In 2017, the export value of water transportation reached 567.93 billion U.S. dollars, accounting for 73.4% of China's export value to the Belt and Road countries (see Figure 1).

Among China's imports from the Belt and Road countries, water transportation also accounts for the highest share. In 2017 alone, the

import value of water transportation reached 384.19 billion U.S. dollars, accounting for 57.7% of China's import value from the Belt and Road countries (National Information Center, 2018) (see Figure 2).

In view of this, for maritime cooperation under the BRI, the security of maritime passage

is the key to maintaining the stable development of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Maritime Silk Road, while port facilities constitute the basis for the security of maritime passage. For this reason, this article focuses on the construction of port facilities along the Belt and Road. The highlights are listed as follows.

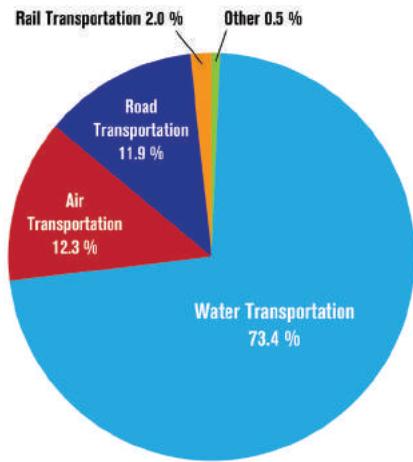


Figure 1: China's export transportation mode to Belt and Road countries in 2017.

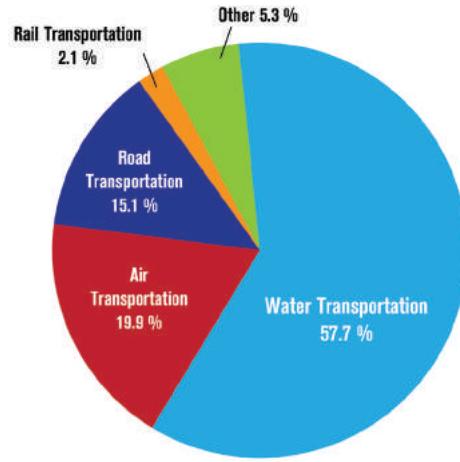


Figure 2: China's import transportation mode from Belt and Road countries in 2017.

### Gwadar Port in Pakistan

Gwadar deep water port is located in Gwadar City, Baluchistan, southwestern Pakistan, about 460 kilometers east of Karachi, and about 120 kilometers west of the Pakistan-Iran border.

It is adjacent to the Arabian Sea in the Indian Ocean in the south and is located at the mouth of the Strait of Hormuz. It is not only a bridge connecting Central, Western and South Asia and Middle East countries, but also a balance point in regional strategic transformation, a regional transit port and a logistics business center. As the third largest port in Pakistan, Gwadar Port was officially opened for navigation in November 2016. At present, routes for

regular container liners have been opened and supporting facilities in the starting area of the Gwadar Free Trade Zone completed, attracting more than 30 companies into the area (Belt and Road Portal, 2019b). Gwadar Port is an important fulcrum on the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor. The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor starts at Kashgar and ends at Gwadar Port. It has a total length of 3,000 kilometers. It is connected to the Silk Road Economic Belt in the north and the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Maritime Silk Road in the south. It is a key hub linking the north-south Silk Road, as well as a trade corridor including roads, railways, oil, gas and optical cable channels, which makes it an important part of the BRI.

**Gwadar Port is of great significance to the realization of Pakistan's long-term peace and stability, the expansion of China's energy cooperation with North African and Middle Eastern countries, and the opening of the western strategic channel.**

The opening of Gwadar Port can solve China's long-standing energy transportation dilemma. Oil from the Middle East entering Xinjiang by land via Gwadar Port will shorten the transportation distance by 85% as compared to the Malacca Strait, which is of great significance to the realization of Pakistan's long-term peace and stability, the expansion of China's energy cooperation with North African and Middle Eastern countries, and the opening of the western strategic channel (Yang & Gao, 2019).

#### *Hambantota Port in Sri Lanka*

Hambantota Port is the capital of Hambantota District in Southern Province of Sri Lanka. It faces the Bay of Bengal to the north and India across the sea to the west. The Hambantota Port is only 10 nautical miles away from the main international shipping line of the Indian Ocean. Since 2/3 of global oil transportation, 1/2 of container freight and 1/3 of the bulk cargo shipping all pass through the Indian Ocean, the port is superior in terms of geographic location. Hambantota Port is an all-round deep-water port capable of berthing very large ships. It has the potential of a world shipping center and is also an important node along the Belt and Road.

Since 2007, China has helped to build the Hambantota Port, which was severely damaged by the Indian Ocean tsunami, at the request of Sri Lanka. At the end of 2016, the first and second phases of the Hambantota Port Project

undertaken by the Chinese were completed. A total of eight 100,000-ton docks and two 10,000-ton docks were built in the two phases of the project, which are deep-water ports that can accommodate very large ships. In December 2017, the Sri Lankan government officially announced the transfer of the rights of management and operation of Hambantota Port to China Merchants Port Holdings Co., Ltd. through a joint venture. At present, preliminary work has been completed for Sri Lanka's Hambantota Port Special Economic Zone, including defining the zone's industrial functions and making conceptual plans.

Thanks to China's aid and investment, the once deserted small fishing village has now become a deep-water port with huge economic potential. The construction of Hambantota Port has improved the living standards of residents in the area, enhanced the competitiveness of Sri Lanka's ports in South Asia, and promoted the economic rise of Sri Lanka's Southern Province. Meanwhile, Hambantota port connects with China's BRI and is one of the most important transit ports in the future Indian Ocean international routes. Once its huge potential is released, it will reshape Sri Lanka's important position in the Maritime Silk Road in history.

#### *Port of Piraeus in Greece*

The port of Piraeus is located in southeastern Greece and is the largest port in Greece. It is 9 kilometers away from Athens and is one of the largest container ports in the eastern Mediterranean. Due to the Greek sovereign debt crisis, the port was once on the verge of bankruptcy. In 2008, China Ocean Shipping Group (hereinafter referred to as "COSCO SHIPPING") signed an agreement with the Greek government to obtain part of the right to operate the Port of Piraeus. In 2016, COSCO SHIPPING completed the acquisition of 67% of the Piraeus Port authority and became the operator of the entire port.

Driven by the BRI, the Port of Piraeus has become one of the fastest growing container ports in the world. The container throughput here has increased from 880,000 TEU in 2010 to 5.8 million TEU in 2019. Its ranking in global container ports has also jumped from 93<sup>rd</sup> at the beginning of China's taking over to 32<sup>nd</sup> (Qi, 2020). At present, an important transit hub has been completed at the Port of Piraeus, and Phase III port construction is to be completed.

For the China-Europe route, the Port of Piraeus is the nearest and most cost-effective replenishment and transshipment hub for container ships after crossing the Suez Canal. Containers can either be replaced by more economical medium-sized container ships in Piraeus and continue to Northwest Europe, or they can be unloaded on site and directly transferred to the hinterland of the European continent through the Balkan rail network. The rapid development of the port is vital for solving the problems which existed in China's cooperation with Central and Eastern European countries, facilitating the construction of the China-Europe shipping express, accelerating the BRI to dovetail the Western Balkan transportation network, and promoting the in-depth development of China-EU relations (Sun & Wang, 2020).

### **The Problems that Turkey Faces in the Eastern Mediterranean Are Similar to these of China in the South China Sea**

Turkey's unique position in the BRI lies in that this will serve as country a gate to Europe and Africa for China's trade operations along the BRI.

Around 1,000 Chinese companies are currently operating in Turkey. They mainly carry their operations in the logistics, electronics, energy, tourism, finance and real estate sectors and are expanding their businesses. They have increased their operations in Turkey after the launching of the BRI.

In order to increase connectivity on the BRI, the Turkish and Chinese transport ministries signed an agreement during the Belt and Road Initiative Summit held in Beijing in 2017, which involves an international passenger and cargo transport company. The agreement is expected to unlock international road transport channels between China and Europe, with Turkey serving as the middle corridor of the route. The agreement, which symbolizes China's willingness to render the BRI integrated into Turkey's development strategy, will also help strengthen the exchange between China and Turkey, promoting the facilitation of international transportation among the countries located on the Silk Road.

Turkey has developed the "Blue Homeland" concept in order to highlight its sovereign rights in the seas surrounding the country on three sides. The problems that Turkey has been facing in the Eastern Mediterranean are similar to these of China in the South China Sea. Due to the involvement of foreign countries outside the region, the problems already existing –which could have been solved through mutual negotiation– have been exacerbated so as to generate military conflict.

**Turkey's active participation in the Maritime Silk Road will greatly contribute to the peaceful solution of the problems in the Eastern Mediterranean. It will also encourage the participation of several countries from North Africa and West Asia.**

Turkey's active participation in the Maritime Silk Road will greatly contribute to the peaceful solution of the problems in the Eastern Mediterranean. It will also encourage the participation of several countries from North Africa and West Asia. This will make it possible for the Mediterranean to turn into a sea of peace and prosperity.



*Belt and Road Forum, 14.05.2017. (TCBB)*

### Challenges in Maritime Cooperation under the BRI

Maritime Cooperation under the BRI mainly concerns cooperation in the construction of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Maritime Silk Road. The 21<sup>st</sup> Century Maritime Silk Road is composed of three blue economic passages. The countries along each economic passage have different levels of socio-economic development and attitudes towards the BRI. Therefore, to better promote maritime cooperation under the BRI, it is necessary to consider the specific challenges in each economic passage.

#### *China-Indian Ocean-Africa-Mediterranean Blue Economic Passage*

This Passage is broad in scope, involving many countries in Asia, Europe and Africa. Being the most complex and most important of the three economic passages, it also faces the most severe challenges. Closely related to the Indo-China Peninsula, China-Pakistan Economic Corridor

and the Bangladesh-China-India-Myanmar Economic Corridor, this passage is of highly strategic international political importance and most countries along the passage are developing countries. Therefore, it is crucial to properly handle the relations between all parties involved.

*Firstly, there exists fierce strategic competition between China, the United States and other countries in this region.* In November 2017, U.S. President Donald Trump proposed the “Free and Open Indian-Pacific Ocean Strategy” at the APEC forum held in Vietnam (hereinafter referred to as the “Indo-Pacific Strategy”), and then restarted the four-party security dialogue among the United States, Japan, Australia and India. In June 2019, the US Department of Defense released the latest version of the *Indo-Pacific Strategy Report*. The report states that the Indo-Pacific region is the most important battlefield for the United States in the future, and that this region is vital in maintaining the stability, security, and prosperity of the United States. The

United States regards Japan, Australia and India as its allies in advancing Indo-pacific strategic activities. In terms of policies towards China, the report points out that China is a “revisionist” force that will undermine the autonomy of countries in the Indo-Pacific region and challenge the dominance of the United States.

**The “Indo-Pacific Strategy” will interfere with the implementation of China’s BRI, worsen China’s surrounding environment, and increase the resistance to China’s good-neighborhood diplomacy.**

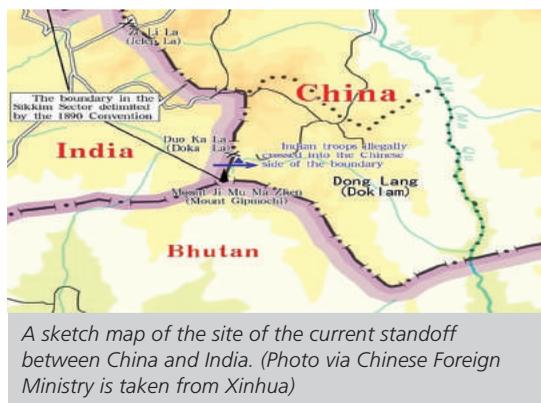
As a contemporary neo-imperialist country, the United States’ “Indo-Pacific Strategy” has brought great challenges to the peaceful development of China and the region. On the one hand, the implementation of this strategy will not only trigger a strategic conflict between the United States and China, but will also further aggravate the already complex situation in the South China Sea and endanger China’s legitimate demands for the protection of maritime rights and interests. Since the Trump administration took office, he has continuously put pressure on China over the issue of “free navigation” in the South China Sea, and has frequently sent aircraft carriers to exercise in Chinese waters. Since the end of June 2020, the U.S. military has held three dual-carrier exercises in Chinese waters, and even sent strategic bombers to participate in the exercises. In addition, the US military has also dispatched coastal warships to carry out investigation missions near China.

These actions are undoubtedly red flags to the peace of China and the South China Sea. At present, the issue of the South China Sea has become the starting point for the United States to

contain China’s further expansion of economic, political, diplomatic, and military power (Wu & Colomberg, 2019). On the other hand, the “Indo-Pacific Strategy” will interfere with the implementation of China’s BRI, worsen China’s surrounding environment, and increase the resistance to China’s good-neighborhood diplomacy (Wei, 2020). In the eyes of many biased American politicians and scholars, the BRI is essentially a geo-strategic arrangement aimed at expanding the scope of China’s geopolitical and geo-economic influence. For this reason, part of the United States’ consideration when formulating the “Indo-Pacific Strategy” is to restrain and offset China’s growing influence in the region. This is particularly reflected in the fact that the United States clearly intends to strengthen the construction of energy infrastructure in the Indo-Pacific region, especially in the southeast Asian countries in this strategy.

In addition to implementing the “Indo-Pacific Strategy”, the United States has also taken advantage of its dominant position in the field of international power discourse to continuously smear China and damage China’s international image. Since the outbreak of COVID-19, politicians represented by US President Donald Trump and Secretary of State Mike Pompeo have disregarded facts and spared no efforts to demonize China on various occasions and even stigmatize the novel coronavirus as “China virus” (In fact, the United States has not accounted for the doubts from the international community that the novel coronavirus originated in the US). As a result, a new Sinophobic wave has been triggered in the international community, leaving a negative impact on the advancement of the BRI.

*Secondly, there exist disputes over territory, islands and maritime rights and interests among China and some countries along the passage.*



As a typical land-sea country, China has 14 land neighbors and 7 maritime neighbors. Due to historical reasons and competition over natural resources, there exist disputes over territory and maritime rights and interests among China and some neighboring countries, which directly affects the smooth operation of the Belt and Road maritime economic passage. On the one hand, border disputes still exist between China and India. In recent years, India has been plotting against Chinese territory. On June 18, 2017, a military confrontation between China and India took place in the Donglang area. In June 2020, serious incidents occurred in the Galwan River Valley on the western section of the China-India border. These incidents provoked by India have greatly damaged the normal development of China-India relations, and directly affected the construction of the Bangladesh-China-India-Myanmar Economic Corridor.

On the other hand, there exist disputes among China, Vietnam, the Philippines, Malaysia and other countries in the South China Sea. The frequent intervention of the United States, Japan, the European Union and other extraterritorial forces has further exacerbated the tension in the region. In addition, there still exist disputes over affiliated islands among China, Japan and South Korea. Although China has always advocated

for “pursuing joint development while shelving disputes”, the relevant issues have not been fundamentally and effectively resolved. Once China and other countries involved fall into conflict due to certain emergencies, cooperation under the BRI will be affected or even interrupted.

*Thirdly, most countries along the passage are relatively poor and their infrastructure is backward.* Some countries (such as Myanmar, Yemen, etc.) have turbulent domestic situations and unstable regimes. Moreover, there are serious contradictions and conflicts among some countries (such as India and Pakistan, Middle East and Mediterranean countries, etc.). In addition, this maritime passage passes through several regions in the world where piracy and maritime terrorism are the most rampant - South Asia, West Asia, and East Africa. The safety of maritime navigation is at great risk (Li & Xue, 2015).

In brief, the China-Indian Ocean-Africa-Mediterranean Blue Economic Passage has very important commercial value. However, there are severe traditional and non-traditional security challenges along this passage, which need to be addressed by joint efforts of countries along the passage.

#### *China-Oceania-South Pacific Blue Economic Passage*

At present, the South Pacific region is still one of the regions in the world populated by least developed countries. Excluding Australia and New Zealand, there are 27 countries and regions in the South Pacific region. Since the 1970s, 14 countries have achieved independence, many of which are pocket countries. The total land area of this region is only more than 550,000 square kilometers, and its population accounts for only 0.5% of the world's total population. However, it has 7.25% of the votes in the

United Nations General Assembly. Therefore, it is the object of cooperation for major countries in the world (Wang & Wang, 2015). The South Pacific island countries have more than 30 million square kilometers of sea area and more than 10,000 islands. This region is extremely rich in minerals, oil, gas, fishery and other resources. Located at the intersection of traffic routes in the Pacific, the geo-strategic position of this region is vital (Cheng, 2020a). As an important part of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Maritime Silk Road, this maritime economic passage currently encounters the following challenges:

Firstly, except for Australia and New Zealand, which are developed countries, most of the countries in this region are small and micro island countries. Dominated by marine economy, these underdeveloped countries are in severe lack of infrastructure and are backward in terms of the level of economic development (Jin, 2019). The traditional trading partners of the region are Australia, the United States, New Zealand and Japan, while trade with China is relatively rare and small.

Secondly, from a historical point of view, the South Pacific region has always been regarded as being located within the sphere of influence of countries such as the United States and Australia, and its perception of China has been greatly influenced by the media of the United States, Australia and other countries. According to mainstream think tanks of the United States, China's strategic intention to promote the BRI in South Pacific island countries mainly includes "optimizing the geo-strategic situation, acquiring natural resources, enhancing China's political and diplomatic influence, and compressing Taiwan's 'diplomatic' space" (Cheng, 2020a). Some Australian media frequently and unreasonably hype China's "malicious interference" with Pacific island countries, and wantonly exaggerate

that "China's rising influence in the South Pacific region will undermine regional stability". Under the influence of "China threat theory" spread by the United States, Australia and other countries, the South Pacific island countries are full of misgivings about China's proactive action, and have a low level of political mutual trust with China.

Thirdly, with the improvement of China's comprehensive national strength and the unfolding of the BRI, the United States has adjusted its policy in the Asia-Pacific region and strengthened its assistance to Pacific island countries, thereby enhancing the strategic position and value of Pacific island countries in US foreign policy. From the perspective of the US, assistance to Pacific island countries is not only a tool for safeguarding its regional security interests and advancing its foreign policy, but also a tool for conducting a great power game with China at important strategic points and balancing the influence of the BRI (Cheng, 2020b; Wu, 2020). The confrontational attitude of the United States has become an important factor that cannot be ignored in deepening the BRI.

#### *The Arctic Blue Economic Passage*

Global warming in the past thirty or so years has accelerated the rising of temperature and the decreasing of summer sea ice in the Arctic region, which has continuously improved the value of the Arctic in terms of strategy, safety, economy, scientific research, environmental protection, navigation and resource exploitation. Against this backdrop, on July 4, 2017, when Chinese President Xi Jinping met with Russian Prime Minister Medvedev in Moscow, he proposed for the first time that cooperation on the Arctic passage should be carried out to jointly build the "Ice Silk Road" (Xinhua net, 2017b).



*President of the People's Republic of China Xi Jinping meets with President of Russia Vladimir Putin. (Official Internet Resources of the President of Russia)*

“Ice” is the Arctic Ocean, and the “Ice Silk Road” refers to the Arctic waterway that traverses the Arctic Circle and connects the three major economic centers of North America, Asia and Europe. It mainly includes the Northeast Passage passing through Russian waters, the Northwest Passage passing through Canadian waters, and the Central Passage across the central waters of the Arctic Ocean. At present, the ice floes in the Northeast passage are decreasing at the fastest speed, offering opportunities for large-scale commercial navigation. As a result, the Northeast passage has become the main support of the “Ice Silk Road”.

