

Analyzing the Reasons for Formulating the Belt and Road Initiative

Kun Wang

School of Social Sciences and Humanities, Loughborough University, Leicester, United Kingdom
Xuancheng 242000, Anhui Province, China

Received: 12 Mar 2023; Received in revised form: 05 Apr 2023; Accepted: 12 Apr 2023
©2023 The Author(s). Published by TheShillonga. This is an open access article under the CC BY license
(<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>)

Abstract

The discussion over the impetus behind the Chinese government's actions in the realm of international relations has become more intense since the 1970s when China began the platform of reform and opening up. Based on The related literature, there are different kinds of opinions related to this issue. On the one hand, according to some academics, China's foreign policy is intended to showcase its tremendous might and begins with its own interests. According to particular academics, the foreign policy of the Chinese government focuses on cultural inclusiveness and takes social consensus as a central starting point. By using the example of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) to illustrate the variables influencing the formation of China's foreign policy, this study primarily examines the factors that influence foreign policy in China. Besides, the International relations (IR) theory and political heuristic theory will be used to carry out the discussion. The methodology of this paper will rely on secondary data to study the different views of the academic community and propose a foreign policy that China could adopt in the future.

Keywords— One Belt, One Road, China, Foreign policy

I. INTRODUCTION

Along with China's fast development, China's foreign policy has gained attention from many aspects all over the world. Every country formulates its foreign policy based on its national interests and international situation, including China. As a big eastern country with a unique social system, China has to face more special challenges in formulating its foreign policy. In recent years, one of China's key international policies is the "One Belt, One Road" initiative, which is a good case for researchers to explore the drivers and theories behind China's foreign policy (Ferdinand, 2016).

Many research questions for this topic are, "Why did China decide to initiate the BRI?". The Chinese government enacted the "One Belt, One Road" policy to boost China's economic development and that of a number of Central Asian nations. Meanwhile, it has far-reaching significance in economic, political, and cultural exchanges. In this article, the researcher will first introduce the basic information of BRI, then illustrate the reasons for the Chinese government to initiate this policy based on related literature.

The "One Belt, One Road" initiative emphasizes global collaboration, especially in Central Asia countries. Central Asia lies at the center of the Eurasian continent, connecting Eastern and Western Europe (Pop, 2016). Its position has special strategic significance. Some scholars point out that the five central Asian countries have problems in transportation and technology levels and urgently need help from other countries, so China wants to seek business opportunities in these countries in these countries and provide them with more investments. However, some scholars believe that China decided to develop One Belt And One Road in order to realize the economic community within the scope so as to enhance the regional strength to cope with the impact of the USA and other Western nations (Cai, 2018). Furthermore, the Chinese government said: that weak countries have no diplomacy. Therefore, the impetus behind China's One Belt, One Road initiative is not only related to the economic environment and trade environment of the five Asian countries. There are complex reasons for the formulation of BRI, which gives researchers an opportunity to explore the drivers of Chinese foreign policy.

According to the literature, the diplomatic approach of China has been characterized as "intermittent" as well as "aggressive," and many factors have contributed to its new assertiveness. This description might relate to the Chinese constantly growing economic power. Henry Kissinger (2012) stated, "China does not perceive itself as a rising power; rather, it views itself as a rising power." It perceives no likelihood of a powerful China posing an unnatural threat to the international order by exerting its grip on economic, cultural, political, as well as military matters. Back to normal" (Shambaugh, 2013). China's foreign policy also faces some challenges. As the global financial crisis intensifies, China's political leaders face the challenge of managing its impact on the country's labor market (Zhao, 2011). Consequently, variations in the foreign policy of China, especially the One Belt And One Road policy, should have lots of initiatives.

II. THEORETICAL AND METHODOLOGY

The fundamental theory used in this essay is the theory of international relations (IR). International relations (IR) theory is often taught as a theory that aims to both explain and forecast state conduct in the past. However, many theories disagree with even this characterization. The main origins of conflict in traditional theories of IR are often seen to be people, states, or state systems (Cristol, 2019). The foundation of liberalism—also referred to as "liberal internationalism"—is the conviction that the existing international order can promote world peace. Liberalism promotes international collaboration to advance national goals rather than using direct force, such as military action. Liberals contend that its potential advantages outweigh its disadvantages, such as possible economic harm and human fatalities (Norwich University Online, 2017). "Rational actors" and "cognitive approaches" are two contrasting theories of decision-making introduced by Milton Friedman and Herbert Simon. Friedman maintained that "Outcome validity" should be used to evaluate theories, whereas Simon insisted that "Process validity" should get greater attention. Alex Mintz and associates created Political Inspiration Theory in the early 1990s to fill the gap between cognitive and rational methods (Redd, S. B., Brulé, D., & Mintz, A., 2010).

