

**Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Kazakhstan**

**M. Narikbayev KAZGUU University**

«Approved for Defense»

Supervisor \_\_\_\_\_

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**MASTER'S THESIS (PROJECT)**

*«Analysis of the role of Higher Education in the Belt and Road Initiative with particular focus on  
Central Asia: Concept, instruments, and practices»*

**specialty 6M020700 - «Translation Studies»**

**Written by Assiya Daulet**

**Dilyara Amangeldy**

**Supervisor Ikboljon Qoraboyev**

**M. Narikbayev KAZGUU University**

**ANALYSIS OF THE ROLE OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN THE BELT AND ROAD  
INITIATIVE WITH PARTICULAR FOCUS ON CENTRAL ASIA: CONCEPT,  
INSTRUMENTS, AND PRACTICES**

**Assiya Daulet**

**Dilyara Amangeldy**

May 22, 2020

«Approved»

Supervisor's First and Last Name \_\_\_\_\_

Supervisor's Signature \_\_\_\_\_

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## **Abstract**

This thesis investigates role of higher education in the Belt and Road Initiative of China. The main aspect of BRI is that China develops economic, cultural, political influence at the world level us. “People to people exchange” is one of five pillars of BRI. Higher education is important from this pillar’s perspective because the future generations will create and develop exchanges between countries. So, that people who go to study abroad receive experience from other countries and in the future could use the knowledge gained to develop their country. Students have the chance to study abroad at the expense of the state - this is an investment in the future through higher education. Based on this premise, this study will highlight how BRI integrates higher education as one of priority areas for the development of the initiative. It includes thorough analysis of three higher education-related projects linked to BRI: Universities role in creation of knowledge on BRI (case of Tongji University), use of higher education institutes for promoting BRI (Confucius Institutes), and fostering world class Universities (Double First-class University Plan). Thesis also provides substantial number of examples of BRI implementation from Central Asian region. This thesis thus highlights the function of BRI as a framework to develop and share knowledge, and improve intercultural communication

**Key words:** The Belt and Road Initiative, Central Asia, higher education, people to people exchange, Kazakhstan and China, cooperation, science and technology.

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# 1 Introduction

## 1.1 The Belt and Road Initiative Description

The China's the Belt and Road Initiative is the project that creates a new type of development, implementation and modernization strategy. This initiative relates to the Silk Road Economic Belt and XXI century Maritime Silk Road. The project was established by the Chinese government, in order to contribute to "peace and cooperation, openness and inclusiveness, mutual learning and mutual benefit" between more than seventy countries, comprise the land and sea routes linking Eurasia<sup>1</sup>.

The Belt and Road Initiative is not a geographical project. This initiative is the plan through which China wants to develop incorporated framework with other countries to develop the economy, to improve their position in the sphere of politics, economics and culture in the world arena among the countries of the Belt and Road Initiative, but at the same time addressing China's internal and external concerns<sup>2</sup>. The Belt and Road Initiative focuses on global direction, economic globalization, cultural diversity and the development of information technology. This not only promotes among the countries of the Belt and Road Initiative to realize the "Chinese Dream". In the meantime, the Initiative is implementing new critical readiness for countries and regions of the Belt and Road Initiative<sup>3</sup>. The goal of the Initiative is to build common cooperation among Asian, European and African countries, to create ties between coastal countries, and to create sustainable development at different levels<sup>4</sup>.

The purpose of China is to enhance the Belt and Road Initiative in order to implement a lot of projects in partner countries. It is possible, that the Chinese government will see the results, as the increasing relevance in it in the partner countries, by having succeeded in making the financial basis for the strategy under consideration and decreasing some political risk. Taking into account the fact that a new world order is being created and significant changes in China's foreign policy with a hegemonic goal,

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<sup>1</sup> Michael A. Peters (2019): China's belt and road initiative: Reshaping global higher education, Educational Philosophy and Theory, DOI: 10.1080/00131857.2019.1615174

<sup>2</sup> D. Mitrovic (2018), Institute for Asian Studies, Belgrade, Serbia

<sup>3</sup> Barton D. (2015), 'Building the Right Silk Road – China and the 'One Belt, One Road' Initiative', Horizons 4 (Summer): 74–83, accessed 29 June 2017.

<sup>4</sup> Mitsoune Akono Freddy (2017), CHALLENGES OF CULTURAL EXCHANGE IN THE CHINESE INITIATIVE "ONE BELT, ONE ROAD": case of Africa, China.

there is a high probability, that different opinions will appear but this must be avoided. At this stage, the Chinese government considers the “Belt and Road Initiative” as an opportunity to solve pressing problems of its own social and economic development, resource provision and reduction of regional imbalances. Neighboring countries, despite differences in regional aspects, economic development, etc., in any case, get new opportunities<sup>5</sup>.

The Belt and Road Initiative involves the implementation of cooperation projects with both landlocked and inland countries. Therefore, within its framework, the creation of the “Economic Belt of the Silk Road” and the “Maritime Silk Road of the XXI century” is singled out. For the first time, the Chinese leadership made a proposal for the formation of this projects in September-October 2013, during the visits of the General Secretary of the CPC Central Committee, Chinese President XI Jinping to Kazakhstan and Indonesia. Speaking at the “Nazarbayev University”, he proposed “joint efforts to create the “silk road economic belt”, which will be very beneficial to the peoples of all countries, and in his speech at the APEC summit in Bali, he called on the States of South-East Asia to support the idea of the “Maritime Silk Road”. But only in March 2015, at the “Boao Asian Forum”, some details of the projects were presented to the public<sup>6</sup>.

In 2014, the concept of the Belt and Road Initiative was officially named a key component of the Chinese leadership’s foreign policy. The plan for the country’s development for decades ahead, which he called “the dream of the great revival of the Chinese nation”<sup>7</sup>. By 2021, it is planned to create a “society of average prosperity / average prosperity” (in the Confucian tradition “Xiaogang”)<sup>8</sup>, and by 2049 – “a rich and powerful, democratic ... and modern socialist country”. The need to “create a middle-class

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<sup>5</sup> Rodemann, H., & Templar, S. (2014). The enablers and inhibitors of intermodal rail freight between Asia and Europe. DOI: 10.1016/j.jrtpm.2014.10.001

<sup>6</sup> Kao, L. (2018). Silk Road Diplomacy: China Redefines Its Role on the Asian Mainland. DOI: 10.17265/2328-2134/2018.07.005

<sup>7</sup> Shinji Yamaguchi (2017). Basic Analysis of the 19th National Congress of the Communist Party of China: (1) Xi Jinping’s Declaration of the Dawn of a New Era. <http://www.nids.mod.go.jp/english/publication/commentary/pdf/commentary062e.pdf>

<sup>8</sup> Shinji Yamaguchi (2017). Basic Analysis of the 19th National Congress of the Communist Party of China: (1) Xi Jinping’s Declaration of the Dawn of a New Era. <http://www.nids.mod.go.jp/english/publication/commentary/pdf/commentary062e.pdf>

society” was again identified by XI Jinping as a strategic goal in 2015 (the “Four comprehensive aspects” policy program)<sup>9</sup>.