In January 2018, the Chinese government released the white paper *China's Arctic Policy*, which clearly defined the relationship between China and the Arctic. Geographically, China is a “Near-Arctic State”, one of the continental states that are closest to the Arctic Circle. China is an important stakeholder in Arctic affairs. On the basis of the principles of “respect, cooperation, win-win result and sustainability”, China, as a responsible major country, is ready to cooperate with all relevant parties to seize the historic opportunity in the development of the Arctic, to address the challenges brought by the changes in the region, to jointly understand, protect, develop and participate in the governance of the

Arctic, and to advance Arctic-related cooperation under the BRI, so as to build a community with a shared future for mankind and contribute to peace, stability and sustainable development in the Arctic (The State Council Information Office of the People's Republic of China, 2018). As a result, the construction of the “Ice Silk Road” has been shifted from concept to action. As of January 2020, China has reached 6 cooperation projects with countries along the “Ice Silk Road” (Zhoushan Port, 2020).

The opportunities brought by the opening of the “Ice Silk Road” are obvious. On the one hand, Arctic routes can save a lot of economic costs. It is estimated that the “Ice Silk Road” will shorten the route from ports north of Shanghai to ports in Western Europe, the North Sea and the Baltic Sea by 25%-55%, saving between 53.3 billion and 127.4 billion US dollars in international trade and shipping costs every year. Furthermore, the passage can avoid the invasion of pirates and international emergencies to a greater extent. On the other hand, as the Arctic region and its ocean floor continental shelf abound with oil, natural gas, forest, fishery resources and a large number of mineral resources, the opening of the Arctic route will provide a safe and stable energy channel for China, and affect the economic layout of China's coastal areas.

In the meantime, it should be noted that the “Ice Silk Road” is also facing severe difficulties and challenges. On the one hand, the areas along the “Ice Silk Road” are characterized by high latitude, harsh natural environment, great difficulty in development which require strong technical support and high cost. On the other hand, with the change of Arctic climate conditions, countries around the Arctic have participated in the upsurge of Arctic development. As a non-Arctic country, China's participation in

Arctic affairs in accordance with international law will inevitably arouse unfounded suspicion and opposition from the United States, Canada and other countries.

### Countermeasures and Future for Maritime Cooperation under the BRI

The BRI is in line with the general trend of economic globalization and has broad prospects for development. In the process of advancing the construction of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Maritime Silk Road, the risks should be faced squarely, and possible countermeasures should be explored and discussed.

*Properly handle the relations with the United States and neighboring countries*

As the leading power in the world, the major concern of US foreign policy is the maintenance of hegemony. At present, China has become the world's second largest economy, the world's largest exporter and second largest importer. As the most important engine of global economic development, China's growing strength has caused fear and panic in the United States as a neo-imperialist country. After taking office as President, Donald Trump has constantly provoked trade frictions between China and the United States under the guidance of the "America First" slogan. In 2017, the *National Security Strategy Report of the United States* further defined China as a "rival power". Sino-US relations have changed from "coexistence of cooperation and competition" to "intensified strategic competition" (Gong, 2020). Since then, the United States has continuously strengthened political sanctions against China by using human rights and COVID-19 as excuses, intensified its control of high-tech exports to China, mobilized allies to illegally suppress Huawei's legitimate opera-

tions, frequently threatened the use of financial sanctions, and strengthened capital decoupling. The Sino-US relationship has gradually evolved into the most unstable and unpredictable relationship among major powers. At present, the United States has become a country that suffers the the worst consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic in the world, and 2020 coincides with the year of the US presidential election. Under the economic downturn at home and abroad, the confrontation between China and the US has further intensified. In this context, the promotion of the BRI requires considering more of the latest developments in Sino-US relations, estimating possible changes in advance, and preparing for the worst scenario.

As an important ally of the United States, Japan's attitude towards the BRI has been greatly influenced by the United States, and it has undergone a change from resistance and wait-and-see to active participation (Zhang & Hu, 2019). Immediately after the BRI was raised, Japan took a cautious and wait-and-see attitude towards China's initiative on account of historical issues, territorial disputes and geopolitical competition between China and Japan. Later, due to the changes in US foreign policy and the consideration of Japan's own interests, the Japanese government has obviously changed its attitude towards the BRI since 2017 and began to take measures to participate in it. It should be noted that while Japan has expressed its willingness to cooperate with China's BRI, it has not weakened its strength in using policy means to "multi-angle hedging". Instead of smooth sailing, cooperation between China and Japan will be full of twists and turns. Under such circumstances, it is even more necessary to take advantage of various means and policies flexibly to actively promote the development of Sino-Japan cooperation under the BRI for a better direction.

As China's comprehensive strategic partner, Russia welcomes the BRI. The joint construction of the "Ice Silk Road" by China and Russia can greatly promote the development of Russia's Arctic region, as well as the Russian economy. Given that conditions in the Arctic region are complex and have a great impact on the global ecosystem, special attention should be paid to protecting the ecological environment of the Arctic region in the process of Sino-Russian cooperation.

*Strengthen the construction of "the five-connectivity program" according to the specific conditions of countries along the Road*

Generally speaking, most of the countries along the three blue economic passages are economically backward and lack infrastructure. In the process of promoting the BRI, specific policies must be implemented according to the different characteristics of each country, and a "one size fits all" plan must not be blindly adopted, let alone acting with undue haste. It is necessary to fully respect the characteristics of each country's history, culture, religion, etc., and implement policies according to national and sea conditions. For instance, when advancing the construction of the China-Oceania-South Pacific Blue Economic Passage, we must fully consider the most urgent needs of the countries in the South Pacific region. Due to global warming and other reasons, global sea levels continue to rise, and many island countries in the South Pacific are facing the danger of being submerged by the Pacific Ocean, among which, Tuvalu has been called "sunken island country". It is reported that according to the current sinking rate, 60% of Tuvalu's land will be completely sunk into the ocean in less than 50 years. In cooperation with countries in the South Pacific region, we should first consider their environmental protection demands and help them better cope with the challenges of global warm-

ing, instead of blindly emphasizing the promotion of infrastructure construction.

*In the process of promoting cooperation under the BRI, attention must be paid to strengthening the construction of China's international discursive power*

International discursive power does not only refer to the right of a country to express its own views and opinions on international affairs, but also concerns the power of a country's external discursive system in the international arena. In the process of proposing, advancing and implementing the BRI, China's acts of goodwill have been misreported and even maliciously speculated by many Western media. One of the important reasons for this phenomenon is that China does not possess international discursive power. In order to fundamentally solve this problem, we should take the initiative to dovetail media at home and abroad, and promptly show the world what China has done in the areas along the Belt and Road in the process of implementing the BRI. Moreover, we should invite people in the areas along the Road to tell their stories and friendship with the Silk Road, so as to make people across the world know and understand the BRI and eliminate all kinds of misunderstandings about the BRI. In conveying China's true position and voice, we should also promptly refute the slander and attacks from media and politicians with evil purpose. Only by proactively exposing and actively opposing the fallacies and evil deeds of the neo-imperialist United States and its anti-China allies, can we fundamentally get rid of the passive situation of being misunderstood and scolded. Only by eliminating the fanatical academic worship of American social sciences, can we fundamentally establish China's due position of international discursive power based on academic studies. ☁

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# Asia's Gate to Europe: The North Aegean Port\*



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**ERSEL ZAFER ORAL**

Dr.  
Margen Marine and Land Research  
Training Consultancy Services

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*Dr. Oral graduated from Yıldız Teknik University in 1984. He received his master's degree from the Institute of Marine Sciences and Technology at Dokuz Eylül University (DEU) in 1988 and earned his PhD in the same department in 1999. When he was a PhD student, he took courses on port and harbour engineering at the Port and Harbour Research Institute in Japan. He worked at the DEU Institute of Marine Sciences and Technology, Republic of Turkey Ministry of Energy and Natural Resources, Republic of Turkey Ministry of Transportation, General Directorate of Railways Harbors and Airports Construction. He also served as a lecturer at the DEU Maritime Faculty between 2001 and 2012. He established Margen Land and Sea Research, Training and Consulting Services and he still serves as a consultant on port and harbour engineering and management. His publications include 42 international and 47 national scientific studies and he has taken part in hundreds of project. He currently serves as a consultant at TURKLİM (Port Operators Association of Turkey) and Chamber of Shipping İzmir Branch Office.*

*E-mail: [ersel.oral@margenproje.com](mailto:ersel.oral@margenproje.com)*

## ABSTRACT

The North Aegean Port has been on the agenda for more than 30 years, however; it has not come to life until today. With the spread of globalization, the increasing importance of transit loads and transit ports has brought the North Aegean Port, which is planned to serve the transit load in the region, into the agenda again. Aegean Region is one of the most important agricultural, tourism, mining and industrial regions in Turkey. The North Aegean (Çandarlı) Port has been planned to serve transshipment loads in order to meet increasing cargo volume in the long term. The North Aegean Port is one of the most favourable locations for cargo to be transferred to the Eastern and Middle Mediterranean, Aegean and Black Sea countries. Thanks to its geographical location, the port can reach more than thirty countries with very short transfer times. With this feature, it is a candidate to be one of the important transfer centers for the Belt and Road Project. The North Aegean Port is a project that can activate the great potential of the Aegean Region in foreign trade. With this feature, it is an important opportunity both for potential investors and those who want to expand their trade with the countries that are under the influence of the North Aegean Port. The North Aegean Port is more than just a transfer port for goods from China and other Far East countries. In a similar vein, the North Aegean Port has the potential and privilege to become a strategic port where goods can be both produced and shipped as a result of cooperative efforts made in the Aegean Region and other regions in line with the basic principles and targets of BRI.

**Keywords:** Aegean Sea; Belt and Road Initiative; China; Izmir; North Aegean Port

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THE ANATOLIAN PENINSULA HAS HOSTED many different civilizations with its history of more than ten thousand years from the Paleolithic period to the present. In this long period, it has experienced very bright periods as well as invasions, wars, epidemics, and earthquakes. Old cities were destroyed and new ones were re-born. However, over the course of time, it has always had an important place on trade routes due to its geographical location between Asia and Europe. The Aegean coast, where the Asian continent ends, has many ancient port cities.

With its location consisting of many ports such as the North Aegean Port, İzmir City, one of the most ancient residential areas in Anatolia, has never lost its edge within its history exceeding 8,000 years. Probably, thanks to its feature, only İzmir City has come as a metropolitan city

until today among cities such as Ephesus, Bergamo, Teos, Miletus, Aspendos which are on the list of UNESCO World Heritage Sites.

Although the North Aegean Port has been on the agenda for more than 30 years, it has not come to life until today. Delay and failure of commissioning of the North Aegean Port investment, which started at a time when the private sector port business was just beginning to develop, caused many medium-sized ports to be put into service. This development, which disrupts the supply-demand balance in the region, started a debate on the necessity of the North Aegean Port. With the spread of globalization, the increasing importance of transit loads and transit ports has brought the North Aegean Port, which is planned to serve the transit load in the region, into the agenda again.

### Turkey's Port Management Sector

Turkey has 197 coastal resorts (such as piers, moorings, dolfen, platforms etc included). 89 of these coastal facilities corresponding to 45% are in the Marmara Region, 45 corresponding to 23% in the Mediterranean Region, 35 corresponding to 18% in the Black Sea Region and 28 corresponding to 14% are in the Aegean Region (Oral, 2019).

In 2019, 484.1 million tonnes of cargo were handled in total, which equals 224.8 million tons loading and 259.2 million tons unloading in Turkey's ports. On a ton basis, 53.6% of the cargo handled, including all cargo types (liquid bulk cargo, container, etc.) and regimes (transit, cabotage, etc.), is unloading and 46.4% is loading. In the last decade, cargo handled increased by an annual average of 3.3% in Turkey's ports (Türklım, 2020).

32% of cargo handled in Turkish ports is liquid bulk cargo, 31% is dry bulk cargo, 25%

is container and 11% is general cargo. Since 2019, the ratio of RO-RO loads on a ton basis remained only 1% (Figure 1) (Türklım, 2020).

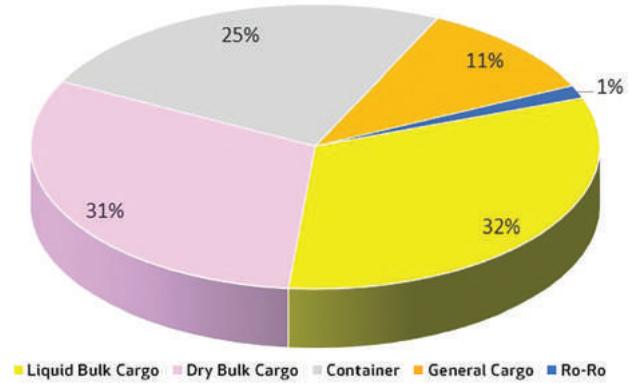


Figure 1. Load distribution at ports in Turkey.

Since the 1980's, container transportation as a significant part of sea business has shown a rapid development in Turkey. Today, there are 28 ports which serve container ships in Turkey. A significant portion of these ports serve other cargoes besides container loads (Figure 2).

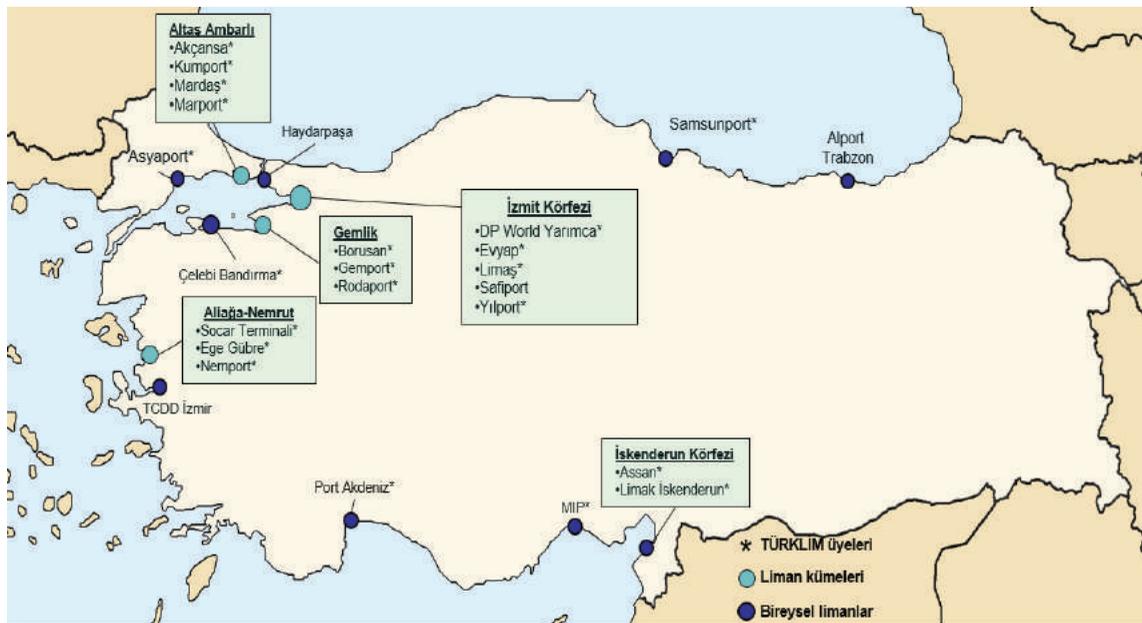


Figure 2. Container handling ports in Turkey (Türklım, 2020).

In addition, there are also some ports that do not provide container services, although container ships are included in the operating permits. Ports serving container loads are concentrated in the Marmara Region. There are 15 ports in total serving container loads in the Marmara Region. Ambarlı, İzmit Gulf and Gemlik, located in the Marmara Region, are important port centers serving container freight and ships.

In 2019, the total number of containers handled at ports in Turkey was 11,750,660 TEU (Twenty-foot Equivalent Unit). Foreign trade and cabotage container represent 8.5 million TEU, and transit containers 3.1 million TEU (Figure 3).



Figure 3. Container handling port development in Turkey (TEU) (Türklım, 2020).

Container handling at ports in Turkey increased by 6.2% in total, foreign trade and cabotage container by 5.9%, and transit container by 6.9% compared to the previous year.

The Marmara Region ranks first with 60.5% in terms of the volume of containers handled in Turkish ports. Following the Marmara Region respectively; Mediterranean Region ports follow with 23.2% and Aegean Region ports with 14.7%. The share of Black Sea Region ports in total container handling volume is 1.6% (Figure 4).

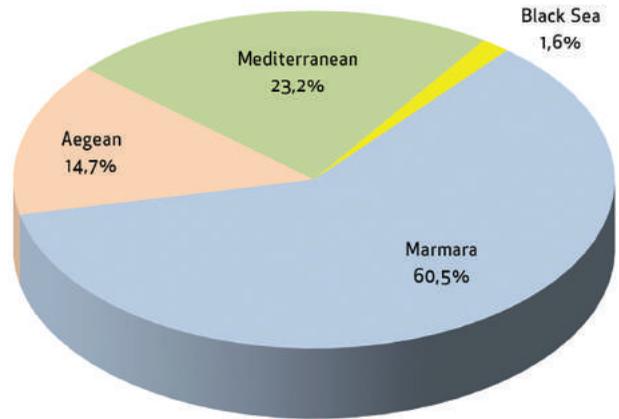


Figure 4. Container handling rates by regions (Türklım, 2020).

Mersin International Port, where 15.6% of the cargo in Turkey is handled, maintains its first place by handling 1.9 million TEU. Marport Port ranked second with 1.7 million TEU and Asiaport Port third with 1.4 million TEU (Table 1).

Ranking	Ports	2017	2018	2019
1	MIP	1,591,983	1,722,711	1,939,029
2	MARPORT	1,711,357	1,573,600	1,679,340
3	ASYA PORT	1,002,133	1,117,749	1,353,409
4	KUMPORT	1,063,246	1,258,294	1,281,850

Table 1. Container ports handled over a million TEU in Turkey (Türklım, 2020).

The Marmara Region has become an important transfer center especially for Black Sea cargoes. 83.9% of the transshipment cargo handled in Turkey goes through the Marmara Region ports. Since 2019, Asyaport has handled over one million TEU transit cargo. With a share of 15.9%, the Eastern Mediterranean Region, where MIP Mersin and LİMAK İskenderun Ports are located, is in the second place.

## Aegean Region Ports Cargo Volume

In terms of value, more than 60% of Turkish foreign trade is carried by sea routes and in terms of tonness, it is more than 80%. The Aegean Region ranks second after the Marmara Region in terms of foreign trade volume on the basis of foreign currency. In 2019, 83.9 million tons of cargo were handled at 22 ports in the Aegean Region. 43.3% of the cargo handled on a ton basis is liquid bulk cargo, 37.9% is general cargo (+ dry bulk cargo) and 18.6% is container cargo (Türklım, 2020).

The ratio of wheeled loads is only 2%. 1.7 million of 7.7 million TEU (approximately 14.7%) handled in Turkey's ports are handled in the Aegean Region ports (Figure 5) (MTI, 2020).

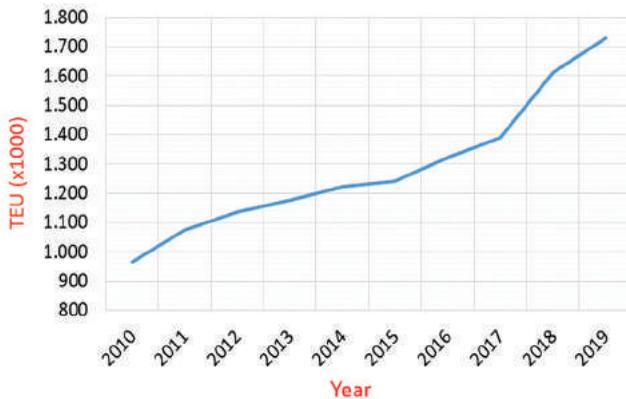


Figure 5. Container handling in Aegean Region ports.

There are 4 ports (TCDD Izmir Port, Nemport Port, Ege Gübre Port and Socar Container Terminal) serving container ships in the Aegean Region. Among the ports in the Aegean Region, TCDD Izmir Port is the largest in terms of both cargo volume and service diversity. In 2019, 605 thousand TEU containers were handled at TCDD Izmir Port (Türklım, 2020). TCDD Izmir Port, previously operated publicly is now at the privatization stage.