There are five key processing characteristics: sequential search, non-holistic search, dimension-based processing, and non-compensatory decision rule. Political Heuristic Theory's fundamental tenet is that it pertains to the political elements of making foreign policy decisions (Sandal, N. A., Zhang, E., James, C. C., & James, P., 2011). Political Inspiration Theory is connected to Applied Decision Analysis (ADA), which is relevant for leaders,

organizations, and coalitions at all levels of analysis. Political inference theory is crucial to the development of global politics as a link between the rational and cognitive decision-making models (Redd, S. B., Brulé, D., & Mintz, A., 2010).

The main research method of this project is analyzing second-hand data. In the collection of second-hand data, the data and literature elaborated by Chinese officials and academia will be the main part, which is more representative. Besides, One Belt, One Road, and the other beneficiary countries will be collected. Through these documents, researchers can have a deeper understanding of the problem from different angles. When a sufficient number of documents are collected, the data and documents will be classified and processed, and the similarities and differences between the documents and data will be compared. Subsequently, the selected data and literature will be critically analyzed. In addition, Ethical issues must be taken into account in the project. During the implementation of the project, some national confidential data need to be protected, and the acquired non-public data cannot be spread. Also, One Belt, One Road public data collection is to be taken as a prominent academic topic to prevent influencing foreign policy.

III. THE INTENDED CONTRIBUTION OF THE THESIS

The "One Belt, One Road" initiative is primarily focused on China and a few Central Asian nations. In order to fully use the Silk Road, China wants to strengthen its transport cooperation with Central Asian nations, take full advantage of the benefits of the Eurasian Continental Bridge and cross-border road transport cooperation, and build and expand collaboration structures. Jiang made this point. Jiang also highlighted that China is ready to work with Central Asian nations to combat extremism, terrorism, and separatism. China opposes outside forces, especially military organizations, that bring about instability in Central Asia (CHINANEWS, 2017).

China's execution of its foreign policy is complicated, nevertheless. Different cultures and settings in other nations, as well as various interests, must all be taken into consideration. China's foreign policy should thus not be limited to the obvious. It is necessary to examine China's "One Belt, One Road" strategy in more detail. Currently, literature has completely articulated China's foreign policy, but few academics have offered implementation strategies. The main idea of this thesis is this methodology.

IV. LITERATURE REVIEW

4.1 One Belt And One Road's policy in the Asia-pacific region and Central Asia

According to Xue (2015), the "One Belt, One Road," initiative has three main problems, among which foreign policy is a very complex and sensitive risk. In central Asia, most small states usually cooperate selectively. However, for some countries with sovereignty disputes, it is necessary to deal with the disputes in a developmental manner, which will have an impact on the formulation of foreign policies (Wang, 2015). Lu (2016) proposed that in the process of formulating foreign policies, it is necessary to maintain a strategic perspective at all times and meet the resource needs of the countries in need. According to Huo (2017), public diplomacy and diplomatic strategies should be developed interactively during the establishment of foreign policy. As new media and policy communication are often ignored, they also need constant attention to find out the commonalities and demands of the two countries (Huo, 2017). The "One Belt And One Road" initiative's progress, according to Liu (2017), will have an impact on foreign policy. During the process of establishing foreign policy, it should be promoted from a constructive perspective, with equality and openness as the main starting point.

As seen in CHINANEWS, China respects the route taken by the Central Asian people in light of their unique national circumstances and values and supports the efforts made by the region's nations to preserve their independence, sovereignty, and stability. China wants to strengthen its trade ties with Central Asian nations, support and safeguard one another's investments, raise the level of economic and technological cooperation, fully use its advantages in terms of resources and markets, and look into new channels and avenues for collaboration.

Along China's western border, autonomous republics like Kazakhstan arose with the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991. Beijing is suddenly faced with domestic threats to the control of its borders as well as global rivalry for oil and power in Central Asia. Hasan Karrar describes how China collaborated with Russia and other Central Asian republics to stabilize the area, promote commerce, and develop energy infrastructure for oil imports from the area. China favored multilateral diplomacy in Central Asia as part of its gradualist strategy, but this put Beijing in direct conflict with Washington, which saw Central Asia as being crucial to its strategic interests (Karrar, 2010).