The key provisions of the Belt and Road Initiative are contained in the official report of three Chinese departments published in March 2015 with the approval of the State Council of the people’s Republic of China (“Excellent prospects and practical actions...”)<sup>10</sup>. It describes in general terms the principles of the Belt and Road Initiative, possible routes, mechanisms and priorities for cooperation. The latter include interstate coordination of economic policy, modernization of transport infrastructure, promotion of trade and mutual investment, financial integration, and development of humanitarian ties. The leitmotif of the report is an appeal to potential partner countries to cooperate more closely in the political and social and economic sphere based on the principles of “mutual trust” and “common win” (win-win/positive-sum). It is intended to convince the leadership of neighboring countries that China does not have utilitarian goals and is designed in a high-sounding style: for example, it is claimed that the initiative “embodies the dream of the world community and its desire for beauty” and will be “a significant contribution to the development of humanity”<sup>11</sup>.

Russian expert Mikhaylenko A. shares the official positions. He emphasizes that China unconditionally respects the interests of partner countries, follows the principles of equality and mutual benefit, what is particularly important, neutrality and non-interference in the internal affairs of other states. Following XI Jinping, expert refutes assumptions about China’s hidden geopolitical goals, including the desire of its leadership to create zones of influence or increase its role in international relations. It is argued that China should not and will not dominate or act from a position of strength, adhering to the principle of “morality above interests”<sup>12</sup>.

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<sup>9</sup> Kao, L. (2018). Silk Road Diplomacy: China Redefines Its Role on the Asian Mainland. DOI: 10.17265/2328-2134/2018.07.005

<sup>10</sup> Bianco, W. T., & Canon, D. T. (2013). *American politics today*. New York: Norton & Company.

<sup>11</sup> Andersen, H. (2019). The new Maritime Silk Road and WTO law. DOI: 10.4324/9780429058585-15

<sup>12</sup> Mikhaylenko, A. (2018). Challenges and Possible Responses of the Eurasian Economic Union to the Belt and Road Initiative. DOI: 10.1163/9789004373792\_009

The development programs of the Belt and Road Initiative are supposed to be broad in scope and change them depending on the preferences of partner countries. In 2015, XI Jinping called them “a true chorus of all states, not a solo of China alone”, and Chinese officials and experts developed this phrase into the idea of a “Symphony” of equal partner countries<sup>13</sup>.

The Belt and Road Initiative is reported by the proficient and the official community, because the Initiative defines the general context, since it does not have a particular specificity. Russian experts point to the slow pace of development and implementation of relevant topics in China itself, despite of the creation of a number of specialized research centers. It has become common to associate any large-scale investment project in China or its potential partners with this Initiative. Land and sea routes for cargo transportation have not yet been approved, which is why there are no corresponding maps<sup>14</sup>.

The goal is clear: to create a new image of China, which seeks to unite as many countries as possible with a common idea. This serves the purpose of the Chinese leadership to declare its readiness to consider various options for trade and investment cooperation with partner countries. Competition between production and infrastructure projects offered by partner countries promises significant political and economic benefits to China, as well as strengthening its negotiating position. Thus, the low level of detail is deliberately made an element of the Belt and Road Initiative strategy, allowing you to quickly respond to changes in the situation.

## **1.2 Chinese cooperation in higher education under the Belt and Road Initiative**

In the summer of 2016, the Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China published an education action plan for the Belt and Road Initiative. Thus, according to the plan of the Initiative, the countries, which is located along the Belt and Road Initiative can learn from each other, deepen and strengthen their cooperation, take on common global responsibility, as well as pursue common interests in the field of education and work together to create an educational community of the Belt and Road

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<sup>13</sup> Eveland, W. P., Marton, K., & Seo, M. (2004). Moving beyond “Just the Facts.” DOI: 10.1177/0093650203260203

<sup>14</sup> Maximilian Mayer (2018). China’s Rise as Eurasian Power: The Revival of the Silk Road and Its Consequences. DOI: 10.1007/978-981-10-5915-5\_1



Initiative. To promote cooperation in the field of education within the framework of the Belt and Road Initiative, states will work together to:

- Promote closer connections between people. China will expand, elevate and deepen interpersonal exchanges and promote ever stronger mutual understanding and ties between people along these routes.
- Develop Supportive Talents. China will spare no effort to develop much-needed talent under the Belt and Road Initiative to support infrastructure development, policy coordination, unhindered trade and financial integration among the belt and road countries.
- Achieve Overall Development. China will join its efforts in deepening educational cooperation and promoting mutual learning in order to stimulate the development of education in our countries and improve the overall level of education in the region<sup>15</sup>.

The Chinese Belt and Road Initiative in the sphere of higher education allows students to study in different countries, to share knowledge and experience, to develop and to improve cooperation, to strengthen communication, follow mutual interests, work together and to create an educational community. Educational grants and projects will increase. China has made a significant contribution to the development of higher education<sup>16</sup>. According to Aisi Li, the sphere of higher education is one of the ways to establish and develop intercultural communication around the world. Highly qualified professionals should be related effective and supportable relationship between China and Central Asia<sup>17</sup>.

According to Kazakhstan expert R. Izmirov, soft power was officially adopted to provide Chinese policymakers from foreign policy planning. It means that in the future “China” and the entire “Chinese”

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<sup>15</sup> Education Action Plan for the Belt and Road Initiative. Issued by the Ministry of Education of the People’s Republic of China. July 2016. The website of the Belt and Road portal. [URL:https://eng.yidaiyilu.gov.cn/zchj/qwfb/30277.htm](https://eng.yidaiyilu.gov.cn/zchj/qwfb/30277.htm)

<sup>16</sup> Lyudmila Ponomarenko, Anastasia Zabella (2019), China's Higher Education Cooperation Within the Framework of "the Belt and Road Initiative

<sup>17</sup> Aisi Li (2018), “One Belt One Road” and Central Asia: A New Trend in Internationalization of Higher Education?” International Higher Education, Astana, Kazakhstan

will increase in several times. One of the advantages of the Initiative is thousands of students who have received education in China will bring their harvest<sup>18</sup>.