## Aegean Region Port Investments

Aegean Region is one of the most important agricultural, tourism, mining and industrial regions in Turkey. Therefore, it has a great potential for foreign trade. The Aegean Region can make very little use of current potential, however; it plays an important role in development of Turkey thanks to its suitable geography, agricultural lands, wide agricultural product pattern, rich underground resources and rapidly growing industry. The region needs ports that provide a strong infrastructure of foreign trade in order to be able to actualize its advantages in the most efficient way for the benefit of the country, to increase Turkey's exports and to transfer more resources to the country's economy.

**Increasing port capacity in the region with new investments will expand trade volume, increase employment and develop a qualified labor force. Depending on the increase in transportation facilities and opportunities, it will be easier to evaluate agricultural and commercial products.**

Increasing port capacity in the region with new investments will expand trade volume, increase employment and develop a qualified labor force. Depending on the increase in transportation facilities and opportunities, it will be easier to evaluate agricultural and commercial products. New port investments are soon hoped to provide economic and social benefits, not only at the regional but also at the national level.

TCDD Izmir Port, which is the largest port of the Aegean Region in terms of both capacity and handling volume, has been serving the re-

gional industry since 1959. In order to meet the increasing freight volume in parallel with Turkey's economic development, the port was expanded with work carried out starting in 1976. At the end of the 2000s, the port exceeded its theoretical capacity and reached the point of congestion and started having difficulties in responding to freight traffic in the region. In order to meet the increasing load demand in the Aegean Region, the Ministry of Transport and the General Directorate of DLH Construction developed the "Izmir Port Dredging and Extension Project" as a short- and medium-term solution and the "North Aegean Port Project" as a long-term solution.



North Aegean (Çandarlı) Port.  
(Sagisman, North Aegean Port website)

TCDD İzmir Alsancak Port has a 3,650 m long dock, ranging from 10 to 13 m, and a port area of 650,000 m<sup>2</sup>. The port can serve passenger ships as well as general cargo, container, dry cargo and liquid cargo ships (Oral, 2011a).

In 2009, TCDD Izmir Port Operation Plan was prepared. In this study, the road map for the development of the port until 2035 was determined (Oral, 2011b). In this context, necessary infrastructure investments (dredging need, construction of new berthing areas, strengthening of existing docks), superstructure investments and equipment investments are planned. In addition, the detailed feasibility of the investments in question has been prepared and the operation

plan and feasibility study have been approved by the relevant institutions and entered into force.

The North Aegean (Çandarlı) Port has been planned to serve transshipment loads in order to meet increasing cargo volume in the long term. The North Aegean Port Project site, where studies are carried out by the General Directorate of Infrastructure Investments of the Ministry of Transport and Infrastructure, is located within the borders of Zeytindağ Municipality of Bergama District. Located to the east of the Çandarlı Gulf, which is 20 km long and 25 km wide, the region is 80 km from İzmir by highway and 55 nautical miles by sea.

More than thirty years have passed since the location of the North Aegean Port was selected. However, it has never dropped from the country's agenda over this period. Delayed investment in the North Aegean Port caused new container terminals to be put into service in the region. In this context, Ege Gübre Port and Nemport Port were put into service in Aliğa District of İzmir Province in 2009 and Socar Container Terminal (operated by APM Terminalleri Liman İşletmeciliği A.Ş. until 2018) in 2016. The theoretical container handling capacity of the Aegean Region has reached 2.6 million TEU with the ports put into service (Oral, 2019: 89).

### North Aegean (Çandarlı) Port

When the North Aegean Port's construction is finished, which is expected to be tendered with the Build-Operate-Transfer model, will have 2,000 meters of dock and 1 million m<sup>2</sup> of backfield. The breakwater construction of the port, which started in 2011, was completed in 2014. The 1,500-meter-long breakwater, which was built with a cost of 294 million Turkish Liras, was completely covered by the state budget (Çandarlı North Aegean Port website, n.d.).



*A ship, arrived in Çandarlı Port crossing Strait of Gibraltar and the Suez Canal will only cover 6,500 miles. (Sagisman, North Aegean Port website)*

**The most important feature of the North Aegean Port is its geographical location between the Eastern Mediterranean and the Black Sea. Thanks to this feature, it has an extremely convenient position for transfer loads.**

The North Aegean Çandarlı Port is planned to be built in two phases. In the first phase, with a 1000 m quay line investment, approximate capacity will be 2 million TEU. It is planned to reach 2,000 m quay line and 4,000,000 TEU capacity by the target year 2035 (Çandarlı Port CFCU, 2009). The total cost of investment in the project (for phase one) is 917 million Euros. The North Aegean Port project was put out to tender in November 2013, but investors were not interested in the tender because of uncertainties in the tender specifications.

The most important feature of the North Aegean Port is its geographical location between

the Eastern Mediterranean and the Black Sea. Thanks to this feature, it has an extremely convenient position for transfer loads. The biggest advantage of container transportation is that the cargo is transferred to its recipient at suitable ports. The North Aegean Port is one of the most favourable locations for cargo to be transferred to the Eastern and Middle Mediterranean, Aegean and Black Sea countries. Thanks to its geographical location, the port can reach more than thirty countries with very short transfer times. With this feature, it is a candidate to be one of the important transfer centers for the Belt and Road Project.

Another distinctive feature of the North Aegean Port is its large hinterland. In this way, it offers a suitable site for the development of many sectors such as chemical, automotive, electrical and electronics. The backyard of the port is untouched and not under the pressure of urbanization. In the back field of the port, there is an area, more than 30 million m<sup>2</sup>, for industrial investment, mainly allocated to various industrial branches (Chemport, 2018).

The first condition for a port to be able to operate effectively and efficiently is to have adequate transportation facilities in the region. The North Aegean Port has an excellent road connection. Thanks to the 1915 Çanakkale Bridge, which is under construction and set to open in 2022, the port will also contribute to road transit transportation, especially with Balkan countries. It is planned that the port will be connected to the national railway network by rail. For this purpose, the necessary survey project works were carried out by the General Directorate of Infrastructure Investments.

### Conclusion and Assessment

Throughout its history of more than eight thousand years, İzmir has never lost its feature of being a port city and has played an important role in Asia's trade with Europe for many years. The biggest reason is its location on main transportation routes. Thanks to its location, İzmir is a candidate to become a global logistics center in the future.

An important share of industrial investments have shifted to the Marmara Region in the last thirty years. As a result, there has been a slowdown in the Aegean Region industry. However, the opening of the Izmir - Istanbul highway has created new opportunities for the region. Urbanization in the city has accelerated and the number of companies investing in the region has increased. The recovery in the industry has increased private port investments, Nemport, Ege Gübre Port and finally Socar Terminal were put into service. These three ports in Aliğa Gulf are 12 nautical miles away from the North Aegean Port project. Therefore, Aliğa Region ports are the terminals of a single port with different operators. When considered in terms of total loading volume, the region has a port capacity exceeding 3 million TEU together with TCDD Izmir Port. With the opening of the North Aegean Port, the

port capacity will reach 7 million TEU. With this capacity volume, the region has the necessary infrastructure to become a global hub.

The North Aegean Port is a project that can activate the great potential of the Aegean Region in foreign trade. With this feature, it is an important opportunity both for potential investors and those who want to expand their trade with the countries that are under the influence of the North Aegean Port. Finally, it will be useful to mention the importance of the North Aegean Port and the existing or near future port and logistics village facilities in the Aegean and the Mediterranean in the context of the Belt-Road Initiative (BRI).

**Turkey, in particular the Aegean Region, with its unique location may serve as a "production base". It thus has a function beyond just being the logistics center where goods from the Far East are shipped to Europe, Black Sea Basin, Western Mediterranean and North Africa after they are handled.**

Turkey, especially the Aegean Region, has become prominent with its unique features for BRI. While, Turkey is located in the middle of Europe, Asia and Africa, Izmir City with the whole Aegean Region is at the "Middle Corridor"s west side. The location is just like New Silk Road's west gate.

Turkey functions as an intersection and transit corridor linking the Mediterranean and Black Sea Basin, as well as building a bridge between East and West. Turkey, in particular the Aegean Region, with its unique location may serve as a "production base". It thus has a function beyond just being the logistics center where goods from the Far East are shipped to Europe, Black Sea Basin, Western Mediterranean and North Africa after they are handled.

Companies which invest in the Aegean Region, primarily from China and other New Silk Road countries will obtain a significant logistical and competitive advantage by procuring their goods from a region very close to the aforementioned markets, rather than shipping them from distant ports and logistics areas in the Pacific Basin.

Moreover, particularly applicable for Chinese companies, the tax exemption granted to established industrial companies in Turkey as a result of the Customs Union Agreement between Turkey and the European Union (EU) offers a huge advantage. Thanks to exemptions from customs duties on goods produced in Turkey and exported to EU countries, the Chinese companies that invest in Turkey will not be subject to anti-dumping duties imposed by the EU on certain goods of Chinese origin.

In the light of the brief assessment above (and in the context of BRI), it would be appropriate to improve the general perspective regarding the North Aegean Port. The North Aegean Port is more than just a transfer port for goods from China and other Far East countries. In a similar vein, the North Aegean Port has the potential and privilege to become a strategic port

where goods can be both produced and shipped as a result of cooperative efforts made in the Aegean Region and other regions in line with the basic principles and targets of BRI.

When considered from this point of view, it is obvious that the North Aegean Port has no rival. The North Aegean Port and other Turkish ports offer a unique opportunity to access the world's most strategic regions and markets. 🌐

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# The Belt and Road Initiative in the Shadow of Competition Between China and the US



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**ASSADOLLAH ATHARI**

Assist. Prof., Department of Political Science,  
Islamic Azad University

**EHSAN EJAZI**

Lecturer, Department of International Relations,  
University of Guilan

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*Dr. Assadollah Athari received his PhD in Political Science from the University of Tehran. He is currently Professor of Political Science at Islamic Azad University of Takestan. He served as a senior researcher at the Ministry of Defense and Armed Forces Logistics, The Center for Strategic Research and Scientific Research and Middle East Strategic Studies Center in Tehran. Dr. Athari has written various books and articles concerning Middle Eastern politics, especially about domestic and foreign policy of Turkey. He has also participated in various international conferences. Dr. Athari has been one of founders of the Iranian International Studies Association and Iranian World Studies Association.*

*E-mail: athary.asadolah@yahoo.com*

*Dr. Ehsan Ejazi earned his PhD in International Relations at the University of Guilan. He is currently a lecturer at the University of Guilan. He previously serves as a lecturer at Islamic Azad University's Science and Research Branch. He taught courses on the Palestine-Israel conflict. Dr. Ejazi has been a fellow researcher at The Center for Strategic Research and Scientific Research and Middle East Strategic Studies Center in Tehran since 2016. His research interests are Middle Eastern politics, Iranian foreign policy, Iran-US relations and the Palestine-Israel conflict.*

*E-mail: ehsan.ejazi@gmail.com*

## ABSTRACT

The Belt- Road Initiative (BRI) is a global project that connects China to other parts of the world, such as Europe, Asia and Africa, by land and sea. China's goal in launching this project is to expand its trade links to the rest of the world and to find a common ground in the global equation. The BRI is one of the manifestations of China's emerging power that will pose serious challenges to US hegemony. It is expected that the implementation of this project will not only increase China's influence and power in the regional and international arena, but also pave the way for Asia's economic development and increase its political and economic power around the globe. In this regard, the main questions of the article are: What are the salient characteristics of this project? What are the main challenges posed by the US? We suggest that the BRI will provide a golden opportunity for China to become a regional hegemon in Asia and then a hegemon in global level. Meanwhile, the US has resorted to tough measures to prevent China from becoming a hegemon by putting economic, political and financial obstacles in the way of BRI.

**Keywords:** Belt & Road Initiative; China; hegemony; international cooperation; US

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IN 2013, CHINA PUBLICLY UNVEILED ITS Belt & Road Initiative (BRI), which consist of a project to connect China to other parts of the world, such as Europe, Asia and Africa, by land and sea. In fact, China's goal in building such a project is to expand its trade links to the rest of the world and to find a common ground in the global equation. Generally speaking, it is a move towards establishing a new hegemony and engaging in close competition with the United States. This project is supposed to connect China to Europe through Iran, which is why the Middle East resides at the center of this project.

China has introduced the BRI to the global community as a 100-year-old project. It seems that the main goal of this project has to do with economic issues, and China intends to somehow control the region's economy with the new Silk Road project. Apart from economic control, many of these countries are also politically and culturally inclined towards China and will become potential partners. China has been pur-

suing a change in the world economic map for many years. The route that turns the ancient Silk Road into a modern transit, trade and economic corridor stretches from Shanghai to Berlin. The project is the largest economic development project in the history of the world, which, of course, has further raised the concerns of China's rivals, to the point that the Europeans signed an infrastructure agreement with Japan to counter the BRI strategy. The deal is part of a "connect to Asia" strategy launched by the European Union last year to allay international concerns about the Chinese new Silk Road (Emmott, 2019).

The BRI is considered to be a modern and improved design of the ancient Silk Road. It is also one of the manifestations of China's emerging power that connects the three continents of Asia, Europe and Africa. The New Silk Road is an investment project in the economic infrastructure of 71 countries (Belt and Road Initiative, 2020) and the development of two major trade routes, the "Silk Road Economic Belt" and

the “21<sup>st</sup> Century Maritime Silk Road”, which are still being developed and expanded. The project aims to enhance China's position in the world's trade and economic equations, and to create an international transit network centered on China, enabling China to deliver its goods by land and sea to countries on all three continents. The “economic belt”, which is a land project, connects China through Central Asia and the Middle East and then to Eastern and Western Europe by Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Iran, Turkey, Ukraine, Poland, Belgium, France and finally Italy (Countries of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), 2020). The 21<sup>st</sup> Century Maritime Silk Road connects China by sea to Southeast Asia and Africa and even Europe through Greece and Italy in the northern Mediterranean, and includes Vietnam, Malaysia, Indonesia, Sri Lanka, Pakistan and Kenya.



*A China-Europe freight train leaves the Xinzhu Railway Station in Xi'an to head for Italy's Milan.  
(Yuan Jingzhi/Xinhua)*

It is expected that the launch of this project will not only increase China's influence and power in the regional and international arena, but also pave the way for Asia's economic development and increase its political and economic power in the world. A number of important questions arise at this point: What are the salient characteristics of this project? What are the main challenges posed by the US?

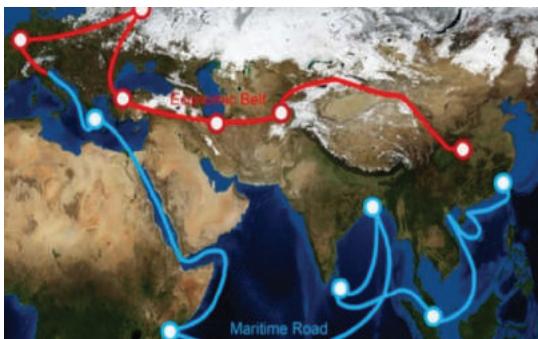
## Highlight Design Features

Any successful global development strategy is to be based on communications and transit lines in order to strengthen trade cooperation. The full implementation of this plan will change the business structure of the world, and for this reason the BRI is called the project of the century. It accounts for 62.3% of the world's population, three-quarters of the world's energy resources (Bruni, 2019: 5), and 30% of GDP (Shepard, 2020). So far, 126 countries and 29 international organizations have signed 173 cooperation agreements with China in line with this plan (Xinhua, 2019). By 2027, the total value of the projects envisaged in this plan is 1.2-1.3 trillion, although estimates on total investments vary (Chatzky & McBride, 2020). China Development Bank has already allocated \$ 900 billion for more than 900 projects in 60 countries (Cai, 2017).

## The BRI's Political Goals

The BRI is a win-win plan and all parties, including China and the countries on the route, will benefit from it; at the same time, involved countries dependence on China is increasing. It will increase China's freedom of diplomatic maneuver and is therefore one of the manifestations of China's emerging power. It will certainly boost China's international power and political influence in the world, especially in Asia. Given the positive economic effects of its implementation, it will change the economic and political future of Asia. It could, along with China's military power, lead to its hegemony in East Asia, and ultimately enable China to become a major power in the world economy by overcoming the onshore and offshore trade routes in Eurasia. Moreover, the BRI has remarkably increased China's soft power among various countries along the land route (Voon & Xu, 2020: 122).

Nevertheless, it is doubtful that China could exert a soft power of similar influence to that of the US (Beeson, 2018: 250). It rather remains an initiative to strengthen the trend towards a multipolar world, the globalization of the economy, cultural diversity, the wider use of information technology, and the strengthening of a global free regime within the framework of open regional cooperation.



"Silk Road Economic Belt" and "21st Century Maritime Silk Road" (CGTN, 2019)

### The BRI's Political Goals

It is a great platform for economic cooperation. Some see it as a development path in line with China's model of globalization, which seeks to reshape the world economic order and place countries and companies on China's economic trajectory. Some consider it as the greatest Marshall Plan of China and the economic route of the century (Boucher, 2019). It is the largest investment project ever undertaken by a single country (\$900 billion). The main economic goal of the BRI is to deliver Chinese-made goods to the largest number of countries in the world in the shortest time and cost. It increases traffic, develops tourism and expands investment infrastructure.

It changes the economic structure of the world and increases the volume and value of trade in the world. It provides a large market for Chi-

**It will have a positive impact on the economies of Asian countries and pave the way for the emergence of a strong Asia.**

nese manufacturers and adds to China's strength as a large economy. It will have a positive impact on the economies of Asian countries and pave the way for the emergence of a strong Asia. Undoubtedly, it facilitates the flow of communication and transportation of goods from China to Europe, Asia and Africa and vice versa, and generates lively competition in the field of transportation. As of 2017, more than 5,000 cargoes have been transmitted and 33 cities in China and 33 cities in 12 European countries are mutually connected within the BRI's framework (Ohashi, 2018: 91).

China seeks to connect poorer areas within the country to foreign markets, too. Thus, one could acknowledge that linking parts of Xinjiang or Hunan to foreign markets represents an important part of the Chinese rationale for implementing this project. Chinese strategic thinkers have sought to increase China's influence as the United States expands its influence in Southeast Asia and competes with the United States over the alliances of countries such as South Korea, Japan, Singapore, Thailand and the Philippines. 46 sub-Saharan African ports with financial, construction, or operational involvement by Chinese entities have been identified (Devermont, 2019). However, Chinese experts believe that these ports are fundamentally different from their American counterparts, because the latter ones are designed to defend against US hegemonic policies.

### The BRI's Advantages

The BRI will develop the infrastructure of the involved countries along the route and invest in and modernize their economies. It is a new opportunity for countries along the way to ex-

pand their trade in Asia, Europe and Africa. A network of railways, roads, pipelines, power plants, seaports, airports, railways, telecommunications, digital networks and shipping routes is being built that directly connects China with countries on three continents: Asia, Africa, and Europe (Dezenski, 2020). One way to bridge the infrastructure gap between developed and developing countries is to help them grow economically and boost international trade. In addition to bilateral talks with countries and governments, China also has regional or international dialogue mechanisms with international and regional organizations such as the “China and Eastern Europe (1 + 16)” referring to the 16 Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) states with which China is developing ties: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Macedonia, Montenegro, Poland, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia, and Slovenia (Kavalski, 2019). Africa is also a huge market for Chinese products and could greatly add to China's strength as a major economic power and exporter. The economic benefits of implementing the BRI will enable countries along the way to establish better political relations, benefit from each other's trade, and develop their infrastructure.



Chinese entrepreneurs are in the ground breaking ceremony of Jiangxi Multi-Facility Economic Zone in Zambia. (Wang Chao/ Xinhua, 2018)

Connections and interactions among the peoples of African countries will increase and the exchange of cultures will become easier. In this regard, China has considered 39 African countries for inclusion to the Belt and Road Initiative, ranging geographically from Tunisia to South Africa. Nevertheless, China is now the creditor of only three countries: Congo-Brazzaville, Djibouti, and Zambia (Risberg, 2019: 44).