As a result, China's approach to diplomacy in Central Asia has become an important issue for the Chinese government. Zhao (2011) pointed out that China has abandoned the strategy of "low-key diplomacy" when

formulating its present foreign policy. When formulating foreign policy, consider the state of the economy and territorial integrity as the main starting point to establish diplomacy. The way to make foreign policy in Central Asia requires not only an influential foreign policy but also a constant focus on the "core interests" within the country. Zheng (2015) points out that regional issues and regional systems need to be paid close attention to in the establishment of foreign policies. Although the diplomatic strategy for central Asia does not need an excessive emphasis on sovereignty, it also needs a common posture to deal with the impact of European nations and the USA, to achieve a fairer as well as less competitive relationship. In addition, it is worth mentioning that the different religious beliefs and cultural backgrounds in the central Asia region will have a specific impact on the construction of One Belt And One Road. Therefore, in the process of foreign policymaking, it is also necessary to ensure security among countries and comb the "One Belt And One Road" scheme has spread across Eurasia, Africa, and even beyond. These tactics encompass a wide variety of topics, including economics, security, science, and environmental preservation. In terms of how individuals see international relations, the policy has evolved into a paradigm. Furthermore, the initiation of this endeavor may signal China's entry into the role of creator of new international organizations and rules. However, OBOR's rapid growth in terms of participants and forms of collaboration could make the initiative ineffectual.

Xue (2015) and Zhao (2011) both put forward that there are certain risks in the process of formulating One Belt And One Road and pointed out that the conflict of interests between countries is the main risk point. Moreover, Shi (2016) also points out that cultural differences and regional problems will bring troubles to the implementation of the policy. However, in the literature, the implementation process of the policy is less elaborated, and the implementation method for the policy in Central Asia is not clearly pointed out.

4.2 Analyzing international relations from a theoretical perspective

Marxism serves as the basis for the Chinese theory of international relations. In international relations, the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence have evolved into fundamental standards (Richardson, 2005). The five pillars of peaceful coexistence are equality, mutual benefit, non-aggression, respect for one another's sovereignty and territorial integrity, and non-interference in one another's internal affairs (Wang, 2015). They contributed significantly to Marx's theory of international relations and became the guiding concept and norm for new post-World

War II international relations. International relations have a persistent effect on Chinese foreign policy.

Since the turn of the century, as China's overall might has continuously grown, Chinese-specific foreign diplomacy has kept up with the times. In the relevant UN legal instruments, the phrase "common future community" has been written into relevant legal documents by the United Nations. However, there are significant differences between this view and foreign theories of international relations. Tian (2006) pointed out that the basic academic characteristics of the British school are manifested in the pluralistic thinking method with rationalism and traditionalism as the mainstream, and the three vantage points of the global community, multinational system, as well as global society, rather than fully complying with Marxism. That is to say, the establishment of foreign policy is mixed with the capitalist society's view of giving priority to interests. One belt, One Road, is the other. There are differences in how China and Europe have developed their connections throughout time. It is worthwhile to research the topic.

V. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the reasons for formulating the BRI are multifaceted and complex. The desire of China to expand its economic influence, secure its energy supplies, and alleviate domestic economic imbalances are some of the key drivers behind the BRI. Additionally, the initiative is also aimed at enhancing China's soft power and promoting its strategic interests.

Furthermore, the BRI also seeks to address some of the global challenges, such as the infrastructure deficit in developing countries, trade barriers, and regional conflicts. By providing funding for large-scale infrastructure projects, the BRI aims to stimulate economic growth, promote regional connectivity, and foster cooperation between participating countries.

While the BRI has been widely criticized for its potential geopolitical implications and concerns about debt sustainability, it has also received significant support from participating countries and international organizations. It remains to be seen how the initiative will evolve and whether it will achieve its objectives in the long run.

Overall, understanding the reasons for formulating the BRI is crucial in comprehending China's ambitions and its role in shaping the global economic and political landscape.