### 1.3 The Belt and Road Initiative and Made in China 2025

Higher education and research development are closely related to the “Double First-class University Plan” program, as well as “the Made in China 2025 strategy”. This all implements the “Double First-class University Plan” development plan. The list of this development plan draws attention to information technology, exact sciences and various types of technologies<sup>19</sup>. Another evidence that these two programs are very related is the implementation of the plan in 2017 for the development of artificial intelligence. This project provides the creation of artificial intelligence in the form of a subject in education and promotes cooperation with the best international schools of artificial intelligence and institutions of science and technology<sup>20</sup>. This emphasis on education and research strategies consider into funding for the international community.

According to J. Liu, higher education and research are closely linked into the Chinese strategies of the Belt and Road Initiative. The Belt and Road Initiative is a long-term strategy that designed to build, improve, and develop strong and close economic ties between Asia and Europe, Asia and the Middle East, Asia and Africa. And for achieving the goals, an infrastructure was created, market simplifying and investing, improving joint ties between the countries of the Belt and Road Initiative. One of the main goals of the Initiative is a plan not only for the growth of the Chinese economy, but also for the development of future integration in the global economy and improving China’s position on the world stage. The initiative does not have a framework, the Belt and Road Initiative also contributes to the development of education, scientific and technical plans. Most Chinese universities promote their own programs. For example, Xi’an Jiaotong University manages the “Silk Road University Alliance” project

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<sup>18</sup> Izmirov, special monthly magazine «Yurist» (2015), “Materials of the round table: The Chinese policy of soft power, reality and prospects”, available at: <http://journal.zakon.kz/4708335-naselenie-kazakhstan-vse-eshhe-sklonno.html> (Accessed 11 January 2016).

<sup>19</sup> “‘Double First-Class’ initiative disciplines development list (Sorted by discipline),” Department of Education and Training, Australian Government, accessed September 20, 2018, [https://internationaleducation.gov.au/International-network/china/PolicyUpdates-China/Documents/DFC%20initiative%20disciplines%20development%20list%20\(Sorted%20by%20discipline\).pdf](https://internationaleducation.gov.au/International-network/china/PolicyUpdates-China/Documents/DFC%20initiative%20disciplines%20development%20list%20(Sorted%20by%20discipline).pdf)

<sup>20</sup> “Xin yi dai rengong zhineng fazhan gui Hua 新一代人工智能发展规划” [Next generation artificial intelligence development plan], State Council 国务院, July 8, 2017, [http://www.gov.cn/zhengce/content/2017-07/20/content\\_5211996.htm](http://www.gov.cn/zhengce/content/2017-07/20/content_5211996.htm).

and 150 Chinese and international universities contribute to this project. Another example is the “Belt and Road Platform to Promote Innovation”. This program would be implemented in 2016 by the Chinese Academy of Sciences<sup>21</sup>.

In 2016, the Ministry of Education of China announced a paper about educational collaboration in sustainability of the Belt and Road Initiative. The purpose of the plan is to strengthen cooperation in the sphere of education and the development of partnership<sup>22</sup>.

In 2017, Chinese President Xi Jinping announced the release of a plan for cooperation in the Belt and Road Initiative development of science, technology. This plan consists of several projects, such as people to people exchange in science and technology, to collaborate in the development of science parks and the exchange of technologies. China will provide 2500 visit for research work by young foreign researchers. And also China will train 5,000 foreign scientists, engineers and other specialists and create 50 common laboratories<sup>23</sup>.

One of the interesting fact is that all the projects related by the Belt and Road Initiative, represent China in the form of a country that provides other countries with technology, provides the opportunity to learn and contribute to the development of other countries of Central Asia and the ASEAN region. At the moment, all these plans are part of the Belt and Road Initiative. But it is not known how much these projects are all financed by the established funds or whether they are funds that were created before the Initiative<sup>24</sup>.

## 2 Methodology

The study analyzed data from the countries of Central Asia and China. This paper examines the influence and mutual cooperation of China in higher education on the countries of Central Asia. The goal

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<sup>21</sup> J. Liu, “China Launches Belt and Road Platform to Promote Innovation,” *Chinese Academy of Sciences*, December 6, 2016, [http://english.cas.cn/Special\\_Reports/CAS\\_in\\_the\\_Belt\\_and\\_Road\\_Initiative/News/201612/t20161206\\_171653.shtml](http://english.cas.cn/Special_Reports/CAS_in_the_Belt_and_Road_Initiative/News/201612/t20161206_171653.shtml)

<sup>22</sup> “Tuijin gongjian ‘yidai yilu’ jiaoyu xingdong 推进共‘建一带一路’教育行动” [Educational action to promote the construction of One Belt One Road], Ministry of Education 教育部, July 13, 2016, [http://www.moe.edu.cn/srcsite/A20/s7068/201608/t20160811\\_274679.html](http://www.moe.edu.cn/srcsite/A20/s7068/201608/t20160811_274679.html)

<sup>23</sup> “Xi Jinping: China Launches Belt & Road STI Cooperation Action Plan,” Ministry of Science and Technology, July 2017, [http://www.most.gov.cn/eng/pressroom/201707/t20170713\\_134067.htm](http://www.most.gov.cn/eng/pressroom/201707/t20170713_134067.htm).

<sup>24</sup> Ingrid d’Hooghe, Annemarie Montulet, Marijn de Wolff and Frank N. Pieke (2018), ‘Assessing Europe-China Collaboration in Higher Education and Research’, *Made in China 2025 and the Belt and Road Initiative*

is to analyze the impact of the Chinese strategic plan on the provision and implementation of incorporation in higher education in the form of the exchange of knowledge and experience of Central Asian countries and China.

The main research question of this study “What is the role of higher education in the Belt and Road Initiative”. In order to answer this main question, two additional sub - questions are formulated. First sub - question investigates the place and role of higher education in BRI framework. In particular, it will focus on official documents of BRI to identify higher education action plan as part of general BRI framework. Second sub - question explores several BRI - related programs launched in Central Asia to see how BRI higher education cooperation unfolds in practice. For this, we will use analysis of Central Asian scholars of BRI - projects in the sphere of higher education currently conducted in Central Asia. In this study, we used the qualitative research method in order to answer the research question. This research method is more optimal for analyzing and identifying findings. In the thesis, we examined the data that was collected by the analysis of projects and examine of the context. We examine different types of research papers, articles and reports of international educational organizations, policy documents, various case studies, and documents of Chinese government institutions. The results of this study explore unfolding of BRI in the sphere of higher education with a particular focus on Central Asia through intercultural communication, the exchange of knowledge and experience, as well as the scientific community.