### The BRI's Obstacles

Opponents of the BRI, especially the United States, see it as a colonial scheme that indebts countries to China, with many target countries unable to repay their debts. Disagreements and conflicts between the countries along the way, such as China's disputes with India or the India-Pakistan disputes, more specifically ethnic, religious and border disputes and the lack of a dynamic and complementary economy constitute major obstacles to this project. Moreover, New Delhi has asserted that the BRI will violate India's sovereignty and territorial integrity (Chakma, 2019: 184). Other obstacles include trans-regional conflicts –especially the long-standing rivalry between India, Russia and the United States with China and their opposition to China expanding its influence to other regions. The United States has accused China of investing billions in infrastructure projects in developing countries to expand its geopolitical influence and gain a competitive advantage over the United States.

Almost all American politicians have claimed that China has sought to use the BRI to export its surplus capacity in construction materials, engineering services, and perhaps even labor (Chance, 2016: 10). Therefore, many have described the project as “neocolonial debt trap diplomacy”, in which China uses unpayable debts to dominate less powerful countries around the world (Khanna, 2019).

**American officials failed to acknowledge the BRI as an economic opportunity and strongly recommend their allies not to join the plan and to even consider it as a threat.**

American officials failed to acknowledge the BRI as an economic opportunity and strongly recommend their allies not to join the plan and to even consider it as a threat (Schuman, 2019). Moreover, the US is likely to soon accuse the BRI of lacking transparency and environment safeguards. In the near future, the US may even impose sanctions on private-sector actors involved in the project. Additionally, the US can prevent advanced economies from cooperating with the BRI (Zhang, 2019). Although the US and China had cooperated for self-interested reasons in the past (Feigenbaum, 2020), in the present era they disagree over various geo-economic and geo-strategic issues which may eventually lead to the failure of the BRI. The Sino-American trade war is a clear indication of increasing tensions between both parties. This war has led to an escalation of tariffs on American and Chinese goods. It has certainly had a significantly negative impact on global trade (Iqbal, Rahman & Elimimian, 2019: 223).

Nevertheless, “Andrew Small”, a senior transatlantic fellow on the Asia program at the German Marshall Fund of the United States, told Yahoo Finance: “The problem has been that [U.S. agencies] haven’t really had the means to mobilize resources to compete” with China regarding BRI (Swaminathan, 2020). Therefore, it is suggested that the US administration needs to recognize the BRI in the US-China trade agreement as a pragmatic move to increase the likelihood of cooperation, not confrontation (Meltzer, 2017).

The United States needs to engage with the BRI in a number of significant ways. The participation of the US administration, US-led institutions, and US companies may lead to higher environmental, labor, and quality standards in the developing world. Setting these standards for the BRI would advance US interests and leadership (Zhang, 2019).

Contrary to these recommendations, US policies, especially during the Trump era, have resulted in the US retraction and China’s expansion (Silverstein, 2019). While this situation may not necessarily lead to military clashes, the possibility of war could not be ruled out. It seems essential for China to respect existing multilateral institutions while seeking to develop new regional arrangements (Loong, 2020).

### **China’s Actions Within the Framework of the BRI**

The Chinese have taken a series of steps to make progress in the Silk Road project including:

*Policy Coordination:* Over the past five years, China has been in full coordination with participating countries and international organizations, and has reached a broad consensus in international cooperation to build the BRI. This initiative and its core concepts are enshrined in the documents of the United Nations, the G20, OPEC and other international and regional organizations. Virtually 29 international organizations have promised to participate in the project (News in Asia, 2019).

*Infrastructure Connection:* Infrastructure connectivity is at the top of the BRI agenda. While committed to respecting the sovereignty and security concerns of all countries, the countries involved in the BRI have made concerted efforts to build a global, multi-level, composite infrastructure framework centered on rail, road, sea, air and air transport. Pipelines and space

information networks are being integrated. Significant progress has been made in the construction of six corridors of international economic cooperation including the New Eurasian Land Bridge, the China-Mongolia-Russia Economic Corridor (CMREC), the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), the China-Central and Western Asia Economic Corridor, the China-Indochina Peninsula Economic Corridor, and the Bangladesh-China-India-Myanmar Economic Corridor (BCIMEC) (Belt & Road News, 2020), which connects the Asian economic circle with the European economic circle. These corridors have played an important role in creating and strengthening partnerships between participating countries and creating an efficient and smooth Eurasian market.



Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi meets with Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif. (Lu Yang/ Xinhua, 2020)

*Trade Without Restrictions:* Trade without restrictions are a crucial objective of the BRI. The efforts invested in this initiative have led to the liberalization and facilitation of trade and investment in participating countries and regions, the reduction of trade costs, and the liberalization of growth potentials. It enables participants

in this project to participate in wider economic globalization. In this regard, China's trade with countries cooperating in the BRI has reached \$617.5 billion in the first half of 2019 (The Maritime Executive, 2019). Indeed, the Middle Eastern region is also part of the BRI. The BRI does not only encourage regional trade, connectivity, transactions and communications in the Middle East, but also creates an economic structure that is not under the control of Washington (Lons, Fulton, Sun & Al-Tamimi, 2019: 6).

*Financial Integration:* Financial integration is an important pillar of the BRI. The Financial Times describes the BRI as a “colossal undertaking” which could cost tens of trillion of dollars to finance (Smits, 2017). Several key banks have extensive relationships with participating countries, including the China Development Bank and the Exim Bank of China, which have played significant roles in basic financing and are engaging other banks in this project. Commercial banks such as the Industrial and Commercial Bank of China, the Agricultural Bank of China, the Bank of China and the China Construction Bank have strongly advocated commercial projects through their advantages in size and volume. Equity funds like the Silk Road Fund and China Investment Corporation are participating in leveraging domestic and overseas social capital and improving financial structure. Moreover, insurance organizations including the China Export and Credit Insurance Corporation have also engaged in risk control and information services as part of the BRI projects (Xijun, 2019). When China first initiated the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) in 2013, it was expected that it would fund many of the country's newfound international infrastructure projects (Shepard, 2017). The AIIB plays a significant role in providing financial assets to launch initiatives. In order to gain the support of American allies such as Great Britain and Australia, the AIIB needs to pay attention to good gov-

ernance and transparency (Beeson, 2018: 246-247). Concerning the financing of the BRI, its implementation is restricted by the structural power of the US in the global political economy. In fact, the US dollar may impose financial constraints on implementing the project (Lai, Lin, & Sidaway, 2020: 114-115).



Chinese mobile laboratory team get into a laboratory in Freetown, capital of Sierra Leone, amid an Ebola outbreak. (Xinhua, 2015)

*Improving the Welfare of the People:* China is providing necessary assistance in the areas of poverty reduction, agriculture, education, health, environmental protection and other areas through the BRI. The BRI transport projects may increase the welfare of participating countries by reducing delays at the border and tariffs by half (de Soyres, Mulabdic & Ruta, 2019). China also has adopted a policy to provide medical support to countries involved in the BRI. For instance, China has implemented a China-Africa public health cooperation program. The China-Africa health development initiative was signed in December 2015 in Cape Town, South Africa (Tambo, et al., 2019: 46). It has trained several thousand specialists in public health management and disease prevention and control in collaboration with other countries involved in the BRI. For example, China responded to Eb-

ola outbreak in West Africa, and took an unprecedented public health approach by sending 1200 workers, infrastructure, and aid to afflicted communities in Sierra Leone, Liberia, and Guinea (Tambo, et al., 2019: 47).

**The goal of the BRI is to create a new model of international relations that includes mutual respect, fairness, justice and win-win cooperation, and builds partnership through dialogue instead of confrontation and friendship instead of treaty.**

*Facilitating the Transfer of Scientific Innovation:* In 2018, China hosted 500 young scientists from various countries for research and trained more than 1,200 science and management specialists. China is actively cooperating with other countries in the BRI Technology Initiative, providing BeiDou, its navigation satellite systems, satellite communications systems, remote sensing technologies and satellite meteorology. Moreover, The Digital Belt and Road Program (DBAR), launched by the Chinese Academy of Sciences, has opened eight International Centers of Excellence (ICoE) in Morocco, Zambia, Thailand, Pakistan and other countries (Sheng, 2019).

*The Road to Peace:* The goal of the BRI is to create a new model of international relations that includes mutual respect, fairness, justice and win-win cooperation, and builds partnership through dialogue instead of confrontation and friendship instead of treaty. To ensure the smooth implementation of the BRI, China will work with all countries involved in the project to establish an early warning and hazard control and emergency response mechanism. In the event of a dispute, all parties to the conflict

can discuss their interests and concerns through dialogue, not conflict. These talks will create a positive development environment for BRI cooperation, and help all participating countries build a world where they respect each other's core interests and resolve disputes peacefully.

**Bilateral trade between Turkey and China has grown from \$1.4 billion in 2000 to \$26.3 billion in 2017 and China has become Turkey's largest trading partner.**

According to Akkan Suver, chairman of Turkey's leading non-governmental organization (NGO) called Marmara Group Foundation, the BRI may “furnish the people of all countries along the route with a safer, richer and more peaceful living environment” (Bo, 2019). In order to implement the BRI, China needs to ensure peace in certain regions, especially in the Middle East. Regarding the US, which continues to be an indispensable power in the region, China has adopted a discrete approach of not antagonizing the US about sensitive issues such as Iran. Meanwhile, Americans have sharply criticized China for its ongoing military presence in the area (Lons, Fulton, Sun, & Al-Tamimi, 2019: 6). So far, China has focused on geo-economic issues in the region, and assigned the US to deal with security matters. Undoubtedly, the BRI will increase the economic and energy interests of China in the Middle East. Therefore, China will likely be forced to handle security affairs in the area (Watanabe, 2019: 3). If China engages in Middle East conflict, there is a high danger to be sucked into the vortex. In fact, the BRI cannot be implemented without satisfactory resolution of disputes in the region (Chaziza, 2020).

### Turkey's Position in the BRI

The Turks believe that by joining the scheme, they can boost their economy and significantly increase their trade volume. For some time now, Turkey has been leaning eastward. This development could lead to greater economic and political cooperation between Turkey and countries such as China and Russia. In this regard, bilateral trade between Turkey and China has grown from \$1.4 billion in 2000 to \$26.3 billion in 2017 and China has become Turkey's largest trading partner (Turkstat, 2017; MFA, n.d.). Moreover, Turkey, because of its strategic geographical position between Asia and Europe, provides a cost-effective economic corridor to major markets (Bitmis & McGuire, 2020: 182). With the emergence of political differences between Turkey and the United States (its main ally in NATO) as well as strained relations with the European Union –although Turkey's cultural and trade relations mostly involve European countries and the United States– the Turkish government is increasingly coordinating its foreign policy with Eastern countries. Through the BRI, therefore, Turkey intends to expand its trade and industrial relations with China and Russia, and does not intend to be a mere transit route between East and West in this project, but it also seeks to play a strategic role between Europe and Asia. Yet, it seems that Turkey is still oscillating between the West and China (Güler, 2019). Due to growing political and economic disparities between the US and China, Turkey is expecting to become an ideal business partner with China (Cinar, 2020).

### Conclusion

The Chinese government intends to expand its trade and political-cultural ties across Europe and Africa by building railways and sea lines

within the framework of the BRI. The Chinese believe that the countries along the road have rich resources that can be used for development and high economic growth. By implementing this plan, China intends to increase the volume of its foreign trade. Meanwhile, this project also appeals to several other countries who desire to partner with China.

One could argue that China is unlikely to achieve a global hegemonic status in the near future and does not desire to engage with any global power bloc until it completes its power stroke. This is precisely the reason why the United States has taken an aggressive stance against China to thwart its plan, and why China, on the other hand, has taken a largely defensive stance so as not to sacrifice its plans too early. Hence, the Chinese are becoming more conservative in the face of the United States and are trying to avoid using the Trump administration's policies as an excuse to increase tensions. For one thing, the history of Sino-US relations shows that after each period of escalation, the two powers begin de-escalating diplomacy so that the process does not spiral out of control. It seems quite obvious to the leaders of both countries that escalating tensions to the point of risking a military confrontation could result in a global catastrophe. From this perspective, it is possible to suggest that the BRI provides a golden opportunity for both China and the US to cooperate with each other on a global level. Given the fact that China's rivalry with the United States is largely of a political-economic nature, the US is extremely reluctant to engage with China at this stage.

The US has resorted to tough measures to thwart China's global goals by strengthening existing alliances with Australia, Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, Vietnam, Malaysia, Thailand, and to some extent Indonesia and the Philip-

pines. Strengthening relationships with India is the next step in US strategy in Asia. In pursuing this strategy, the US has paid special attention to Middle Eastern countries, especially Egypt, Saudi Arabia and Turkey. The United States is pursuing a parallel strategy to shift the supply chains of goods and services, especially in communications, medical goods, pharmaceuticals, and sensitive industries, from China to the Americas, Western Europe, India, and some Asian countries to gradually prevent China from monopolizing the global market. In this regard, the US is likely to pressure countries to avoid the BRI, which may result in tariff wars, bilateral trade negotiations, regional alliances, international tensions, and the malfunctioning of international organizations. 🌸

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# The Formula of Success and Peace in the Eastern Mediterranean and Southern Caucasus<sup>\*</sup>



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**MEHMET PERİNÇEK**

Dr.  
Institute of Asian and African Countries,  
Moscow State University

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*Dr. Mehmet Perinçek was born on September 19, 1978 in Istanbul. He graduated from Istanbul University's Faculty of Law. He started to work as a research assistant at the Institute of Ataturk's Principles and History of The Turkish Revolution, Istanbul University. He served as a visiting researcher at the Moscow State Institute/University (MGİMO (U)) in the period 2005-2006 and at Moscow State University's Institute of Asian and African Countries in the period 2010-2011. He was a visiting scholar at the Institute of Asian and African Countries at Moscow State University between 2011 and 2017. For more than twenty years he has been conducting research on "Turkish-Soviet Relations" and the "Armenian Question" in the Russian-Soviet state archives and on current Turkish foreign policy. He has published several books and articles on these issues. His books and articles have appeared in Russian, English, German, Persian and Azerbaijani Turkish. Dr. Perinçek has presented several papers at international conferences and symposia in Turkey and abroad.*

*E-mail: mperincek@hotmail.com*

**The United States has one grand strategy; all its plans, its build-ups, and allies are shaped according to this strategy. This is also true when it comes to Libya. Of course, those targeted by this strategy also need their own holistic counter strategy of defenses and alliance-building. And this is also true of Libya. It should also be remembered that the Eastern Mediterranean security is the guarantee for a decisive solution in the Syrian crisis. The United States would have the opportunity to reach the Black Sea much easier if it manages to dominate the Eastern Mediterranean.**

**At this point, Russian national security correlates with Turkish national security. Turkey's Blue Homeland strategy and the Turkish-Libyan maritime agreement as part of this strategy served to block the Atlantic front in the Eastern Mediterranean and strengthen the hands of regional powers. Therefore, this move has not only strengthened the hands of Russia and Turkey, but also created an opportunity for defensive fortification in the entire Eurasian front. All countries that are targeted by imperialist forces must act according to their shared interests, and not according to any historic rivalry or conflicts. Turkey and Russia must take the first steps in this direction at once. It is also important for China to pursue a more effective policy in Western Asia, to take measures to support the anti-US front and to cooperate with the countries that face the Atlantic threat to reinforce their sovereignty.**

TODAY, THE CONFLICTS AND PROBLEMS in our region, especially the ones that Turkey is involved in, are not independent of the overall polarization in world affairs. This polarization has not changed since the time Mustafa Kemal Atatürk portrayed Western imperialism as a group of “tyrant and tyrannized nations” and Vladimir Ilyich Lenin differentiated between “oppressing and oppressed nations”. We can also define this polarization in terms of a clash between the East and West, the North and the South, or between the Atlantic and Eurasia.

There are a handful of nations that exploit the world's resources, and on the other hand there are nations that are exposed to this imperialist exploitation. Nonetheless, there are also countries that have chosen an independent way of development, as part of the oppressed world.

### **The Holistic Approach of Current US Strategy**

Looking at the current situation, one could observe that the goal of the United States is actually to seize

the energy resources and supply lines in Central Asia, and maintain the dominance of the US dollar. It is especially important for the United States to maintain its supremacy in these regions: the Middle East, the Eastern Mediterranean, Eastern Europe, the Black Sea and the Caucasus.

In short, all of these regions are critical to the overall US strategy. The fate of this strategy is particularly contingent on prevailing over Russia and China, and imposing the partition of Turkey. These countries have well-established traditions of statehood and strong military-economic potentials, and stand as the most serious obstacle to US plans.

Washington has come up with different plans to clear these obstacles, and the “Greater Kurdistan” project is the one that it is currently putting forward to counter Turkey.

However, let us add a side note here: the “Greater Kurdistan” project is not only directed against Turkey; it is also designed to partition Iran, Syria, and Iraq. Furthermore, since the Kurdish puppet state would act as an important base for the United States to reach Central Asia, this project poses a threat to all of Eurasia, especially to Russia and China.

For this reason, “Greater Kurdistan” is not only part of US plans for the region, but also a strategy for its world domination. In short, it is a plan for a second Israel.

The same situation goes for US threats that Russia and China confront. As part of its intention to contain Russia and China, the USA would also encircle Turkey and the entire Eurasian geography.

Now we can close the parenthesis and move on from where we left off to the main topic.

### **The Eastern Mediterranean-Black Sea: The Only Security Zone**

What is happening in Libya today is not independent from the polarization of the world into oppressed and oppressing nations, as well as from the grand strategy of the United States and from the “Greater Kurdistan” project.

The United States has one grand strategy; all its plans, its build-ups, and allies are shaped according to this strategy. This is also true when it comes to Libya. Of course, those targeted by this strategy also need their own holistic counter strategy of defenses and alliance-building. And this is also true of Libya.

Was it not the US strategy that has led to civil war and crisis in Libya in the first place? Gaddafi’s government in Libya was a huge obstacle for the United States, having considerable importance both in terms of its high-quality oil reserves and geopolitical position in the world. This obstacle was removed by the USA as part of the Arab Spring process.

This was what brought the country into a state of pure mayhem. Therefore, it is the United States and its allies such as France who are responsible for the chaos we are witnessing today. Naturally, one could not expect the responsible parties to solve this problem.

Who could solve the problem?

If the United States were the source of the problem and Washington’s actions in Libya were eventually connected to the “Greater Kurdistan” project, who could really help to fix the situation?

The answer lies in regional powers being targeted by US plans, as were mentioned earlier in explaining the polarization of the world into oppressed and oppressing nations. It is more or less clear that Turkey and Russia share the same fate in the region. Is this also the case in the Eastern Mediterranean? Turkey is confronting the US-Israel-Greece-Greek Cyprus bloc in the Eastern Mediterranean. In fact, this bloc is openly targeting Turkey through military drills and provoking a diplomatic crisis around the issue of natural gas exploration. However, this bloc threatens not only Turkey, but also Russia. The United States is encircling Russia, while containing Turkey in the Eastern Mediterranean.

Washington is provoking the Greek Cypriot government against Moscow as well by lifting the arms embargo against Greek Cyprus. This is driving Greek Cyprus to stand against Russia. It is also clear that the British air bases in the Greek territory are also threatening the Russian presence in the region.

In addition, the recently increasing racist attacks on Russian citizens in the Greek Cyprus have also been a painful topic for Moscow. Thus, Russian state-media is not afraid to publish some news related to this issue.<sup>1</sup>

The situation is no different when it comes to energy. The aforementioned EastMed pipeline project is a project against the Turkish-Russian TurkStream and the Turkish-Azerbaijani TANAP project, and to an extent, it is directed against the supply of Central Asian gas to Europe. The Russian media frequently emphasizes Turkish-Russian cooperation and Turkey being a “fellow-sufferer” on this issue.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> As an example, see RIA Novosti, 2019.

<sup>2</sup> For some examples, see Danilov, 2020; Anpilogov, 2020; Репортёр, 2020.

Of particular relevance to this very context is the Russian Energy Minister Aleksandr Novak's offers to Turkey for cooperation on the Eastern Mediterranean energy deposits (Abay, 2019).