REFERENCES

[1] Blaauw, E. (2013). The driving forces behind China's foreign policy - has China become more assertive? [Online]

Available at:
<https://economics.rabobank.com/publications/2013/october/the-driving-forces-behind-chinas-foreign-policy-has-china-become-more-assertive/#AnkerVoetnoot3>
[Accessed:16/05/2022]

- [2] Brona, A. (2018). One Belt, One Road: new framework for international relations?. *Polish Journal of Political Science*, 4(2), 57-76.
- [3] Cai, K. G. (2018). The one belt one road and the Asian infrastructure investment bank: Beijing's new strategy of geoeconomics and geopolitics. *Journal of Contemporary China*, 27(114), 831-847.
- [4] CHINANNEWS. (2017). Jiang Zemin elaborated on China's policy towards the central Asian countries [Online] Available at: <http://www.chinanews.com/2000-07-06/26/36610.html> [Accessed:20/05/2022]
- [5] Cristol, J. (2019). *International Relations Theory*, Oxford Bibliography
- [6] Ferdinand, P. (2016). Westward ho—the China dream and 'one belt, one road': Chinese foreign policy under Xi Jinping. *International Affairs*, 92(4), 941-957.
- [7] Huo, Y. (2017). "One Belt And One Road" is analyzed under the perspective of China's public diplomacy for Indonesia. (Doctoral dissertation).
- [8] Karrar, H.H. (2010). The New Silk Road diplomacy: China's Central Asian foreign policy since the Cold War.
- [9] Kissinger, H. A. (2012). The future of US-Chinese relations: conflict is a choice, not a necessity. *Foreign Aff.*, 91, 44.
- [10] Liu, Y. (2017). Risk assessment of one belt, one road construction in Central Asia. (Doctoral dissertation).
- [11] Li, Y., & Yang, Z. (2016). "One belt, one road" became the hot words of the ESCAP annual meeting. *Central Asia information* (5), 16.
- [12] Lu, G. (2016). China's reflection on diplomacy in Central Asia in the context of "One Belt And One Road ."Exploration and contention, 87-91.
- [13] Norwich University Online. (2017). Key Theories of International Relations [Online] Available at:<https://online.norwich.edu/academic-programs/resources/key-theories-of-international-relations> [Accessed:16/05/2022]
- [14] Pop, I. I. (2016). Strengths and challenges of China's "One belt, One road" Initiative. *Centre for Geopolitics and Security in Realism Studies*.
- [15] Redd, S. B., Brulé, D., & Mintz, A. (2010). *Poliheuristic Theory and Foreign Policy Analysis*. In *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of International Studies*.
- [16] Richardson, S. D. (2005). *China, Cambodia, and the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence: Principles and Foreign Policy*. University of Virginia.
- [17] Sandal, N. A., Zhang, E., James, C. C., & James, P. (2011). *Poliheuristic theory and crisis decision making: A comparative analysis of Turkey with China*. *Canadian Journal of Political Science/Revue canadienne de science politique*, 44(1), 27-57.
- [18] Shambaugh, D. (2013). *Understanding China's Global Impact---China Goes Global*
- [19] Sheng, B. & Guo, T. (2014). *The game of Asia Pacific*

- regional economic integration and China's strategic choice. *World economy and politics*, 4-21
- [20] Shi, X. (2016). One Belt, One Road, the Central Asian religious extremism, and the world's religious culture (2), 14-18.
- [21] Tian, A. (2006). The basic academic characteristics of the British School of international relations theory. *Journal of the Institute of International Relations* (2), 72-72
- [22] Wang, G. (2016). China's one belt, one Road impact on China's economy. *Silk Road vision*, 78-80., 2016
- [23] Wang, P. (2015). China and the third pillar. *The Responsibility to Protect and the Third Pillar: Legitimacy and Operationalization*, 78-96.
- [24] Wang, Q. (2015). Thinking on "One Belt And One Road" public diplomacy. *Theoretical perspective* (6), 69-72.
- [25] Wang, Y. (2016). "One Belt, One Road initiative ." *Asia Pacific economic integration*. (Doctoral dissertation).
- [26] Xue, L. (2015). Diplomatic risks faced by China's "One Belt And One Road" strategy. *International economic review*, 68-79.
- [27] Ying, X. (2017). "One Belt, One Road" provides new impetus for globalization. *China Finance* (9), 79-81.
- [28] Zhao, S. (2011). China's New Foreign Policy "Assertiveness ." *Motivations and Implications ISPI analysis*
- [29] Zheng, A. (2015). A brief analysis of the "new normal" of China's central Asia strategy in the context of "One Belt And One Road ." *Contemporary world and socialism* (04), 28-33.