### 3 Data analysis

#### 3.1 People to people exchange

The Belt and Road Initiative has five main concepts: cooperation policies; linking infrastructure; unhindered market; economic inclusion; people to people exchange. Cooperation through the Silk Road will be implemented through exchange methods, both academic and cultural, among students and staff. In the process of implementing the Belt and Road Initiative, the amount of student exchange between countries will increase. For developing bilateral and multilateral cooperation, these methods will contribute on the basis of improved public encouragement.<sup>25</sup>

The Belt and Road Initiative is China's project which does not consider or translate directly. China's idea is to improve economic, cultural and political influence at the world level including internal and external factors in seventy regions. It plans to cooperate for a long time, which means this cooperation will be unique in its volume and value<sup>26</sup>. And one of the concepts for the implementation of developing these sphere "people to people exchange" concept is being in progress and providing across Eurasia and Africa.

The topic of discussion and the statements in recent years are one of the main arrangements of the Belt and Road Initiative. It means that "people to people exchange" remain unknown in other countries except China. And in some countries where this is taken into account, they consider that it is a weak strategy. Because in an initiative where culture and history are taken as a basis is not the best strategic approach. Between the countries of Eurasia and Africa the historical values of China can compete with the concepts of world attitudes and will occupy a significant position on the world stage<sup>27</sup>.

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<sup>25</sup> Shi Donghui, Helen Brand OBE (July, 2017). The Association of Chartered Certified Accountants

<sup>26</sup> Dragana Mitrovic, Belt and Road Initiative in Global Arena <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-10-5921-6>

<sup>27</sup> Tim Winter, One Belt, One Road, One Heritage: Cultural Diplomacy and the Silk Road

People to people bonds will be the main link that facilitates and implements the process. All actions such as education, healthcare, poverty alleviation will be taken to improve. These aspects of life in society would be uphold<sup>28</sup>.

People to people exchange is the basis of the Belt and Road Initiative. Within the program, the Belt and Road will contribute to the expansion of cultural values in the form of employee exchanges, as well as cooperation in various fields among countries located on the route the Belt and Road. Under the Initiative will increase the number of students which will study by academic exchange programs between countries along the Initiative. Various programs implemented as part of this Initiative help to achieve assistance in 70 countries for the development of multilateral cooperation<sup>29</sup>.

### **3.2 The Belt and Road Initiative and Higher Education**

One of the important spheres of development is education, as the future generation will create cooperation between countries<sup>30</sup>. Educated people are one of the relevant factors in the improvement of the country's economy. The Chinese government attaches great importance to education. Another essential aspect is public diplomacy, which is the basis of Chinese policy and the Belt and Road Initiative directly contributes to the development of diplomacy<sup>31</sup>.

The topic “Belt and Road Initiative: Higher Education in Central Asia” is actual among the scientists of many countries. Because the Initiative touches upon development of various spheres. For many years, partnership between the countries developed through the Silk Road. Such as common benefits, common cooperation, economic development, knowledge developed. This all contributed to the development of civilization in the countries of the Silk Road<sup>32</sup>.

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<sup>28</sup> Dipankar Banerjee, China's One Belt One Road Initiative – An Indian Perspective

<sup>29</sup> The Belt and Road Initiative: Reshaping the global value chain, The Association of Chartered Certified Accounts, July 2017, p 9

<sup>30</sup> Anastasia Zabella. Humanitarian Cooperation between China and Countries in Sub-Saharan Africa // Conference on Contemporary Education, Social Sciences and Humanities (ICCESSH 2018)- International Advances in Social Science, Education and Humanities Research. URL: <https://www.atlantis-press.com/proceedings/iccessh18/25898223> (Accessed: 11.01.2019).

<sup>31</sup> Zhang Guozuo. The 18th National Congress on the Enhancement of Cultural Soft Power. Materials of the Jiangsu dajingtang. URL: [http://jsdjt.jschina.com.cn/21375/201211/t1096193\\_1.shtml](http://jsdjt.jschina.com.cn/21375/201211/t1096193_1.shtml) (Accessed: 20.01.2019).

<sup>32</sup> NDRC, MFA and MC (National Development and Reform Commission, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and Ministry of Commerce of the People's Republic of China). (2015). Vision and actions on jointly building belt and road [Online]. Available from: [http://english.cri.cn/12394/2015/03/29/2941s872030\\_1.htm](http://english.cri.cn/12394/2015/03/29/2941s872030_1.htm). [1 November 2015].

In 2013, Chinese President Xi Jinping's statement was announced in Astana, Kazakhstan at the Nazarbayev University. The proposal was put forward on the "Silk Road Economic Belt". As said before, this Initiative connects the vast territory stretching with China through Central Asia to Europe and Africa. Central Asian countries: Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan and Tajikistan have reacted differently. The Kazakhstan program should provide communications between China and Europe not only in the transit sphere, but also have more communications in other areas. In addition, the Belt and Road Initiative has a great influence on higher education in the countries of Central Asia. A few years later there were problems associated with higher education with the importance of the strategy in China and in Central Asia<sup>33</sup>.

During the development of the Belt and Road Initiative led to the fact that the regions announced that 30,000 scholarships will be allocated in the coming decade for countries that are members of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. Also, these scholarships will be allocated for teaching and inviting not only students, therefore 10,000 teachers from Confucius institutes. Some SCO member countries decided that China through higher education would have an impact on the countries of Central Asia. From Central Asia in 2013 more than 20,000 students entered to China and about 2,200 people received a scholarship from the Chinese government. The number of students from Kazakhstan is among the top ten receivers student scholarships from the Chinese government, this figure increased with the implementation of the Belt and Road Initiative. According to Aisi Li's research, China not only accepts students from other countries, but also sends students and teachers abroad by "people to people exchange" concept, so that people who go to study abroad gain experience from other countries and in the future could use the knowledge gained for development their country. Students have the opportunity to study abroad at the expense of the state is an investment in the future through higher education. Such investments can be calculated as the development of Chinese higher education, and this process of sending students, teachers and staff will help to achieve their goals. However, the process of sending to study

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<sup>33</sup> Aisi Li (2018). "One Belt One Road" and Central Asia: A New Trend in Internationalization of Higher Education?

abroad is also the development of political, economic ties, intercultural communication between countries along the Belt and Road Initiative<sup>34</sup>.