**The United States would have the opportunity to reach the Black Sea much easier if it manages to dominate the Eastern Mediterranean. At this point, Russian national security correlates with Turkish national security.**

It should also be remembered that the Eastern Mediterranean security is the guarantee for a decisive solution in the Syrian crisis. The anti-Turkey bloc is also a problem for Russia in Syria. Furthermore, the United States would have the opportunity to reach the Black Sea much easier if it manages to dominate the Eastern Mediterranean. At this point, Russian national security correlates with Turkish national security.

The same situation applies to the Black Sea as well. US efforts to reach the Black Sea do not only play a role in the strategy of encircling Russia, but also come into play in the plan to contain Turkey. The polarization of world politics is intensifying in this region. The agreement signed between the United States and Ukraine against the Turk-Stream further complicates the picture.

Could the Libyan crisis be perceived outside this picture depicted above? For the time being, Turkey and Russia are supporting opposing sides in Libya. Understanding previously mentioned processes could be important in planning future policies more adequately.

### The History of Russia's Libyan Policy

Russia had mainly adopted a passive attitude towards the Arab Spring in the Medvedev era, and

the fault line that started from Libya has stretched all the way to Syria. Moscow, which by then had learned from these mistakes, has now taken action to prevent the threat before it started. Russia has started to take a more active stance in Libya, while sending troops to Syria, with the requisition of Damascus.

Russia had initially remained neutral at the beginning of the Libyan conflict and supported the dialogue process. Moscow's favorite, a third party, the son of Gaddafi, did not stand a chance of success. Haftar's expansion over the 94% of the country's land area and perceived strength to win this civil war have played an important role in garnering Russian support. After all, Moscow preferred to stand by the winner in order to be able to increase its influence in the new Libya.

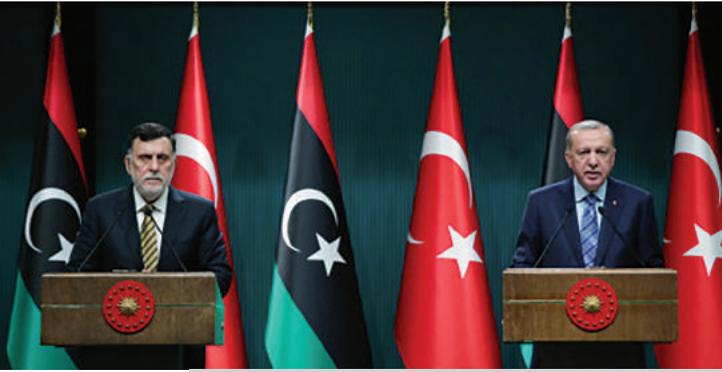
But of course, Russia was not the only force behind Haftar's side. In fact, it was on the same side as the forces it clashed with in the US grand strategic plan. Moscow's point of view sparked from a similar mentality: to compensate for the influence of its strategic opponents, and not leave the winning side to its rivals.

### The Turkey-Libya Agreement and the Blue Homeland

Turkey's involvement in the Libyan crisis has changed the balance of power. Even more importantly, the Memorandum of Understanding on the Delimitation of Maritime Jurisdictions signed between Ankara and the Libyan Government of National Accord (GNA) on November 27, 2019 have put an end to important uncertainties in the conflict. This was incredibly important in terms of crystallizing the two currently existing fronts in Libya.

Turkey's Blue Homeland<sup>3</sup> strategy and the Turkish-Libyan maritime agreement as part of this strategy served to block the Atlantic front in

<sup>3</sup> Blue Homeland is coined by Cem Gürdeniz, retired Turkish admiral. It is a roadmap aimed to protect rights and interests of Turkey in the seas surrounding Anatolia as well as seas and oceans beyond its periphery.



Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan meets with Libya's UN-recognized Government of National Accord (GNA) Prime Minister Fayez al-Sarraj. (Mustafa Kayal Xinhua, 2020)

the Eastern Mediterranean and strengthen the hands of regional powers. Therefore, this move has not only strengthened the hands of Russia and Turkey, but also created an opportunity for defensive fortification in the entire Eurasian front.

Now, everything has started to settle in its place in Libya. The turmoil in this North African country was not unrelated to the overall polarization of world politics. For some time, the global powers had been analyzing the formation of fronts in Libya and trying to coopt them in order to increase their influence.

**The same plan for a Turkish-Russian conflict in Syria, which had earlier fallen apart with the Sochi Agreement, was being extended to Libya. However, the plans have failed once again. The disadvantageous situation of supporting two opposing sides was turned into an advantage.**

The situation has begun to become clearer, even though the Atlantic forces have devoted special efforts at adding more uncertainties since late

2019. The same plan for a Turkish-Russian conflict in Syria, which had earlier fallen apart with the Sochi Agreement, was being extended to Libya.

However, the plans have failed once again. The disadvantageous situation of supporting two opposing sides was turned into an advantage. On January 8, 2020, Erdoğan and Putin met in Istanbul and reconciled. A ceasefire was to be ensured by Ankara using its influence on the GNA and by Moscow on Haftar's side.

However, the process did not proceed quite as Moscow expected. During the ceasefire negotiations mediated by Turkey and Russia in Moscow this January, Sarraj's government immediately signed the agreement, while Haftar had left the country without signing the agreement. This shows that Haftar is not only under Russia's influence. As a matter of fact, this was a large disappointment for Moscow.

Following this incident, intelligence provided in mid-February revealed that the Russian private security company Wagner has withdrawn its mercenary forces from Libya before their contracts expired.

### US and French Support for Haftar

The Atlantic front was not to tolerate the agreement signed between the Sarraj government and Turkey.

It later turned out that Haftar forces were preparing for an attack on Tripoli with troops trained by the US military, with the US military and intelligence officials working closely with Haftar and with the US having the total control of the region's airspace; France was not far behind in terms of its support<sup>4</sup>

While the United States gave Haftar its full support, Haftar in turn positioned himself with the Atlantic forces. The United States and Haftar shared the same goal in the Eastern Mediterranean. The systematic cooperation even on the most sensitive and confidential areas revealed its true

<sup>4</sup> For the details of the USA-Haftar and France-Haftar cooperation, please see the following articles: Aydınlik, 2020a; Perinçek, 2020a; Perinçek, 2020b; Perinçek, 2020c.

scale, but this action from the Atlantic front in Libya also paved the way for new opportunities for cooperation and other initiatives.

### **Turkey's intervention could be seen as a game changer, in result of which Russia has started to pursue a new course, both pragmatically and geo-strategically.**

Faced with this situation, Russia has now to revise its position on the Libyan crisis. Haftar's stance against the Turkey-Libya agreement played an important role in the determination of his allies, consolidating his positioning within the Atlantic camp. Surely this showed that Moscow's influence has been undermined, while the United States has strengthened its hand.

Turkey's intervention has been successful in pushing back the Haftar forces. This could be seen as a game changer, in result of which Russia has started to pursue a new course, both pragmatically and geo-strategically.

Haftar's side is no longer hiding the problems with Wagner. Their dissatisfaction with each other has also begun to be reflected in the press.<sup>5</sup> As a result, on May 20, 2020, Wagner has decided to evacuate their remaining troops.

### **FETO Message from Wagner to Turkey**

An interesting development took place during this period. Yevgeniy Prigojin, known as the owner of the Russian private security company Wagner, also referred to FETO in his open letter to the US Senate and reacted to Washington hiding Fethullah Gülen in the country. The US Congress House of Representatives on June 11 (2020) and the US Senate on June 16 (2020) took two decisions regarding Prigojin, who is also known as Putin's cook.

In both these resolutions, Yevgeniy Prigojin was accused of attacking the national interests and

democratic values of the United States, in particular influencing the internal policies of the United States and its allies, and interfering in the democratic processes of the United States.

The Russian businessman penned an open letter dated June 21, 2020 addressed to the US Congress against this decision and the accusations. The letter mentioned Fethullah Gulen as follows:

"In order to destroy the national values of other countries, including their customs and culture, the United States regularly interferes in political processes and elections around the world. (...) The USA is a haven for the money of thousands of criminals, thieves and scammers from many countries. The United States creates terrorist groups, harbors their leaders and ensures safety for their families. The USA grows and gives shelter to traitors and dissidents from all over the world, such as Fethullah Gulen, Chen Guangcheng, Reza Pahlavi and many others"

The fact that Prigojin, known for his close ties to Putin and not appearing in the media, published a public letter and made such a reference to Fethullah Gulen. Aalbeit not directly related to the contents of the letter at a time of crisis in Libya, this raised the question of whether Moscow has a message for Ankara (Aydinlik, 2020b).

It was also reported in the press that Wagner's leadership has undergone a change in August 2020. Experts attributed the management change in Wagner to the new regulation to be made concerning the business format of the organization, whose existence is not legally accepted. It was stated that Dmitriy Utkin, who previously managed the company and was responsible for its activities in Ukraine and Syria, will leave due to the change in the company's working methods. This change is defined as follows: Now, instead of directly participating in military operations, the company will develop military-political preparedness and cooperation strategies. It is reported that Wagner will

<sup>5</sup> See Assad, 2020.

only provide consultancy and training support in African countries, including Libya (Oda tv, 2020).

### Two Arrested Russian Citizens

There are two Russian citizens detained in Tripoli that have been at the center of a great deal of controversy between the parties involved. On May 16, 2019, two employees of the Russian Foundation for the Protection of National Values (RFPN), sociologist Maxim Shugaley and translator Samer Hasan Ali Sueyfan (Russian and Jordanian citizen), were charged with intervening in the presidential elections. They were arrested and jailed at the Mitiga Prison.

**The Russian side suggested that this situation could initiate a cooperation process with the GNA, if its citizens were released.**

Russia has attempted to secure their release at the highest level. Turkey was also asked to help resolve the situation, but no results have been obtained yet.

The Russian side suggested that this situation could initiate a cooperation process with the GNA, if its citizens were released. The first steps of this change in Russia's strategic plan were based on this issue.

The developments within the last week have been significant and indicate a serious turning point for the region.

On June 3, the Deputy Prime Minister of Libya's Government of National Accord Ahmed Maiteeq and GNA Foreign Minister Mohammed Taher Siala visited Moscow. During the visit, a series of talks took place with Russia's Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov, Ministry of Defense and officials of security units. The GNA delegation was accepted for the first time in Moscow at such a high level.

In the official statement declared after the meeting, the Russian Foreign Ministry pointed

out that the main obstacle to the development of cooperation based on mutual interest was the two Russian citizens detained in Tripoli (The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, 2020). It meant that a new era would begin in the relations between the two governments if the two Russian citizens were released.

Signals of cooperation between the two governments also came from Libya. Deputy Prime Minister Ahmed Maiteeq stated that his government believes Russia to be a very important partner in the establishment of stability in Libya, as was reported by RIA news agency. In Libyan official's view, Russian diplomacy played an important role in sharply reducing the military tensions (RIA Novosti, 2020).

Maiteeq continued to express such sentiments after he returned to his country. Maiteeq identified Turkey as a 'strategic ally' and stated that 'Russia can be an effective ally' during an interview in February (Yıldız, 2020).

Later, the Libyan side also gave a written guarantee to the Russian Foreign Ministry that the detained Russians would be released.

### The Ankara-Moscow Diplomacy Lines

Diplomacy between the two countries also began to pick up. Telephone conversations took place between Çavuşoğlu and Lavrov on June 8, and between Erdoğan and Putin on June 10. Indeed, Libya was the focal point.

Turkish Minister of Defense Hulusi Akar explained that Russia has rejected some information and allegations about its military presence in the region and that Turkey's problems in Libya need to be solved by negotiating with Russia in a way similar to the way they were discussed in Syria. This is a potential answer to allegations of Russian mercenaries and warplanes being sent to Libya, which he was asked about during a television program on June 10, 2020.



*Turkish Defense Minister Hulusi Akar meets with his Russian counterpart Sergei Shoigu. (The Republic of Turkey Directorate of Communications, 2019)*

Akar's attitude towards Russian mercenaries and aircraft was especially important. Based on the statement of the Russian side, he pointed to a process similar to Astana.

On top of that, it was announced that Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov and Defense Minister Sergey Shoigu would fly to Istanbul. However, this visit was postponed at the last minute. Statements from both sides after the visit clearly showed that there have been no disruption in relations. According to statements from both sides, a joint negotiation process has commenced.

Naturally, the GNA and Turkey did not want to stop after their military successes in the field. Taking advantage of these successes while sitting at the negotiation table was the most logical course of action, after all. It was not possible for Ankara and Tripoli to comply with the Cairo Declaration, and Russia knew that as well.

As a result, a joint declaration was signed between the Turkish and Russian delegations after the talks in Ankara. The decision was made to continue talks in Moscow.

<sup>6</sup> For the details, see Perinçek, 2020d.

<sup>6</sup> See Rudaw, 2020.

## The US Pushes the “Puppet State” Button

The Atlantic front took on a new action in parallel with its own holistic strategy, while the Turkish-Russian relations on Libya continued with its own ups and downs, despite shared objective interests.

The United States, while suffering great losses in Syria with the Sochi Agreement and its “Greater Kurdistan” project, has responded by pushing the button to form a new puppet state, pushing for the project with increased eagerness over the last few months. Deployments to Northeastern Syria have increased and a number of secret talks with the PKK/PYD were held. The United States has launched a new set of processes –militarily, administratively and economically– in an effort to carve up this “corridor”. The military phase of the plan will provide security for the PKK/PYD, whereas the administrative phase will establishing the governmental and institutional power of this puppet state. The economic phase will include oil revenues, which serve as the lifeblood of this American corridor.<sup>6</sup>

In June, a union among Syria's separatist forces was concluded, in the aftermath of the process, with the “sponsorship of the United States” in their own words.<sup>7</sup> On top of that, an oil deal was signed between the US-PKK/PYD forces.

## The Atlantic Front's Fear of Astana in Libya

The United States has taken action on Libya in line with its plans in Syria. In order for its plan in Syria to work, the US also has to dominate Libya as well. US Africa Command (AFRICOM) has started to show signs of returning to Libya, after it

had withdrawn in 2019. Currently, the American petroleum companies do not seem to hold almost anything in Libya. Exxon Mobil had withdrawn from the country in 2014: they had not wanted to remain in the Libyan market.

As a result, in their recent statements, Washington and Paris have shown that they are deeply disturbed by the involvement of Turkey and Russia in the Libyan conflict.

Former US Ambassador to Ankara Eric Edelman and the former Deputy Commander for the US European Command Charles Walt made it clear that the United States should act against Turkey and Russia in Libya. According to them, Ankara and Moscow's influence in Libya must come to an end (Edelman & Wald 2020a; 2020b).

Josep Borrell, the EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, rephrased the same ideas in the beginning of this year by saying that "Turkey and Russia have changed the balances in the Eastern Mediterranean by imposing a military solution in Syria. We cannot accept the same situation happening in Libya." According to Borrell, no one would be happy with the Russian and Turkish military bases along the Libyan coastline. A new Astana process must not be allowed in Libya (Sputnik, 2020).

**The possibility of another Astana process for Libya has led to serious concerns within the Atlantic camp. In fact, this attitude of the West should also be a lesson for Ankara and Moscow. Both countries have become targets along a line that stretches from Syria to Libya.**

Bernard-Henri Lévy, one of the ideologues of Atlanticism in France, is also known to be con-

cerned about also the so-called partitioning of Libya between Turkey and Russia, and has vigorously insisted Turkey and Russia be stopped (La Règle du jeu, 2020).

The possibility of another Astana process for Libya has led to serious concerns within the Atlantic camp. In fact, this attitude of the West should also be a lesson for Ankara and Moscow. Both countries have become targets along a line that stretches from Syria to Libya. There is nothing more natural than these two countries sharing common interests.

These common interests are also noticed by Christopher Nixon Cox, the grandson of former US President Nixon and the director of the Richard Nixon Foundation. According to Nixon's grandson, Erdogan and Putin's interests overlap in Libya. They both want to drive the French out of Libya and weaken the UAE's influence there (Zalfaoui, 2020).

Atlantic Council experts also worry that Turkey and Russia may find a common ground in Libya, both politically and militarily. They even predict that Syria could be involved in this hypothetical agreement (Lorient Le Jour, 2020).

Under these circumstances, it is obligatory for the United States to return to Libya and implement its plans in Syria in order to prevent any possibility of cooperation between Ankara and Moscow and for France to return to the old days of colonialism in North Africa by pitting these two countries against each other. When their strategy fails, they simply begin afresh.

The recent reciprocal provocations are part of this general situation. First, a rumor is spread that the Al-Watiya base was hit by the Russians, then the GNA and Turkey are reported to have hit the Russians back. However, all signs suggest that

the UAE was responsible for the strike on al-Watiya, while the GNA officially denied that the Russians had been hit in retaliation.

### Winning Over Russia

Turkish and Russian authorities need to learn from all these incidents. The rivalries and clashes must be put aside, and common ground must be established as part of a holistic strategy aimed at advancing both countries' mutual interests, as has been the case in Syria.

For Turkey and the GNA, it is obligatory to eliminate and even drag the opposing forces onto their sides, for a final victory. Most importantly, Ankara and Tripoli have the opportunity to turn this process in their favor with the right strategies. Russia can act as a neutral power at first, and can later even be dragged to support the Sarraj government with the right policies. This would change the balance in Libya completely in favor of Tripoli; it would reduce the burdens of the war in each and every sense.

The basis for this cooperation is not just that Haftar is now supported by the United States and losing the war: Moscow has also begun to grasp the anti-Atlantic ideals of the Blue Homeland strategy. This played an important role in Putin finding common ground with Erdogan in Libya on January 8, 2020.

However, radical elements fighting beside Sarraj are another concern for Russia. The Sarraj government is known for not having a unified structure. It is also necessary to pay attention to possible provocations from various autonomous forces and radical elements. This will be important to eliminate the non-cooperative propaganda within the Russian media.

On the other hand, Sarraj can also be targeted by the Atlanticist forces within his own front for signing the Turkish-Libyan maritime agreement. There are some signs suggesting this. Michel Scarbonchi is a Middle East expert and

one of the leading figures in French foreign policy. He is also among the architects of the French policy of support for Haftar and does not recommend Fathi Bashagha instead of Sarraj without reason (Opinion Internationale, 2020).



*Fighters of the GNA in Tripoli. (Hamza Turkial Xinhua, 2020)*

It should be noted that the Atlantic front has not completely ended its support for the GNA. The fact that it is the officially UN-recognized government and that Haftar has been on the losing side, along with its old ties to the Muslim Brotherhood, prevents Washington and its allies from entirely abandoning the GNA. Thus, from the Atlantic point of view, it is necessary to weaken Tripoli's relations with Turkey and take control over the region. Sarraj, who is perceived as a guarantor for relations with Turkey, serves as an obstacle in this plan, and Bashagha, who is known for his pro-American statements is sometimes considered as an alternative.

It would be important for Turkey to adopt a holistic strategy that pays attention to this side of the issue as well. The United States will bet on both sides in Libya. The GNA should not be allowed to be part of US plans to ultimately establish a "Greater Kurdistan".

This would also tear Turkey apart from its natural allies and lead to its isolation in other zones of conflicts due to tensions with the United States.

Believing that Turkey can act together with the United States in Libya while fighting against them in Syria is a misleading concept that could disrupt the Turkish fight against the puppet state.

### **The First Step of the 'Astana Model' in Libya**

In the meantime, the steps to be taken regarding the Russian citizens detained in the GNA region – as was mentioned previously – can also accelerate the cooperation process between Turkey and Russia. This is not just about the release of two Russian citizens: it will be of strategic importance for the establishment of the Astana model in the Eastern Mediterranean and Libya.

In return, Turkey and the GNA will also be in a position to make a demand from Moscow regarding Libya. This kind of mutual gesture can help to alleviate conflicts.

**Washington's strategy in Syria is not independent of its strategies in the Eastern Mediterranean, the Black Sea, Caucasus, Central Asia, etc. Therefore, Ankara should formulate a grand strategy to put an end to Atlantic plans in Syria, Libya, and the Black Sea, and it should establish new alliances accordingly.**

Creating a holistic strategy and a chain of alliances against Atlantic plans to prevent the US, France and their allies from attempting to kick Turkey out from the Eastern Mediterranean will

be instrumental in preventing the exploitation of energy reserves and the opening up of a new "corridor" in Syria. Washington's strategy in Syria is not independent of its strategies in the Eastern Mediterranean, the Black Sea, Caucasus, Central Asia, etc. Therefore, Ankara should formulate a grand strategy to put an end to Atlantic plans in Syria, Libya, and the Black Sea, and it should establish new alliances accordingly.

Cooperation not only with Russia, but also with Syria and Egypt should be among Turkey's priorities in this context. The American threat can only be eliminated by such a holistic strategy. Damascus and Cairo also need to grasp this holistic strategy. While fighting the United States and France in their home country, standing by Turkey's side in Libya is also an important for Damascus.

All countries that are targeted by imperialist forces must act according to their shared interests, and not according to any historic rivalry or conflicts. Turkey and Russia must take the first steps in this direction at once.

The United States and France have already placed Ankara and Moscow on the same front, whether they like it or not.

Therefore, to keep pushing the Blue Homeland strategy and to improve alliances in the region, starting with Russia, is key to a victory in the Eastern Mediterranean and Libya.

### **The Azerbaijan-Armenia Border Conflicts and Karabakh Conflict**

The just solution of the Karabakh problem in the South Caucasus and the establishment of stability and peace in the region pass through a holistic strategy as in the Eastern Mediterranean. The recent aggressive attitude of Armenia towards Azerbaijan and the border conflicts that followed show this clearly once again. The occupation of

Nagorno-Karabakh and 7 regions gives Yerevan the courage to resort to all sorts of arrangements.

Is there any chance for the Minsk Group, which holds the responsibility to solve this problem, to accomplish this seemingly impossible task? Previous years have made it clear that the Minsk process will not yield any results. There was no doubt about this among those who have observed the process closely. Therefore, ensuring the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan and sustaining peace and stability in the South Caucasus can no longer be left to the Minsk Group.

This of course means that some other mechanism will be required to facilitate this process. The success of Syria in the Astana process is an example especially of a solution for the conflicts in the region, and the Karabakh Problem. Turkey, Russia, and Iran are much more concerned with the Karabakh Problem than Western countries in terms of geography, geopolitics, and history. Regional problems can be solved much more comfortably and justly when western states are held back and the countries of the region take the leadership.



*Iran, Russia and Turkey praise contribution of Astana talks to Syrian settlement. (CGTN, 2018)*

It would be more useful to talk about the answer to the question of whether or not there is a

solid basis for the Astana process to take action in the Nagorno-Karabakh Problem and other issues in the South Caucasus.

The largest US embassy in Eastern Europe is located in Armenia. As a result of this, a serious network of American agents and their influences have taken over the country. They have also gained serious ground within the state and various NGOs (Aydinlik, 2018). The activities of Soros Foundations are also substantial. In his statement recently, Ilham Aliyev stated that the Sorosists took over the legislative-executive-judiciary arms of the Armenian state, and stated that the Pashinyan government has followed Soros' instructions (Aydinlik, 2020c).

This network has played an important role in bringing Nikol Pashinyan to power. Pashinyan showed his loyalty to the forces that brought him to power. His political alliance advocated Armenia's resignation from the customs union and military alliance with Russia (United World, 2020). Everyone has now begun to accept that Armenia's "axis" has shifted.

In parallel with this, there has been a recent process in which supporters of greater cooperation with Russia (such as Robert Kocharyan) were arrested and deposed. This "purge" was also reflected in the business world. Russia has clearly expressed its discomfort in this regard.

Yerevan adopted actions that glorify and honor Nazi collaborators in World War II in a way similar to certain former Soviet republics such as Ukraine and the Baltic states. A statue of the Dashnak leader Garegin Nzhdeh, who openly worked for fascist Germany, was erected in the center of the capital, and many high-ranking state officials attended the opening.

Such actions are among the most typical signs of standing against Russia and entering the Atlantic

front. For this reason, this may be seen not just as a simple historical attribution, but also as a strategic choice, since such activities symbolize “liberation from Russian hegemony” and consolidates anti-Russian position in the public opinion.

It is possible to see similar actions when evaluating the incidents that took place between 1915-23. Soviet Russia has also been alleged to be among the co-partners and cooperators of the so-called “Armenian Genocide” in many pro-West groups in Armenia, many of which are led by figures such as Pashinyan. According to these groups, the pro-Turkey Bolshevik Moscow partitioned the territory of Armenia with Ankara, and played a large role in the “genocide” by cooperating.

### Yerevan’s Tovuz Plans

Armenia naturally became more isolated in the region while standing by the Atlantic front and shifting away from Russia. It would be impossible for Yerevan to be not disturbed in this isolation, alongside the economic and political crises throughout the country.

The setup of Yerevan in the Tovuz region, which is located on the border with Azerbaijan, could also have a meaning in this respect. The attack did not come from the occupied territory, but from a natural border with Azerbaijan.

Let us just quickly remind our readers here that Armenia is a member of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), which consists of Russia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, and Kyrgyzstan. Any conflict in the occupation zone will not be counted as the joint defense of the CSTO, but an external attack on its core territory will garner the Organization’s full support.

This is one of the plans of the now isolated Yerevan. While strengthening its place in the

Western camp on one hand, it will have the support of Russia and the CSTO countries against Azerbaijan, on the other.

The economic problems and the political tensions inside the country will also be covered up this way. The government’s complete failure with the fight against the Coronavirus has remained as an important topic of the country’s public agenda, but this has been overshadowed by the conflict.

**This conflict, which was provoked by Armenia, will also encourage the Turkish Army, which had implicitly gone against the Atlantic bloc in Syria, the Eastern Mediterranean, and Libya, to open up a new front and thin out the Turkish military power.**

This conflict, which was provoked by Armenia, will also encourage the Turkish Army, which had implicitly gone against the Atlantic bloc in Syria, the Eastern Mediterranean, and Libya, to open up a new front and thin out the Turkish military power. It is clear that Azerbaijan is not the only target, and that Armenia is not the only perpetrator.

Moreover, this maneuver is not just an action to provoke Moscow against Azerbaijan. This will also pave the way for the Turkish-Russian conflict, which has been the most crucial mission of the West in the region throughout history.

These conflicts can cause Baku to look weak, and get embroiled in turmoil, and the orange movements in Azerbaijan, which the West has failed to strengthen previously, could put the Aliyev government in a tough spot.

### Moscow’s Harsh Reactions to Yerevan

In fact, Armenia’s provocative plans were doomed to failure from the outset. First of all, Armenia

was not the defensive force in this conflict, but the aggressor. The current Turkish-Russian and Azerbaijani-Russian relations in place have made it impossible for Moscow to target Baku and Ankara. And other members of the CSTO would not take an aggressive action against Turkey and Azerbaijan, either.

Armenia has also come up with the lies that some Ukrainian mercenaries and jihadists from Syria are fighting on the Azerbaijani side just to provoke Russia, but these unsubstantiated allegations could not find any support.

In addition to all of this, Yerevan has faced some unexpected reactions. Even Margarita Simonian, an Armenian-Russian who is in charge of Russia Today and Sputnik media groups and does not favor Turkey, has responded harshly to Yerevan asking for help. According to Simonian, the Armenian government has acted aggressively against Russia repeatedly and has basically slapped Russia in the face (MK, 2020).

Russian public opinion has been increasingly subjected to arguments favoring the view that it is Armenia who needs a military base in Gyumri, and not Russia (Khrumchikhin, 2018). The US military biological laboratories in Armenia have resulted in a serious sense of threat in Russia (Belozero, 2020).

The beginning of the border clashes, being three days after the discharge of Pashinyan's son from military service, were also criticized in the Russian media (Lenta.Ru, 2020).

A plan "B" is also ready for Yerevan. This time, Yerevan will be able to provoke its own people against Russia by saying, "we have been left alone" as a pretext of playing a clear role in Western plans in the region. The aim is to discredit Russia in the presence of the Armenian people.

Within that period, Russian television broadcasts would be stopped on grounds of being harmful to the national interests of the country.

### Disturbances That Can Be Created Within China

Another point to note is that the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan pipeline and the Baku-Tbilisi-Kars railway pass near the Tovuz region. Armenia's aggressive stances not only pose a danger for Turkey and Azerbaijan, but also to the security of energy and transportation in the region, especially with the Baku-Tbilisi-Kars railway being a part of the "Belt and Road" proposed by China. The initiative and the agreement of cooperation on this railway between Ankara-Moscow-Baku began in 2019, strengthening the potential for an alliance.

Meanwhile, let us just note that Armenia has recently joined the International Religious Freedom Alliance, which was founded in 2020 under the provision of the United States and has drawn attention for its anti-Chinese activities.

These facts show that the developments in Western Asia are not far from China. For this reason, it is also important for China to pursue a more effective policy in Western Asia, to take measures to support the anti-US front and to cooperate with the countries that face the Atlantic threat to reinforce their sovereignty.

### The Period of Keeping the Status Quo is Now Over

Therefore, Russia is deeply concerned by the pro-Western policies of the Pashinyan government. This situation offers great opportunities in favor of Turkey and Azerbaijan in redistributing the balances of power, and reshaping the alliances in the South Caucasus. It is possible to see the signs for it from the Kremlin.

Moscow has favored the protection of the status quo as it did before in the Karabakh Conflict. The concern that a conflict reaching beyond its relations with Yerevan could lead to a Western intervention in the region has played an important role in this attitude. The possibility of Western powers deploying in the region, with the excuse of the Azerbaijan-Armenia conflict, has been the decisive point in Russia's policy of maintaining the status quo.

However, a new process started in which these policies have begun to change. As we mentioned above, Armenia's Westward axis shift was among the leading reasons behind the strengthening of Moscow-Baku relations in political and economic areas. On such solid ground, relations with Baku have been getting more important for Moscow than relations with Yerevan. This being said, Russia still has certain commitments towards Yerevan within the framework of the CSTO.

### The Lavrov Plan is in Effect

In addition, the Azerbaijani Army has accumulated considerable power over the last 10 years, and has moved to a more advantageous position compared to the Armenian Army (this advantage has proven itself the April War in 2016). Five years ago, relying on this advantageous situation, Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev told the Russian President Vladimir Putin that the Karabakh Conflict must be resolved, even by force if necessary. Then, Putin promised his Azerbaijani counterpart that the issue would be resolved peacefully.

Russia began to work on a new plan, following Putin's promise. According to this plan, which would later be referred to as the Lavrov Plan, it was provisioned that the immediate evacuation of five occupied 'rayon's would take place first, and then be returned to Azerbaijan. This plan was put

in front of the former Armenian Prime Minister Serzh Sargsyan. In the end, both parties agreed upon the Plan.

However, after the overthrow of Sargsyan with the orange revolution movements, Pashinyan came and declared that he rejects the Lavrov Plan. As a result, this step toward a resolution to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict after many years was blocked.

Subsequently, Moscow-Yerevan relations have faced another major crisis. While Putin's promises to Aliyev remain valid, Azerbaijan's strict response to the provocations in Tovuz could also be evaluated as a reminder of the Russian promises in some ways.

All these cases indicate that a new mechanism with greater possibilities must be initiated.

Indeed, the strengthening of military relations between Turkey and Azerbaijan, such as conducting military exercises and developing the recent cooperation in the field of defense industries, is important. It is worthwhile to mention here that Turkish UAVs were put on the screen and that measures for retaliation were discussed at a recent meeting of the Armenian Ministry of Defense.

The efforts of the Ankara-Moscow-Tehran triangle (also known as the Astana process) acting on the Karabakh issue are vital to bear positive results.



*An image from the meeting of the Armenian Ministry of Defense. The Turkish UAV Bayraktar TB2, is seen on the screen. (Ruchron, 2020)*

In history, this mechanism has put an end to the “Armenian Issue”. The Dashnak government, a pro-British collaborative government whom Mustafa Kemal called the “Caucasus Barrier” during the War of Independence, was destroyed by the Turkish-Soviet military cooperation, and peace and stability were provided in the South Caucasus. The imperialist-backed occupied territories were also liberated.

The Holistic strategy of the Ankara government has not only paved the way for the liberation of the South Caucasus, but also saved Izmir. The same thing is needed today. The Astana mechanism, which would be in effect for the South Caucasus, will also be key to overcoming important problems such as Syria, the Eastern Mediterranean and Libya.

### Competition in Natural Gas Projects is not Essential

It is necessary to say that although there seems to be a competition between TurkStream and TANAP –which delivers Azerbaijani gas to Europe and Russian gas projects with the same goals– such projects do not essentially affect the gas providing parties. Europe’s gas demands are large enough to meet the supply of both projects. In addition, TurkStream was designed later on, and has taken TANAP into account as well.

TANAP is not considered as a competitor among the Russian public.

In fact, the TANAP, TurkStream and Nord-Stream projects share common interests against the EastMed project of the Atlantic front in the Eastern Mediterranean.

On the other hand, it is important to maintain the advantageous position supported by UN

resolutions and the full justification of the international law. It is important to avoid actions such as claiming territory on Iran even before the liberation of Karabakh or attempts such as recognizing the “Yerevan government in exile”. The liberation of the occupied lands should be the primary focus. All of Turkey’s attention, energy and power should be directed at this.

Any speeches that might lead to the loss of Turkey’s potential allies, and any attempts that could discredit Turkey in the international community will also disrupt the Nagorno-Karabakh cause and should therefore be avoided.

### The Key to Peace in the South Caucasus and West Asia

From the point of view of Russia, Turkey and Azerbaijan have started to take their place within Eurasia thanks to their military, economic and strategic power on one hand, while Armenia, which has significantly weakened, has fallen under the influence of the West on the other. It is clear who Russia’s ideal partners are to be.

Certainly, a Turkish-Azerbaijani union and Turkish-Russian-Iranian cooperation will disrupt US plans and bring peace in the region, just as they did historically, as we mentioned above, in the South Caucasus. Indeed, the effect of such cooperation will be felt, not just in the South Caucasus, but also all over West Asia.

Patriotic Party (Turkey) Black Sea-Mediterranean Friendship and Peace Plan, accepted on June 21, 2020, complements the ideas above-mentioned and it assessing these ideas together with the Plan will be beneficial. 🌸

# PATRIOTIC PARTY'S PLAN FOR BLACK SEA – MEDITERRANEAN FRIENDSHIP AND PEACE

21 JUNE 2020

1. US and NATO bases that threaten peace and development in the Black Sea, Caspian Sea, Aegean Sea, Mediterranean and Arabian Sea regions should be closed, and the fight against US-supported separatists and fanatical terrorists should be supported.

2. The Turkish and Greek peoples of Cyprus are members of separate nations. It is no longer possible for them to live together because of their painful past. These two peoples have had to determine their future separately. A real Turkish-Greek friendship can only be built on this very basis. Similarly, the State of Abkhazia is the state of the Abkhazian nation and is a factor for peace, stability, and security in the Black Sea. Recognition of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC) and the Republic of Abkhazia by regional states and the international community will disrupt US hegemonic plans and serve peace, stability, and prosperity.

3. Turkey's protection of its legitimate rights in the Aegean and the Eastern Mediterranean is compatible with the interests of Black Sea and Eastern Mediterranean countries: Russia, Syria, Egypt, Libya, Tunisia, Algeria and Italy. Therefore, Turkey should be supported in its rightful defence of its blue homeland in the Eastern Mediterranean against military threats by the US-Israel-Greece-Southern Cyprus alliance.

4. The US-led intervention in Libya should be ended, and Libya's legitimate government should be supported. Protecting Libyan territorial integrity is essential. The struggle of Libya's UN-recognized legitimate government to unite its homeland by any means is both rightful and the only solution for peace in the Mediterranean. Libyan oil belongs to the Libyan state and nation.

5. Crimea should be recognized as territory of the Russian Federation.

6. In order to put an end to the occupation of Armenia in Karabakh, which is part of Azerbaijani territory, regional states should put pressure on Armenia. The territorial integrity of Azerbaijan should be respected.

7. Syria's territorial and state integrity must be respected, and peace should be established in Syria. Syria must be cleansed of separatist and fanatical terrorist organisations. The US should stop occupying Syrian territory and should withdraw from Syria. The Astana Process conducted by Iran, Russia and Turkey and the Sochi Agreement between Turkey and Russia are the only way forward for a peaceful solution.

8. Israel's occupation of Arab lands and their oppression of the Palestinian people should end. The independent Palestinian State, with its capital as Jerusalem, should be recognised.

9. Turkey, Russia, Iran, Syria, the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus, Abkhazia, China, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela and Cuba should wage a joint fight against sanctions and for the lifting of the embargos. Free trade and economic cooperation between countries should be established. Trade in national currencies must be developed to end the supremacy of the US dollar for the welfare of the peoples of the world.

10. Barriers to free transportation, communication, tourism, economic and cultural development between the Black Sea, Caspian Sea, Aegean Sea, Mediterranean and Arabian Sea countries should be removed.

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# The Belt and Road Initiative: Economic and Financial Cooperation



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**SERHAT LATİFOĞLU**

Hedge Fund Manager

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*Serhat Latifođlu is a hedge fund manager. In the first eleven years of his career, he worked in managerial positions in various banks and stock brokerage companies. He also worked on the derivatives desks of various brokerage companies. Over the last ten years of his career, he founded and managed various funds and business in several sectors. Particularly, Mr. Latifođlu founded the first Turkish derivatives arbitrage fund in Switzerland. In addition, he is the co-founder of a London-based boutique wealth management firm Versum Wealth, which concentrates on multiple business areas. He recently co-founded a hedge fund trading in international financial markets, applying AI technology and picking patterns with behavioral finance approach. Moreover, Mr. Latifođlu advises several firms among the top 100 Turkish companies ranked in terms of their position in the financial markets. He earned a bachelor's degree in Public Finance from Marmara University and holds a Certificate in Behavioral Finance from Yale University and several certificates from various financial authorities worldwide. He served in the board of a number of civil society organizations such as Rumeli Türkleri Derneđi/Rumeli Balkan Federasyonu, RUYİAD and Karadeniz Vakfı.*

*E-mail: [serhat@versumwealth.com](mailto:serhat@versumwealth.com)*

**It seems that the Belt & Road Initiative's (BRI) main strategy is wisely designed and due to the world economic crisis it will play an important role in the world economy and global financial markets. This article will mainly focus on the economic effects of BRI and provide suggestions for financial cooperation and the integration of the counties involved. Besides the financial institutions and funds that directly support BRI, various institutions such as bilateral and multilateral regional banks, and China's public and commercial banks, wealth and pension funds could also offer financial alternatives to BRI countries. Establishing a joint clearing institution or a Clearing Bank could significantly facilitate transactions in financial markets, particularly for BRI countries interested in developing financial products specific to their needs. Establishing a joint Wealth Fund of the BRI countries will boost investment projects and support national economies.**

THE HISTORY OF THE SILK ROAD, AS A commercial route that connects China to the Middle East and Europe, goes back centuries. The Silk Road is the first inter-continental commercial route to be ever known in the history of humankind. It exerted a major economic, politic and cultural impact on many European and Asian countries.

The Silk Road maintained its importance throughout history and geopolitical struggles to control this route paved the way for various political and social developments. It started to lose its importance gradually with the geographical discoveries that enabled the expansion of capitalism and a shifting preference for greater use of maritime roads.

Over the last 30-40 years of capitalist globalization, there has been another shift of preference away from maritime roads in international trade. In this way, the development of alternative transportation methods (especially airlines) coupled with the rapid economic growth of Eurasian countries and the complex relations among these countries, brought back the importance of the

Silk Road. In 2013, China referred to this route as The Silk Road Economic Belt and announced its strategy of investing in roads and railway routes, oil and gas pipelines and other infrastructure developments. Belt & Road Initiative (BRI) is an initiative that will have a great impact on not only China's development but also that of many other countries, particularly in terms of energy and trade development.

The initiative defines five major priorities:

- Policy coordination
- Infrastructure connectivity
- Unimpeded trade
- Financial integration
- and connecting people.

The great potential of BRI will affect the world economy in both the short and long terms. It seems that BRI's strategy is wisely designed and due to the world economic crisis it will play an important role in the world economy and global financial markets.