In 2016, China created the higher education development plan for the Belt and Road Initiative. The goal of China is to exchange experience and knowledge through cooperation between countries, to improve and develop cooperation and to work together by creating an educational community. Improving the Belt and Road Initiative in the field of higher education, countries will follow these points:

- Development of people to people exchange. China between the countries along the Belt and Road Initiative will expand of people to people exchange and help more the development of relations between countries;

- Talent development. China is making efforts to develop talent for the Belt and Road Initiative for independent trade, promoting coordination among countries along the Belt and Road;

- Achieve common results through integration. In order to improve education synergies in the countries, which involved to the Belt and Road Initiative, as well as in the region, China will improve and develop cooperation in the field of education<sup>35</sup>.

Based on the statement of Anastasia Zabella and Lyudmila Ponomarenko, the Belt and Road Initiative every year will increase educational programs and grants for studying at universities. By taking into account and considering all the advantages and results of the Belt and Road Initiative, we can say that this Initiative is the big step in the development and implementation of higher education. According to existing results, we can say that the Belt and Road Initiative develops integration and shared values between countries of the Belt and Road Initiative. As the result, People's Republic of China has the idea to create educational society. In most cases, the countries, which involved into the Belt and Road Initiative are currently participating in educational programs of China, namely scholarship programs. The Ministry of Education has adopted 4 joint projects and 98 educational projects, which will be implemented in 14 countries. People's Republic of China opened 134 Confucius Institutes and 130 classes. It is necessary to

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<sup>34</sup> Aisi Li (2018). "One Belt One Road" and Central Asia: A New Trend in Internationalization of Higher Education?

<sup>35</sup> Education Action Plan for the Belt and Road Initiative. Issued by the Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China. July 2016. The website of the Belt and Road portal. URL: <https://eng.yidaiyilu.gov.cn/zchj/qwfb/30277.htm> (Accessed: 01.02.2019).



add that about 60% of such educational scholarships of China was given to the students from the Belt and Road Initiative countries<sup>36</sup>.

Also, some MBA programs are implemented by China as part of the Belt and Road Initiative. For instance, for government official from the Belt and Road Initiative countries, Tsinghua University has created MBA courses. In the framework of the Belt and Road Initiative, currently, the Ministry of Education has the agreements in the education field with the provinces of Gansu, Ningxia, Fujian, Guizhou, Yunnan, Hainan, Xinjiang, Guangxi, Inner Mongolia, Jilin, Heilongjiang, Shaanxi and the city of Qinghai. In 2015, the University Alliance of the Silk Road was established. It is a university alliance, which based at Xi'an Jiaotong University (Shaanxi province). This alliance was created for promotion, expansion and development of integration in the field of higher education. Currently, there are about 150 universities from 35 countries, including universities from the Belt and Road Initiative countries, as well as 23 Russian universities, such as Peter the Great Saint Petersburg Polytechnic University, Bauman Moscow State Technical University, Far Eastern Federal University, National Research Nuclear University<sup>37</sup>.

The Belt and Road Initiative Alliance for Industrial and Educational Collaboration was created in July 2017. According to the statement of the official representative of the Foreign Ministry for China's cooperation with Central and Eastern European countries, Huo Yuzhen, BRAIEC acts as the bridge, that gives a chance and opportunity to build interaction between China and other countries. "We are looking for opportunities to expand cooperation channels. We will conduct dialogues on educational policy issues, that will encourage higher education institutions to find ways to partner with each other. Bilateral relations depend on the unity of people"<sup>38</sup>.

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<sup>36</sup> Lyudmila Ponomarenko, Anastasia Zabella, China's Higher Education Cooperation Within the Framework of "the Belt and Road Initiative"

<sup>37</sup> Lyudmila Ponomarenko, Anastasia Zabella, China's Higher Education Cooperation Within the Framework of "the Belt and Road Initiative"

<sup>38</sup> Belt and Road education alliance to further global cooperation The website of China daily. URL: [http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/beltandroadinitiative/2017-06/09/content\\_29686676.htm](http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/beltandroadinitiative/2017-06/09/content_29686676.htm)

It is worth noting, that China has paid great attention to improving human capital. This is one of the most important tasks to date. There are so many countries interested in attracting great talent. These are the USA, Great Britain, Germany, Australia, Singapore, South Korea. And China is no exception. China is paying more and more attention to human development, artificial intelligence and high technology. It is also important to mention South-South cooperation. Today, there is no need to talk about a lack of research related to the development of activities. It is important to note that this topic is interesting not only for Western scientists, but also becomes particularly attractive for scientists from other developing countries. For the same reason, the study of South-South cooperation can hardly be called inappropriate<sup>39</sup>. China also participates in development assistance activities. For example, in the area of good governance, China, Israel and Singapore have assisted Benin in addressing its technical and managerial problems affecting public institutions, managing them, and providing results-oriented incentives to specific ministries to be effective in governance<sup>40</sup>. The Chinese government provides grants for education in the country, including through South-South channels. In addition, it should be noted that countries that have not yet signed the Belt and Road Initiative's agreement with China are in no way excluded from participating in it.

### **3.3 The Belt and Road Initiative and Higher Education Priorities**

Since each country along the Belt and Road Initiative has its own education system. In accordance with the Belt and Road Initiative education action plan developed by the Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China, China offers a three-way framework for cooperation that includes 3 areas:

*A. Implementing cooperation to improve the interconnectedness of education which will include the following 5 elements:*

- Strengthening of the coordination of policies in the field of education;
- Promoting the establishment of smooth channels for cooperation in the field of education;

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<sup>39</sup> Borzova, A. Yu., Chikrizova, O.S. & Zabella, A.A. (2018). Review of the Book: Bergamaschi, I., Moore, P. & Tickner, A.B. (Eds.). (2017). South — South Cooperation Beyond the Myths. Rising Donors, New Aid Practices? United Kingdom: Palgrave Macmillan, 334 p. Vestnik RUDN. International Relations, 18 (3), 727-739. DOI: 10.22363/2313-0660-2018-18-3-727-739.

<sup>40</sup> Learning South-South Cooperation: Perspectives from Partner Countries. Nov. 2016. URL: [http://ris.org.in/sites/default/files/FINAL\\_Learning%20South%20South%20Report\\_1.pdf](http://ris.org.in/sites/default/files/FINAL_Learning%20South%20South%20Report_1.pdf)

- Overcoming language barriers between the belt and road countries;
- Strengthening closer ties between people;
- Promoting the formulation of criteria for mutual recognition of academic merit.