This article will mainly focus on the economic effects of BRI and provide suggestions for financial cooperation and the integration of the counties involved.

## A Bird's Eye View of the Economy of Belt and Road Initiative Countries

Since its announcement in 2013, BRI involves 65 countries, including Turkey.

The BRI area can be categorized into six main regions:

- East Asia: China, Mongolia
- Southeast Asia: Brunei, Indonesia, Philippines, Cambodia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Singapore, Thailand, Timor-Leste, Vietnam
- Middle Asia: Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan
- Middle East and North Africa: UAE, Bahrain, Iraq, Iran, Israel, Egypt, Kuwait, Lebanon, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Palestine, Syria, Jordan, Yemen
- South Asia: Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan Sri Lanka
- Europe: Albania, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Czech Republic, Estonia, Armenia, Georgia, Latvia, Lithuania, Montenegro, N. Macedonia, Hungary, Moldova, Poland, Russia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Serbia, Turkey and Ukraine (OECD, 2018).

Since 2019, the total population of the BRI area accounts for 4.6 billion people. Its GDP totals 29 trillion dollars. That is to say, with 61% of the world population and 33% of global GDP, BRI is one of the biggest political-economic initiatives in human history. (CSIS, 2019).

With its immense markets, dynamic population and raw material sources, BRI is to become the powerhouse of the world economy in the next 20 years.

As regards the economic composition of BRI, we can see that with few exceptions it is

represented by both economically advanced and developing countries. With this heterogeneity in mind, one could argue that there is a group of countries focused on commodity-based production, as compared to another group in export-based production on various scales.

In terms of indebtedness (Debt / GDP ratio less than 50-60%) and investment ratings, 35 of the countries involved in BRI stand out as low-risk countries, whereas 23 countries are part of high-risk countries. In total, there are 8 countries categorized as extremely high-risk countries (CGDEV, 2018).

The neoliberal policies implemented over the last 30 years subjected the BRI countries to the impact of international companies and organizations. Although these policies were hoped to encourage GDP growth, it is obvious that they led to the deterioration of income distribution. Despite the fact that the BRI area is endowed with fertile soils, neoliberalism led to the decline of agriculture under the yoke of global agri-business. Moreover, small and medium-sized industries went into decline and light industries became subcontractors for international companies, mostly focused on low-added-value production. This transformation –which was mainly driven by the by the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank, the World Trade Organization, international companies and local authorities– caused resource mismanagement and excessive indebtedness. A significant part of BRI countries adopted privatization policies due to external pressure. Increasing unemployment rates and widespread income inequality went hand in hand with external economic dependency.

Except for the socialist countries and a number of BRI countries adopting a mixed-economy approach, a vast majority of BRI countries do not rely on planned economy, which poses

a great risk for the prospects of BRI. This situation enables global capitalism to manipulate the economy of these countries.

**The mobilization of intensive coordination between BRI countries based on a development plan will certainly enable new investors' funds to be used as leverage and will trigger sustainable growth in these countries.**

Despite the adverse circumstances in which these countries find themselves, the BRI strategy offers great opportunities for the countries involved to truly develop and get out of the economic trap they fell into.

The mobilization of intensive coordination between BRI countries based on a development plan will certainly enable new investors' funds to be used as leverage and will trigger sustainable growth in these countries.

In the period 2013-2019, China invested more than 100 billion dollars in BRI countries. In return, these countries invested 48 billion dollars in China. From 2013 to 2018, trade between China and its economic partners expanded by 6 trillion dollars. As a result of all these investments and commercial activities, at least 300,000 jobs were created in the BRI area (China Daily, 2019).

BRI proposes a total number of 2,631 projects, which are worth 3.7 trillion dollars. Approximately 2,600 companies or organizations will participate in these projects. 55% of the companies involved are estimated to be from the BRI countries other than China (Refinitiv, 2019a).

All of the previously mentioned numbers intrigue the international capital market and companies. Despite the propaganda against BRI,

Atlantic-based funds and investors will actively pursue the newly rising investment opportunities offered by BRI, because their profit rates have been continuously decreasing since the 2008 crisis and they have been looking for alternative investment areas. Their pursuit for new investments and funds will also provide various opportunities for BRI countries. In the upcoming years, it is expected that IMF and the World Bank would lose their impact on the region and that these funds and investors would operate independently in the region of BRI.

### **The Belt and Road Initiative: Financial and Monetary Concerns**

China provided 440 million dollars credit support for infrastructure projects through its own banks to facilitate economic activities and strengthen cooperation amongst BRI countries. 11 Chinese banks opened 76 offices in 28 different BRI countries, while 22 of the BRI countries opened as many as 50 offices in China (Refinitiv, 2019b).

- *Financial Institutions Directly Supporting BRI*

Besides China's banks, many funds set up for various purposes and financial institutions actively support the development and growth of the BRI countries. AIIB (Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank) can be considered to be an important actor in this field.



**ASIAN INFRASTRUCTURE  
INVESTMENT BANK**

AIIB was established on January 25, 2015 in Beijing with the lead of China and the participation of BRI countries. The bank's motto is

to invest in infrastructure development, as well as in the productive and sustainable sectors of these countries.

AIIB currently has 102 members: 80 permanent members and 22 prospective members. Unlike the hierarchical structure of the IMF and the World Bank, AIIB is managed by a highly democratic and transparent Board of Presidents where each member has a representative (AIIB, 2020a).

So far, the bank has approved 70 projects from many countries of the “Belt” and has made a total investment of approximately 14 billion dollars since February 2020 (AIIB, 2020b).

Silk Road Fund is another financing source of BRI. This fund stands out as separate from traditional development banks and its flexible structure provides an enabling framework for investment capital funds.

Silk Road Fund is established on December 29, 2014, in accordance with the Chinese public law and with investments from the State Administration of Foreign Exchange, China Investment Corporation, China Development Bank and Export-Import Bank of China. Through a variety of forms of investment and financing such as company mergers and acquisitions, shared purchases and public offerings, the Fund invests in many sectors of the countries involved in BRI. The Fund, which has a total capital of 40 billion dollars, so far has strategically invested in about 100 different projects in Pakistan and the Russian Federation (Silk Road Fund, 2020).

- *Other Financial Institutions and Funds Supporting BRI*

Besides the financial institutions and funds that directly support BRI, various institutions such as bilateral and multilateral regional banks, China’s public and commercial banks, Wealth and pension funds also offer financial alternatives to BRI countries.

There are various other multilateral banks and funds that were established in partnership of BRI countries: BRICS Development Bank (with a capital base of 100 billion dollars), Silk Road Gold Fund (with a capital base of 15 million dollars), China-Central and Eastern Europe Investment Fund (with a capital base of 11 billion dollars) and Eurasian Development Bank (with a capital base of 7 billion dollars).

Developing partnerships and collaborations in certain projects based on bilateral agreements can be considered to be a positive development for BRI countries. Even though the worth of these bilateral funds remains small, their number is expected to grow rapidly as BRI develops. The list and size of the bilateral funds created until today are as follows: China-Russia RMB Investment Cooperation Fund (6 billion dollars), Russia-China Investment Fund (5 billion dollars), China-India Development Fund (6 billion dollars), China-Africa Development Fund (2 billion dollars), Russia-India Development Fund (1 billion dollar).

Sovereign Wealth Funds which are common in Asian countries have the potential to become the most important sources supportive of BRI. These funds include: China Investment Corporation (814 billion dollars), China Life Insurance Company (382 billion dollars), National Social Security Fund of China (290 billion dollars), Russian Direct Investment Fund (10 billion dollars), China Development Bank (64 billion dollars).

Thanks to their extensive assets and experiences, the availability of public banks is an advantage for BRI countries and private companies involved in BRI. such banks include: Industrial and Commercial Bank of China (with a capital base of 3.4 trillion dollars), China Construction Bank (with a capital base of 3 trillion dollars), Agricultural Bank of China (with a capital base

of 2.7 trillion dollars), Bank of China (with a capital base of 2.6 trillion dollars) (Silk Road Briefing, 2019).

- *BRI's Financial Base*

Providing and securing money flows among BRI countries dispersed within such a broad geography are highly critical. With this in mind, China signed mutual swap agreements with 21 BRI countries in 2018. Moreover, it signed several agreements for local currency exchange with 8 countries and regional currency exchange with 2 countries. China also reached agreements with 7 countries for offshore yuan exchange. All of these agreements are designated as positive development that lower the exchange rate risk and favorably support trade between BRI countries. Chinese UnionPay is actively used in 41 BRI countries and it serves as an important tool for the internationalization

of the Yuan. RMB (Yuan) Certified Foreign Institute provides support for those who seek to invest in China's financial products. 5 different countries in the BRI region are consulting with this institute. As an alternative to the SWIFT transactions, CIPS (Cross-Border Interbank Payment System) was established by China. It services to 50% of BRI countries. 31 different BRI countries already signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with China for the development of financial services and cooperation (City of London, 2018).

All these data show that BRI countries are supported by a relatively strong banking and funding infrastructure. In summary, the numbers mentioned above indicate that BRI countries are exposed to increasing opportunities to complete new projects and making breakthroughs without the need of Atlantic-based funds.



Asia Stock Exchanges. Visual Capitalist, (2016).  
<https://www.visualcapitalist.com/all-of-the-worlds-stock-exchanges-by-size/>

## A Bird's Eye View of Financial Markets in BRI Countries

- *Bond and Stock Markets in BRI*

### *Countries*

With their large economies and high potential of growth, BRI countries can exert an important influence on global financial markets. Currently, their share on the world bond market, which is 102 trillion dollars, is 17 trillion dollar. This is relatively small compared to other geographic regions (Asian Bonds Online, 2020). China's low debt ratio is a virtue of its controlled borrowing policy. Considering that the Chinese bond market is around 11.5 trillion dollars and the debt/GDP ratio does not exceed 50%, we can say that China and other BRI countries have high chances of growth in the bond market. It is estimated that the actual share on the bond market would rise by 5 trillion dollars with the intensive cooperation and integration the coming years (Visual Capitalist, 2016).

Asian region stock market with their value of 33% share on the world stock markets has its own remarkable place (Visual Capitalist, 2016). Among the countries involved in Belt and Road Initiative, which total share counts 24 trillion dollars, China on its own has a share of 11 trillion dollars. The countries of West and Middle

Asia in particular have low share on the stock markets compared to their GDP, but they have high potential of growth as the Belt and Road Initiative projects continue to develop. If proper reforms are undertaken, the share on the stock market of the countries in the "Belt" would rise 8 – 10 trillion dollars in the next 10 years.

- *The Importance of Gold Reserves in BRI Countries*

Following the severe crisis that the US and EU economies have been facing since 2008, there are proposals to turn yuan and a gold based World Currency standing into an alternative currency. Therefore, gold stocks are likely to assume a great importance during economic fluctuations to take place in the coming years. 4 of the BRI countries rank among top 10 countries that have the largest gold reserves in the world. The total gold reserves of these countries are estimated at 9,617 tons and represent approximately 30% of the world's total gold reserve. After the 2008 crisis, moreover, many Eurasian countries such as Turkey, Russia and China have increased their gold reserves. Given the changes in the gold reserves between 2008-2020, the BRI countries that rank among top 20 countries with the largest gold reserves in the world are: Russia from 520 tons to 2,299 tons (4.4 times), China from 600 tons to 1,948 tons (3



Quarterly Official Gold Reserves. (World Gold Council), (2020)  
<https://www.gold.org/goldhub/data/monthly-central-bank-statistics>

times), India from 358 tons 635 tons (1.8 times), Turkey from 116 tons 485 tons (4.2 times), Kazakhstan 67 tons 388 tons (5.8 times), Uzbekistan has reached 338 tons from 0 tons (World Gold Council, 2020). This noticeable increase of the gold reserves in BRI countries can potentially enable these countries to create an alternative currency or to undermine the hegemony of the current world currency. With the recent crisis, it is estimated that the trend of increasing the gold reserves will continue and an increasing number of BRI countries will join to this trend.

- *Sovereign Wealth Funds and the Power of the Public Sector*

Another financial phenomenon specific to the BRI countries is the Sovereign Wealth Funds. The combined size of all BRI Sovereign Wealth Funds has a world wide significance. While the total value of world's Sovereign Wealth Fund is 8.2 trillion dollars, the share of the BRI countries is as much as 6 trillion dollars (SWFI, 2020). This situation provides alternative financing for BRI countries and supports the growth of national wealth in these countries. Before the crisis in 2008, these funds were raised primarily by commodity-based economies. Other BRI countries turned to this model after the crisis and evaluated their wealth in a more planned way. This approach provides a great advantage for BRI countries to develop meaningful projects and intensify their cooperation.

Lately, it is acknowledged that the public sector plays important role in certain BRI countries. A recent report published by the IMF indicates that the share of public companies doubled in the world economy over the last decade, reaching a value of 45 trillion dollars, which represents 50% of global GDP (IMF, 2020). This report emphasizes that the tendency of growth

recorded in public sectors would continue; especially in China and other BRI. The total value of wealth of the largest 2,000 companies has reached 20% of the world total. The companies in question operate in a wide range of sectors such as banking, energy, industry and services sectors. National energy companies constitute the largest companies in the world, and they control more than half of the world oil and gas market (IMF, 2020). It is estimated that public and private partnerships, which have a major contribution to national economies in areas such as employment, fair income distribution, strategic planning, sustainability, profitability and development, would continue to receive a greater share in the world economy. Particularly after the credit and demand crisis triggered and deepened by the recent COVID-19 pandemic, the public sector will take on an increasing relevance in the world economy. The IMF (2020) report admits the failure of privatization policies, which rose to prominence in the 1990s, and signals the return of the public sector. The fact that public companies are expanding rapidly is interpreted as a disturbing development by multinational companies and their representatives such as the IMF. It is estimated that China would become a role model for other BRI countries so that these countries would increasingly favour the public sector. Public companies, which operate directly under public institutions or public-private partnership (provided that the public share is 51% and above), will be an important foundation for sustainable growth and the success of BRI countries. Put differently, the development of public sector in BRI economies will encourage sustained economic growth and increased cooperation between these countries.

### Suggestions for the Improvement and Increased Coordination of Financial Markets in the BRI Area

In this section, we will discuss the needed steps and suggestions to be taken in order to establish a stronger infrastructure in which financial markets will be able to support the real economy in the BRI countries. Financial markets designed to support the real economy are conducive to economic growth. Otherwise, financial markets would become a playground for speculative activities by global financial actors. One could notice that certain BRI countries have accumulated considerable experience in global financial markets. This experience will be of great benefit for each country to address its own problems, especially in overcoming these problems in cooperation with other BRI countries.

- *The Belt and Road Initiative Index, Bonds, Stocks and Other Markets*

Establishing a joint clearing institution or a *Clearing Bank* could significantly facilitate transactions in financial markets, particularly for BRI countries interested in developing financial products specific to their needs. A management and contribution model such as AIIB can be replicated in this area. In other words, establishing a *Clearing Bank* would ensure fast and secure transactions, while also attracting new investors.

The stock markets –as the barometers of capitalist economies– in the BRI area are of an heterogeneous character. They are either relatively developed or underdeveloped. The establishment of a joint stock index in BRI countries –which would rank the BRI companies–would support the national stock markets of these countries. It would also provide supplementary funding and enable the diversification of investment instruments for BRI-based companies.

Furthermore, the BRI countries could issue exclusive bonds and bills (e.g. Silk Road bonds and bills). Considering the high gold reserves in these countries, it is also possible to issue common bonds and bills based on gold. All these borrowing instruments would be controlled by the *Belt and Road Initiative Index*, under the heading *Bonds and Bills*.

Many among the BRI countries have economies based on raw material production. On a platform under the *Belt and Road Initiative Index*, it would be an important step to start a headquarters for managing financial derivatives. As such, derivative products could be developed and insurance schemes could be used against the price fluctuation.

Derivate products that support hedging transactions for the development of trade between BRI countries would also be useful. Both crossrates and indicator rates set by these countries could be included in the *Belt and Road Initiative Index*. This would minimize the exchange rate risk and encourage trade.

Considering that the Islamic geography is predominant in the BRI area, Islamic financing and investment products could also be collected by the *Index*. Thus, the volume of the Islamic financial products in Western banks would decrease and a safe alternative would be offered to investors who are interested in using these products more frequently.

Private Equity funds could also be collected by the *Index*. These funds could support projects in BRI countries and serve as an important foundation to BRI-based manufacturing companies. It is also possible to classify the funds by creating different indices, based on both sectors and asset sizes, and present them to investors. *The Belt and Road Initiative Index*, with arrangements such as

tax benefits and various supports, could be a powerful tool to encourage private equity transactions between BRI countries.

- *Institutions Supporting Trade and Local Currencies in the BRI Area*

The contribution of commodity exchanges to the real economy, especially to the national agriculture, is significant. These exchanges create a more transparent supplydemand balance for agricultural products, ensure the right quality standards for production and also promote manufacturing activities. As regards the development of agriculture in the BRI area, it would be an important step to establish a platform that unifies the commodity exchanges within the BRI area. Supported by a technological infrastructure, the *Commodity Exchange Platform* would support the national agriculture, develop the mutual trade and facilitate the use of national cross currencies. The fact that many countries in the BRI area are under a heavy debt burden increases the importance of these countries' mutual swap agreements. More frequent swap agreements between the Central Banks of the BRI countries would be of strategic use for BRI economies, especially in times of crisis. China has already signed 33 swap agreements and supports the international use of *Yuan*. Therefore, signing swap agreements among BRI countries would support the local currencies and protect the national reserves.

In order to facilitate trade and financial transactions among the countries involved in the CIPS and SPFS systems developed by China and Russia could be integrated as an alternative to the SWIFT system. This would eliminate all the potential sanction threats. The widespread presence and infrastructure that CIPS has reached is noticeable, but it is not sufficient to become an alternative to SWIFT yet. SPFS is a relatively

new system. Combining or harmonizing both systems could create a very strong synergy.

- *Other Institutions to Support the Financial Markets in the BRI Area*

Sovereign Wealth Funds s are one of the most efficient tools for collecting and managing national assets. The trend of growth recorded in Sovereign Wealth Funds over the last decade will continue, especially among BRI countries. Establishing a joint Sovereign Wealth Fund of the BRI countries will boost investment projects and support national economies. This fund, which is worth 6 trillion dollars in total, will be a strong leverage for investments. Firstly, all these funds should be presented on a common platform; then all funds can create a new legal entity based on their value and assets and create the Sovereign Wealth Fund of the BRI countries with the deposition of certain shares. The high priority of this fund could be both supporting the infrastructure projects and financial investments in the BRI area.

As regards financial markets, rating agencies are of great importance for governments and companies in need of borrowing. The criteria and ratings determined by these institutions significantly affect the borrowing methods and costs of companies. American companies play important role in this sector. However, their reliability and impartiality have become controversial, especially after the crisis in 2008. Thus, establishing a joint credit rating company for BRI countries and companies is necessary. Having one in the Eurasian region will be beneficial both for financing regionbased countries and companies and for all investors seeking alternative investments.

*Think tanks*, especially Atlantic-based research institutions, perform detailed research on topics such as politics, foreign policy and econ-

omy. They exert great influence on the formulation of state strategies. There are many state-owned or autonomous research institutions in BRI countries. All these institutions, especially those specialized in economics, could be united under a joint platform. In this way, it would be helpful to create a research institute to follow the economic developments resulting from BRI cooperation. 🌱

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# THE FIRST BOOK ABOUT ATATÜRK EVER PUBLISHED IN IRAN



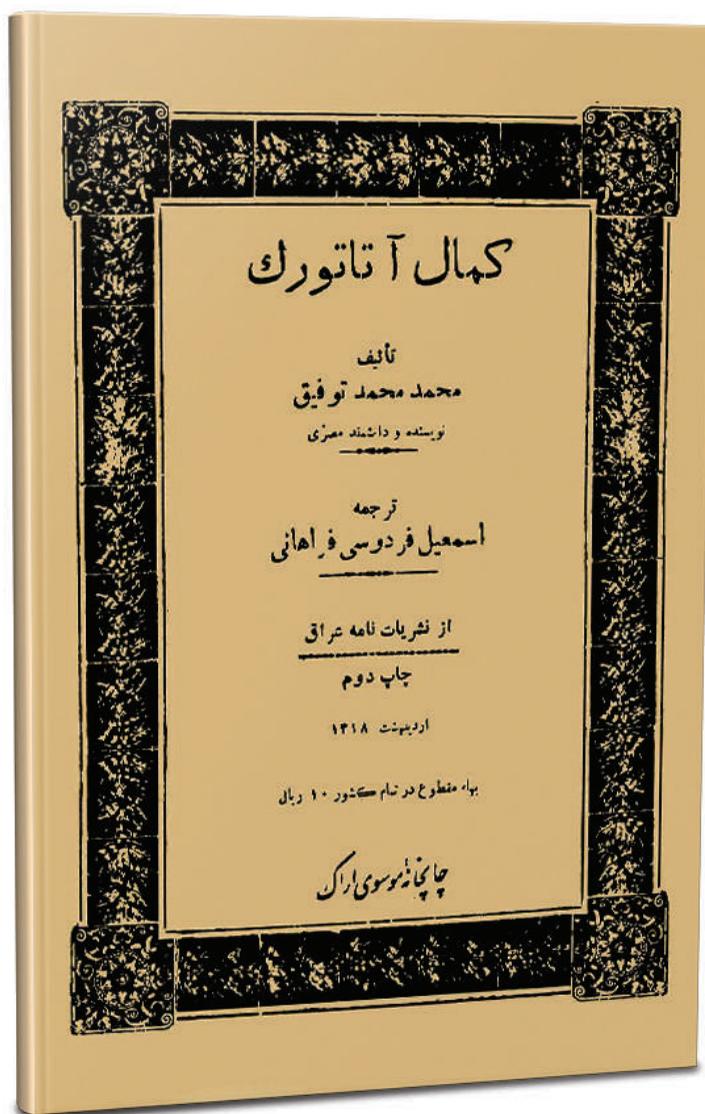
MESUD SADRMOHAMMADI

PhD Student  
Department of History, Hacettepe University



*He is an Iranian journalist born in Tabriz. He has worked on Turkish and Eurasian news and analysis in different newspapers and agencies in Iran. He completed his master's degree in the Department of Caucasian and Central Asian Studies at Tehran University and is currently pursuing his PhD in History at Hacettepe University in Ankara. He works on the last period of the Ottoman Empire and political and cultural relations in the Middle East.*

*E-mail: [m.sadrmoammadi@gmail.com](mailto:m.sadrmoammadi@gmail.com)*



Kemal Atatürk

Author: Mohammad Mohammad Tawfiq

Egyptian Author

Translation: Ismail Firdevsi Ferahani *Namey-i Irak* Publication Second Edition, March 1939 Erak Musevi Printing House

THIS BOOK IS AN IMPORTANT READING in Turkish-Iranian studies. It sheds light on the history of modern Turkey and Atatürk's charismatic personality from a Middle Eastern lens. The manuscript was authored by an Egyptian writer named Mohammad Mohammad Tawfiq and first appeared in *Al-Hilal* magazine based in

Cairo at a time while Atatürk was still alive. It was later translated into Persian by Ismail Firdevsi Ferahani and his translation was serialized during Atatürk's lifetime for a period of 16 months in a daily newspaper called *Namey-i Irak*. This translation was also printed as a book in December 1938, exactly one month after Atatürk's pass-

ing. The book was released in a second edition, which does not unfortunately provide any clues about the publication date of both the original manuscript and its Persian translation. Judging from the narration, however, one could presume that the Arabic edition may have appeared in the mid-1930, while the serialization of its translation by *Namey-i Irak* occurred between 1936 and 1938, until Atatürk's passing.

As was specified in the preface to the second edition, the original edition was completed within a few weeks following its serialization by *Al-Hilal*, and the second edition was published in March 1939. Overall, this 220-page book does not only present Atatürk's personal and intellectual life, but also addresses the history of Turkey after the reign of Abdulhamid.

### The Persian Translator: "The Publication of This Book Is a Service to Humanity"

In his preface, the translator considers the writing, translation and publishing of a book about Atatürk's life, acknowledging his place in world history, as a service to human history.

He goes on to describe the situation of the Turkish people after the First World War and Atatürk's role in this period as follows:

"The Ottoman lands were in a very strange mess and everything was falling apart. There was no chance of salvation. However, Kemal Atatürk, with his own power, tore the veil of eternal unhappiness and misery and started a new era. He saved his own people from the danger of extinction with tireless effort and strong will, which is to be found only in historical geniuses, and he himself became the leader of this greatness."



### The Egyptian Author's Description of Atatürk

In his book, Mohammad Mohammad Tawfiq seeks, not only to tell the social and political history of modern Turkey, but also to draw a portrait of one of the greatest leaders in history.

He concludes his introduction by expressing his gratitude to the Turks who have contributed to the book by providing details of the war of independence and its aftermath. The name of Mehmet Akif Ersoy –the author of the Turkish National Anthem– is also acknowledged in this regard.

In the chapter to follow, Tawfiq provides a vivid portrayal of Atatürk's physical traits:

"Protruding facial bones, long forehead, blond hair, wolf-like blue and bright eyes. It radiates greatness; greatness, genius and magic from these eyes. His nerves are like iron and his will is unbreakable. His soul is sometimes like a flame and sometimes like an ice. The way he talks is hard and scary like molten iron, and the way he looks is very catchy. He

was born for as if rule over iron and flames. His patience is for precautions, but his entrance to the square is like an apocalypse. Life and death are the same in his eyes on the battlefield... He sits seriously in his library, as if he was in ambush during the war. He draws his people towards civilization, just as he marched in front of them on the battlefield. In all of these contrasting situations, he is solid as a stone, solid as a hard steel.”

In what follows, the author attempts to explain the characteristics of Atatürk's personality based on his life story. He quotes Atatürk's own words and the people around him, while also addressing the events he witnessed in the late Ottoman era, the War of Independence and the Early Republic Era. These events testify to his leadership style.

The author uses the following depictions to narrate Atatürk's leadership qualities:

“Confident”,  
 “... despair can penetrate every heart, except for the heart of Mustafa Kemal”,  
 “...his decisions are final, and his will is immutable”,  
 “... the whole world was fooled by Wilson's words, but Mustafa Kemal just smiled at him with full of intelligence”,  
 “... there is no room for softness and compromise in his military method”.

Tawfiq then concludes his introduction by offering the following advice: “We advise all our readers to model themselves on the life of this great man.”

### Relations with Enver Pasha and the Committee of Union and Progress

The first chapter of the book describes Atatürk's life. Main topics addressed in this part include the situation of Thessaloniki, Mustafa Kemal's military education, the policies of Abdülhamid, the creation of the Homeland Society, the exile of Mustafa Kemal to Damascus and his return from exile, his activities in Istanbul and Thessaloniki, the Second Constitutional Era, Mustafa Kemal's travel to Europe and the role of the Union and Progress.

The remainder of this chapter provides information about the Tripoli War and Atatürk's leadership in this war. Tawfiq goes on to criticize the imprudence of Enver Pasha and other Union and Progress officials, especially during the Balkan wars. In particular, the relations with Germany and the decision to enter the First World War are criticized by the author. This critique is supported by the late Atatürk's own words. The author describes this period as follows:

"When Turkey entered the war, Mustafa Kemal was in Sofia. He had repeatedly communicated to the statesmen in Istanbul in long writings that it was wrong to enter the war and march with Germany. But at the time, his views were deemed insane..."

In this regard, the author also refers to the correspondence between Mustafa Kemal and Enver Pasha and describes the long battle of the Dardanelles and the failures of Britain. Afterwards, he describes the state of the Ottoman fronts during the First World War, especially Atatürk leadership in these fronts as well as important developments in the country's domestic politics.

### “There Was No Cure But the Revolution”

The second chapter of the book, titled “Jihad and Independence”, describes the War of Independence. After describing the situation of Turkey after World War II in a few pages, the author goes on to argue:

“There was no cure but the revolution and thus the miracle of the 20th century was about to happen. Some of them mocked and accused the revolutionaries of madness. The Government of Damat Ferit left everything to the Europeans, and the Caliph was sitting in his palace waiting for his fate to unfold. He was satisfied with occupying a throne that rules only a city where the water, air, soil and sky of the Ottoman Empire were under enemy occupation.”

Moreover, Tawfiq mentions Atatürk's initiation of the national struggle, acknowledges the commanders and the people who followed him on this path, and quotes from Atatürk's speeches. In particular, he discusses the developments in Sivas and Erzurum by explaining Atatürk's policies to mobilize the people and the army:

“Mustafa Kemal was always busy writing letters. He once objected to the political attitude of the palace by writing a letter to the palace on behalf of the Sivas Council. In this letter, he criticized the measures taken by the Caliph against the patriots and objected to Kurdish attacks against the national forces in favor of the British. In another letter, he told how Damat

Ferit Pasha sowed the seeds of hostility and discord among the Ottoman tribes. He demanded that the government of Damat Ferit be dismissed. He was not contented with these. In an open letter addressed to the public, he sharply criticized the Istanbul administration for postponing the elections and for keeping quiet about the Greek occupation. This letter was very effective in the eyes of the people and provoked the public against the ‘black bat’ (Grand Vizier Damat Ferid Pasha). The people wanted his dismissal. This marked Mustafa Kemal's second political success after the Congress, and his tone became even sharper towards the Istanbul government.”

### The Iron Will of Mustafa Kemal

Tawfiq describes the situation after Atatürk's arrival in Ankara as follows:

“The Caliph's forces lacked spirit, and his troops were joining the national forces day by day. In a few weeks, they all perished, just as falsehood perishes in the face of the truth. The repentant troops were crying and joining Mustafa Kemal. Young people, old people and women were flocking to Ankara from all over the country.”

“Women and girls were sending fresh and dry food from their own regions to Ankara. They were serving soldiers, cooking, sewing clothes. Then they even helped the military transport military from several provinces

to Ankara. These supplies continued even in the freezing winter cold. Supplies were continuing from villages to Ankara. Women were working day and night, despite rain and snow. They were working without anything to protect themselves from harsh weather conditions. In the middle of roads, deserts, valleys, under snow and rain, these women stayed in the cold, all night until the morning and continued their work again in the morning. Not only did they carry weapons, but they also sent their only children to the front lines to be martyrs of the country. O daughters of martyrs, O mothers of martyrs, only Allah can reward you!”

“Mustafa Kemal was leading with an iron will in this promising but also difficult situation and watching his army grow with iron and flame. A terrible war awaited them in the future, where hunger and hardships were considerable.”

### “The Wolf of Ankara”

In the continuation of the second chapter, Tawfiq explains in a very detailed and exciting manner the Battle of Sakarya and how the Greeks were poured into the sea. He then emphasizes Atatürk's leadership genius as well as the loyalty of the Turkish people and Kuvâ-yi Milliye to his cause.

The third chapter of the book, which covers the Republican period, is under titled “The New Era”.

In this chapter, the author first touches on the abolition of the Sultanate, then the Lausanne negotiations and agreement, and then details the

creation of political parties in the Republican period. After describing the opposition movements and revolts of the Republican period, Tawfiq describes Atatürk's domestic policies and finally addresses the social and cultural reforms under the title, “The Immortal Spirit of Mustafa Kemal”. The author devotes special attention to educational reforms and the reconstruction of the Anatolian civilization.

Tawfiq also addresses Turkey's military situation:

“Such an army is inconceivable anywhere but in Turkey. The disorganized state of the Ottoman Empire has left itself to a unitary and centralized administration. Turkey's current borders are in the form of an impenetrable steel fortress that protects Atatürk's nation. Mustafa Kemal, a war genius, knows his army one by one from A to Z. He knows the methods and tools of war. This means that war is a summoner of hell to anyone who can oppose the interests of the country with the order of the army!”

Tawfiq portrays Atatürk as “the Wolf of Ankara”. Worthy of note that the wolf is a symbol of genius, intelligence, courage and fearlessness in Arab culture. At the end of the book, the author refers to the development of Turkey in the Republican era, especially the increase in production and security, and the fact that Turkey has become an internationally respected country.

These analyses show how Turkey's image was globally perceived in the 1930s, especially in the Middle East. 🌍

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## Post-COVID-19 Global System: Old Problems, New Trends



**SERDAR YURTÇİÇEK\***

PhD Student

International Politics, University of International Business and Economics (Beijing, China)



UFUK ULUTAŞ, THE PRESIDENT OF THE Center for Strategic Research, is the editor and one of the contributors to “*Post-COVID-19 Global System: Old Problems New Trends*”, a book prepared by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Center for Strategic Research. The book’s editorial board includes Yavuz Selim Kıran, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs; Ufuk Ulutaş, Sibel Erkan and Mehmet Zeki Günay from the Center for Strategic Research affiliated with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs as well as Mesut Özcan from the Diplomacy Academy of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Talha Köse from Ibn Haldun University. It is indicated that the views and opinions expressed in the book are not reflective of the position of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. However,

one could still grasp a general idea about the Ministry of Foreign Affairs’ official position by merely reading the book, given that Minister of Foreign Affairs penned the foreword himself and a majority of the members of the Editorial Board and contributors work for the Ministry.

### The International System After COVID-19

This book discusses the impact of COVID-19 on the neoliberal international system, which consolidated its position with the disintegration of the Soviet Union. Also discussed in the book are foresights about global political trends and potential sources of conflict in the post-COVID era. As such, it attempts to answer an important

\* Serdar Yurtçicek was born in 1985 in Diyarbakır. He graduated from Tourism and Hospitality Management at Balıkesir University and then Department of Business at Dokuz Eylül University, and also Department of International Relations at Anadolu University. He holds his MA degree in Department of Business at Beykent University in 2013-2015, and also International Issues and Global Governance at Zhejiang University in 2016-2020. He worked in companies such as Nokia, Samsung Electronic-Turkey. Besides, he served as an Deputy Director General in Aydınlık Daily in 2014-2016. E-mail: serdaryurtcicek@gmail.com

question: what will be the impact of COVID-19 on globalization and global competition? In doing so, it attempts to understand the possible transformation of the relationship between globalization, the international system and national governments. Moreover, the book presents foresights about the future of digital diplomacy, medical intelligence, economy, immigration, conflict resolution, the Middle East and international organizations, which are presented as issues of importance for global players such as Turkey.

The majority of the contributors agree on one crucial point: the COVID-19 is likely to cause a world-wide paradigm shift, as was experienced after the 9/11 Attacks and 2008/2009 Global Financial Crisis. Many contributors raise the question of who will lead the international system in the post-COVID-19 era. The predominant belief is that China is not fit to build its own system. In Chapter 2 and Chapter 19, drawing on Western sources representative of the Atlantic media and scholarship, most of the authors concur that China has tried to hide the outbreak of COVID-19 from the very beginning, delayed making a statement of early warning and shared unreliable data. Another point of agreement is that China will have to limit the scope of the Belt and Road Initiative and is likely to re-orient its focus more on itself and its surrounding region, considering that the global economy is projected to contract due to COVID-19. Interestingly enough, the book admits that China has been successful in stopping the pandemic within its borders thanks to the presence of a strong state mechanism. This being said, the strength of this mechanism is viewed as an important factor that will impede China's acceptance as a legitimate global leader due to its so-called "authoritarian" character. Chapter 1 adds that Germany, South Korea and Japan have also been successful thanks to the strong organizational capacity of their governments.

### Where Will Be Turkey?

The book suggests that the US status as a global hegemon will not change in the medium term,

even though the USA lacks a global vision and the necessary leadership skills to help other countries suffering from the pandemic. In this context, M. Şükrü Hanioglu (author of chapter 3) argues that the USA should launch a new Marshall program, as was done after World War II. Quoting Henry Kissinger, he asserts that the USA can revive the Western Civilization by dropping its "USA First" discourse. This move can even be embraced by Russia and China, since their growth depends on foreign trade. Otherwise, the authors are concerned about China propagating its success by also giving a hand to the European Union (EU) and Africa. In Chapter 4, this concern goes hand in hand with the general conviction that Turkey should be part of a "modern and civilized" West rather than the Asian Civilization.

Chapter 22 remarks that supranational organizations such as the EU cannot become a powerful global player, since European countries will have to isolate themselves while dealing with their domestic affairs after the pandemic. Meanwhile, both the USA and the EU are likely to focus more on domestic production with the aim of minimizing their dependency on the Chinese economy in the post-COVID 19 era.

### Is Globalization Over?

The contributors agree that the fight against COVID-19 constitutes a global battle. In Chapter 2, it is argued that independent and uncoordinated efforts are at best insufficient and costly. Moreover, Altay Atlı notes that in the past, some governments had used globalization for maximizing their individual gains, but that the very same governments have failed to effectively cooperate in the fight against global terrorism. He cautions that the same situation goes for the fight against COVID-19.

According to Altay Atlı (Chapter 9) and Birol Akgün (Chapter 14) COVID-19 has not marked the end of globalization. Yet, globaliza-

tion is likely to take a new shape after the pandemic. The United Nations (UN), the World Health Organization (WHO) and other relevant international institutions who are labeled as the representatives of globalization have proved to be too weak and fragile. Their existence and functioning heavily depend on funding by leading nation-states.

### Nation States Will Be Stronger

Chapter 5 and Chapter 11 underline that COVID-19 has revealed the need for empowering nation-states, reviving a state-led economy and enhancing border protection. It is expected that nation states will further encourage domestic production for greater economic security, particularly in the areas of agriculture and the medical industry. Similarly, the book also observes that countries have recognized the importance of bio-medical power, –of similar importance to nuclear power– after the pandemic. In the meantime, Chapter 18 remarks that terrorist organizations are possibly aware of the growing relevance of bio-medical power, which requires governments to develop more efficient health systems, focus on biological studies and improve medical intelligence.

Talha Köse (Chapter 21) cautions that even though COVID-19 has led to a period of relative peace, this situation is only temporary. Mesut Özcan (Chapter 23) and Nurşin Ateşoğlu-Güney (Chapter 22) underline that the USA will not completely withdraw from the Middle East and key US rivals such as Russia and Iran will mainly preserve their regional influence despite several adversities associated with COVID-19.

### US-China Competition and Turkey

Chapter 11, 14 and 24 foresee that the Sino-American conflict is likely to escalate in the post-COVID-19 era and Turkey will be better off if it can avoid taking sides. The best option for Turkey is to maximize its interests by pursuing a policy of balancing.

Mustafa Kibaroglu (Chapter 8) asserts that Turkey's medical aid to other countries will increase its global prestige in the post-COVID-19 era. Meanwhile, Turkey should not consider withdrawing from NATO. On the contrary, it must remain a member of the Western civilization, while cautiously improving its cooperation with the East by focusing on self-sufficiency in the areas of economic production and national defense. Birol Akgün adds that Turkey will be able to play a constructive role in the post-COVID-19 international system, if it can effectively pursue a policy of balancing between the East and the West.

In the final analysis, the resurgence of nation-states and statism is highly likely in the post-COVID-19 era. Economic production, health and national security present themselves as areas of high priority in this context. However, the book's overall negative approach to China clearly reflects the fact that the influence of Western, or Atlanticist perspectives on the official mindset in Turkey is still of a significant importance. Such a mindset would result in the failure of Turkish policy makers to fully acknowledge how COVID-19 has revealed the collapse of Western neoliberalism and the center of gravity of the global economy has already shifted to Asia (Gürcan 2019, 2019/2020; Gürcan & Kahraman, 2020). Overall, the book expresses a naïve belief that the USA will retain its hegemonic status after COVID-19, which can potentially hamper any attempts at formulating realistic policies that can serve Turkey's national interests. 🌸

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# Ni Min *(Photography Artist)*



Fujian Hui'an Maiden's Weaving Net.

*The Hui'an women refer to a group of women with special folk customs at the seaside of the Huidong Peninsula in Fujian. They are famous at home and abroad for their peculiar costumes and hardworking spirit. They wear colorful headscarves and orange hats because they live on the beach for wind protection. There are woven small flowers and colorful ornaments on the flower towels; the upper body is tight and narrow. Short clothes, showing the belly button.*

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