*B. Close cooperation on education and training of talents, which will include the implementation of the following 4 programs:*

- Program for expanding bilateral student exchange on the Silk road;
- Cooperation on the Silk road in the management of educational institutions and professional development programs;
- Program of Professional Development for Teachers Silk Road;
- Joint educational and training program “Silk Road”.

*C. Joint establishment of specific cooperation mechanisms that include the following 4 elements:*

- Strengthening of high-level consultations on issues of information exchange between people and higher officials;
- Providing a full commitment to the platforms of international cooperation;
- Implementation of the “Silk Road Education Assistance Program”;
- Implementation of the “Silk Road Camel, Golden & Golden Sail Awards Program”<sup>41</sup>.

### **3.4 China’s place in global education space**

Xi Jinping has made a significant contribution to the development of existing desire and further prosperity since 2012. In the field of science and technology, in the main areas that are important for development and recognition, China has advanced in its actions in order to occupy a major role in the world arena. In 2015, two important evidence-based policy documents were published. One of them is a plan for the development of higher education institutions of world scale and the foundation of the best subjects. This program is called “Double First Plan of the University”. And the other is “Made in China 2025”. These supporting documents, some researchers have nicknamed “technological nationalism”<sup>42</sup>.

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<sup>41</sup> Education Action Plan for the Belt and Road Initiative. Issued by the Ministry of Education of the People’s Republic of China. July 2016. The website of the Belt and Road portal. [URL:https://eng.yidaiyilu.gov.cn/zchj/qwfb/30277.htm](https://eng.yidaiyilu.gov.cn/zchj/qwfb/30277.htm)

International academic mobility in China draws the attention of scientists. According to the Chinese Academy of Educational Sciences Bi Cheng, China involves such kind of policy for improving common national soft power and higher education internalization is benefit of any country<sup>43</sup>.

Every year, China puts more effort into the development of international scientific cooperation. To achieve the goals many institutions were open for academic mobility of students and staff for the share experience and knowledge, as well as for the creation of common scientific projects and for the creation of Confucius institutions, etc<sup>44</sup>.

According to the one independent expert, China's educational and research policy is not ready to assert and to impose its values and system on other countries<sup>45</sup>. It is necessary to take into account that China is aimed to develop its country more and to strengthen the security, and also China has the goal to develop unified international system, which will be not under the liberal ideas of Western countries, and by owning authoritarian system of governance that will be competent, like any other system. Furthermore, it is necessary to take into account the fact, that the discussion within the framework of the "War of the Worlds" does not allow achieving fair and balanced integration in the field of higher education and scientific researches with China. It is better to understand, that there is connection and interaction between field of higher education and study, international relations and mutual cooperation (including the Belt and Road Initiative), the government of the Chinese Communist Party, and the rule of President XI Jinping. It can be explained as Chinese government is wants authoritarian system of

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<sup>42</sup> Jost Wübbeke et al. (December 2016). "Made in China 2025: The making of a high-tech superpower and consequences for industrial countries," MERICS Papers on China, no. 2: 12, [https://www.merics.org/sites/default/files/2017\\_09/MPOC\\_No.2\\_MadeinChina2025.pdf](https://www.merics.org/sites/default/files/2017_09/MPOC_No.2_MadeinChina2025.pdf).

<sup>43</sup> Cheng B. (2019) [OBOR Strategy Brings New Opportunities to China's Education] [Electronic resource]. China Education News. Available at: [http://www.jyb.cn/Theory/ltw/201510/t20151009\\_639192.html](http://www.jyb.cn/Theory/ltw/201510/t20151009_639192.html) (accessed 11.05.2019). Educational Migration from Kazakhstan to China: Reality and Prospects, A. E. Serikkaliyeva, G. E. Nadirova, N. B. Saparbayeva

<sup>44</sup> Ingrid d'Hooghe, Annemarie Montulet, Marijn de Wolff and Frank N. Pieke (2018), Assessing Europe-China Collaboration in Higher Education and Research

<sup>45</sup> John Fitzgerald, «Intellectual freedoms challenged by universities uncritical embrace of China», Australian Financial Review, September 7, 2017, <https://amp.afr.com/news/policy/education/intellectual-freedoms-challenged-by-universities-uncritical-embrace-of-china-20170903-gyalpk>.

governance to be adopted, by forcing illiberal ideas or by conducting illegal activities. Thus, we should not ponder too much and to be opposite of it<sup>46</sup>.

### **3.5 The Belt and Road Initiative: Higher Education in Kazakhstan**

According to Jonas Lammertink, for China Kazakhstan is one of the main partners, this is due to the geolocation and the position of the Belt and Road Initiative. Lack of soft power subsequently causes fear that exists in attitude to Chinese goods, methods of conquering land and workers. Such negative attitude and fear are caused by false information and not knowledge of China. By examining official Chinese documents and declarations controlled by state bodies were identified that reason for the implementation of projects is two way. China believes that the partnership and share knowledge and experience in the field of education and for the creation of infrastructure and economic communication ensures technical talent which is the basis for the Belt and Road Initiative. Such initiatives are carried out to familiarize themselves with Chinese cultural traditions and political ideas to attract Kazakhstanis<sup>47</sup>.

Kazakhstan is a state-rich internal potential for networking, development of projects and has taken upon itself part of the responsibility of the Belt and Road Initiative. In small countries, China has a big impact. Kazakhstan decided that all projects are “perfect” without proving or presenting facts that it will be impede for projects’ effective development<sup>48</sup>.

The Belt and Road Initiative has directly impact in higher education in Central Asia. Kazakhstan’s Initiative “Nurly zhol” is closely linked to the Belt and Road Initiative. It shows aspiration of the country to be more than bridge between China and other countries<sup>49</sup>.

The scholarships of the Chinese government are to some extent created that Kazakh students can feel economic growth, political stability and Chinese ancient culture. There are Confucius Institutes in

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<sup>46</sup> Ingrid d’Hooghe, Annemarie Montulet, Marijn de Wolff and Frank N. Pieke (2018). *Assessing Europe-China Collaboration in Higher Education and Research*.

<sup>47</sup> Jonas Lammertink (2018). “Learning to admire. Education as a Chinese political soft power tool within the Belt and Road Initiative,” master’s thesis, Leiden University, Leiden Repository.

<sup>48</sup> Benno Zogg (2019). *Kazakhstan: A Centrepiece in China’s Belt and Road*, September

<sup>49</sup> Aisi Li (2018). “One Belt One Road” and Central Asia: A New Trend in Internationalization of Higher Education?” *International Higher Education*, Astana, Kazakhstan

Kazakhstan universities that are created and supported by the Chinese Embassy, as well as the promotion of Chinese soft power. The capital of China wants to thoroughly attract as many Kazakhstan students as possible through educational projects. In this regard, the Initiative should be perceived as a weapon of soft power strategy. Despite this, the Chinese state is promoting its interest in educating the people of Kazakhstan about their spiritual values and policies. Although, the Initiative was based on the Belt and Road Initiative, it was assumed that there would be an attempt to establish an international political relationship under the leadership of the capital of China, Beijing. Basis global governance which are the foundation of the project is not being promoted<sup>50</sup>.

#### **4 Main issues**

More than 70 countries are involved in the project of the Belt and Road Initiative<sup>51</sup>, each of which has its own political system, political value orientation, social system, political traditions, national religion, history, culture, etc. Political differences, complexities of national issues, diverse cultures, religious issues, etc. All these aspects are in the process of creating. The Belt and Road Initiative creates the ground for certain risks. From the point of view of more than 70 countries, the implementation of the Belt and Road Initiative project involves the emergence of complex and diverse risks, which can be reduced to the following several categories: political risks, economic risks, national risks, cultural risks, geographical risks, project risks<sup>52</sup>. The relevance of the analysis of the risks and threats that such a large-scale project as “the Belt and Road Initiative” entails is not in doubt, since in the implementation of any project, risk assessment is an integral part. As for political risks, this is probably the most important issue, because the project is being implemented on the territory of a large number of states, each of which has its own political interests.

In the modern world, the Belt and Road Initiative obeys the fact of a diversified world which is the worldwide development of the economy and intercultural communication can be divided into 4 parts.

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<sup>50</sup>Jonas Lammertink (2018), “Learning to admire. Education as a Chinese political soft power tool within the Belt and Road Initiative,” master’s thesis, Leiden University, Leiden Repository.

<sup>51</sup> Khuan Pin, Chzhao Chen (2017). Europe and “One belt, one way”.

<sup>52</sup> Lyu Tszokuy (2015). Europe and the “One belt, one way” initiative: response and risks.

This is an opportunity to take a more productive role for China in the international arena for relationships and worldwide management. And also, it promotes China to participate in world matter and active development of extensive military.

According to Kunczik, Eveland and Beam China through the Belt and Road Initiative use variety of resources for developing and improving their position and view of China in the world. In order to establish communication between nations, they need to use various sources, because this is a complex and lengthy process. Radio, TV - international programs, books, newspapers are the source of the image of the country<sup>53</sup>. The Internet is evolving every day and this helps to create online resources to create a common vision of the country<sup>54</sup>. By using the Internet, they can impact on framework understanding about governance<sup>55</sup>.

This program further supports the movement towards a society, where information technology is used widely. The Internet and other technologies promote mutual contact and collaboration between the countries and territories in the Silk Road Economic Belt and the Maritime Silk Road of the Modern age. The growth of the internet technology prompts discussion among individuals in the numerous civilizations alongside the Belt and Road Initiative, particularly the younger generation (as internet natives). This discourse, while leaving aside disparities in this multipolar society, encourages cultural interaction and economic collaboration on the basis of finding a common ground and building on the strengths of one another<sup>56</sup>.

With Chinese background Web 2.0 age information and communication technologies give more participation of internet technology in the growth of the learners. Internet collaboration brings students from various areas around the world together and provides them with a real, site-rich study and

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<sup>53</sup> Kunczik, M. (1997). *Images of nations and international public relations* (p. 1). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

<sup>54</sup> Beam, M. A., Hutchens, M. J., & Hmielowski, J. D. (2016). Clicking vs. sharing: The relationship between online news behaviors and political knowledge. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 59, 215–220.

<sup>55</sup> Eveland, W. P., Marton, K., & Seo, M. (2004). Moving beyond “just the facts” the influence of online news on the content and structure of public affairs knowledge. *Communication Research*, 31(1), 82–108.

<sup>56</sup> Lihe Huang (2018). *Intercultural Education on the Theme of the Belt and Road Initiative: A Multimodality Oriented Pedagogical Design*.

networking environment. Learners might observe most of the benefits and incentives of the mechanism of communicating with individuals from various cultural environments within such an environment and can quickly access resources and skills of offline social communication<sup>57</sup>.

The convergence of social interaction in the Belt and Road Initiative's project, internet communication in the modern age, and intercultural skill of coming years-oriented promising student development can thus be seen and explored by Chinese teachers.

## **5 Case study**

### **5.1 Cooperation of Tongji University international students**

In May 2015, 60 Tongji University international students from over 50 countries cooperated with same university Chinese students to conduct team research on the Belt and Road Initiative<sup>58</sup>. Every team was set up on the Belt and Road Initiative to reach the various countries. They worked together in a “1 + 1” strategy, consisting of at least one Chinese student and one foreign student from targeted country. Every group had access to a wide range of electronic records, electronic surveys, video interviews, etc. Teams had been under the supervision of eight professors, who had a master's degree in transport infrastructure, intercultural cooperation and international and foreign affairs. The description of each of the 51 studies performed was as follows:

1. Overview of target nation's economy, international commerce, international affairs, finance, and infrastructure;
2. Study of web news and comments and polls to demonstrate the understanding and interpretation of the Initiative by the surrounding community;
3. Recommendations of how to engage in the project for the state, companies and other stakeholders.

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<sup>57</sup> Lihe Huang (2018). Intercultural Education on the Theme of the Belt and Road Initiative: A Multimodality Oriented Pedagogical Design.

<sup>58</sup> Cheng, Y., Song, L., & Huang, L. (2019). The Belt & Road Initiative in the global arena: Chinese and European perspectives. Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan.



From September 2016, 14 Chinese students with a major in foreign languages and about 50 international students enrolled in the China Today course conducted studies on the second batch of 14 countries.

They set up 14 study teams to examine political views, electronic media, scholarly circles, and the general public. The primary research approaches implemented by these teams were (1) literature review, (2) public opinion analysis, and (3) survey. By January 2016, they had finished 65 reports.

Online news, posts, and comments from one nation were gathered and analyzed by each of the 65 teams. Surveys were also carried out where possible. Some recommendations have been made, based on their studies, about how to enhance connectivity on the Belt and Road Initiative between China and other countries. The following points are intended to create mutual trust and to reduce confusion and mistrust.

Additionally, the mass media has an important place in understanding and conception of the Belt and Road Initiative. And while defining these aspects, everything, that has made by People's Republic of China, can be implemented and named as distribution tools. It is possible, that many information distribution tools can be appeared in the near future. It can be goods, which produced by China, local production, as well as Chinese citizens.

As the Belt and Road proposal's climate, that proposal's views and beliefs have a huge impact on its implementation. The Belt and Road project can never be accomplished even with the passion and support of China itself. Despite language differences and cultural issues, public's opinion worldwide, particularly views from neighboring countries, will tell the short board in implementing the initiative, and also provide advice on the interaction activities, subjects, material, and strategies required to achieve the shared goal.

## **5.2 Confucius Institutes**

The growing geostrategic influence of Central Asia makes it necessary to promote the interests of different countries in this region. Education is one of the key factors that influence a person's worldview. In this regard, the creation of a social group with a similar value system is one of the priorities of state policy in promoting its interests in the region through consent, not coercion.

The growing economic weight of the People's Republic of China determines the need to expand access to energy resources in Central Asia. The Central Asian region is considered in Beijing not only as a source of raw materials but also as a market for Chinese products and a transit route for Chinese cargo delivery to Europe.

The expansion of China's economic presence in Central Asia can cause an increase in Sinophobia, which will create difficulties in the implementation of Chinese interests in the region. In an effort to avoid such a scenario, the Chinese leadership is expanding cultural and humanitarian ties in Central Asia, in order to create a favorable image of their country in this post-Soviet region.

Promotion of Chinese cultural projects in Central Asia, in order to create a positive image of the country in the eyes of the local population, is expected through the creation of a network of centers, including by extending to the Central Asian countries the experience of branches of Confucius Institutes operating around the world. According to R. Izmirov, "the project to create Confucius Institutes abroad is supervised by the government Office of the People's Republic of China for the dissemination of the Chinese language in the world. According to data for 2011, there were 358 Confucius Institutes and 500 classes in 96 countries and regions of the world, including 65 in Asia, 73 in Europe, 51 in America, 16 in Africa, 6 in Oceania, and 12 in Russia<sup>59</sup>. By 2020, the total number of Confucius Institutes in the world is expected to reach 1,000. Confucius institutes are opened at educational institutions operating abroad. Thanks to extensive financial and human resources support from Beijing, Confucius Institutes are able to offer attractive conditions for those who want to learn Chinese. As a rule, training there is inexpensive. According to some reports, Hanban annually allocates about 100 thousand dollars to finance the activities of each Institute"<sup>60</sup>.

New departments are being created for the Belt and Road Initiative cultural expansion into Central Asia. In 2010, Urumqi opened a database of the state category for the dissemination of Chinese in Central Asia, whose main tasks are to help establish Confucius Institutes primarily in the member countries of

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<sup>59</sup> Special monthly magazine «Yurist» (2015), "Materials of the round table: The Chinese policy of soft power, reality and prospects", available at: <http://journal.zakon.kz/4708335-naselenie-kazakhstan-vse-eshhe-sklonno.html>.

<sup>60</sup> Special Monthly Magazine «Yurist» (2015), "Materials of the round table: The Chinese policy of soft power, reality and prospects", available at: <http://journal.zakon.kz/4708335-naselenie-kazakhstan-vse-eshhe-sklonno.html>

the Shanghai cooperation organization, publish new educational materials on Chinese, encourage Chinese teachers to work abroad and attract foreigners to China to study Chinese<sup>61</sup>.

According to the Kyrgyz press, in 2015 there was an increase in the number of Confucius schools in this country. In May 2015, a Confucius class was inaugurated in Bishkek. On December 1, 2015, a Memorandum of cooperation was signed between the Academy of public administration and the Confucius Institute. on December 2, a publication was published stating that a Center for Chinese education and culture was opened in Kyrgyzstan<sup>62</sup>.

More than 14 thousand Kazakhstani students study in China. Every year, the Chinese government increases the number of educational grants and scholarships for countries, which is participating in the Belt and Road Initiative's project. The Shanghai Cooperation Organization also provides free training for citizens of its member states. More than 1,300 Kazakh students are studying under a grant from the Chinese government. About 2,500 more are trained according to quotas of the municipality of Central subordination and regional governments. Most of our students receive higher education in China at their own expense. Many Kazakhstanis enter technical specialties such as artificial intelligence, programming, space research, nanotechnology, biotechnology and medical specialties<sup>63</sup>.

In February 2009, the Confucius Institute was opened at the al-Farabi Kazakh National University with the mediation of LAN-Zhou University (China). The first two Confucius Institutes were established in Astana and Almaty. The third was opened on the basis of the Aktobe state pedagogical Institute. According to the Kazakh press, there were 4 Confucius Institutes in the country as of December 2014.

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<sup>61</sup> Russian version of web site «Sin'xua» (2014), "International cooperation in the field of education forms the intellectual support for the development of the Silk Road Economic Belt", available at: [http://russian.news.cn/culture/2014-02/28/c\\_133150954.htm](http://russian.news.cn/culture/2014-02/28/c_133150954.htm) (Accessed 11 January 2016).

<sup>62</sup> Zhe'n'min' Zhibao (2015). "In Kyrgyzstan opened Center of Chinese education and culture", available at: <http://russian.people.com.cn/n/2015/1202/c31516-8984605.html>

<sup>63</sup> Plotnikov D. (2016), "Soft Power" Of China , Turkey, Iran , Russia And The Unit Ed States In Central Asia Within The Education Sector", [https://Www.Researchgate.Net/Publication/304367914\\_SOFT\\_POWER\\_OF\\_CHINA\\_TURKEY\\_IRAN\\_RUSSIA\\_AND\\_THE\\_UNIT\\_ED\\_STATES\\_IN\\_CENTRAL\\_ASIA\\_WITHIN\\_THE\\_EDUCATION\\_SECTOR](https://Www.Researchgate.Net/Publication/304367914_SOFT_POWER_OF_CHINA_TURKEY_IRAN_RUSSIA_AND_THE_UNIT_ED_STATES_IN_CENTRAL_ASIA_WITHIN_THE_EDUCATION_SECTOR)

Confucius institutes were established at al-Farabi Kazakh National University (Almaty), L. N. Gumilyov ENU (Astana), Aktobe state pedagogical Institute (Aktobe) and KarSTU (Karaganda)<sup>64</sup>.

In 2015, China took the path of “diversifying” cultural influence. In the summer of 2015, the Kazakh press reported that the Confucius Institute in the field of agriculture will be created on the basis of the Kazakh agrotechnical University named after Saken Seifullin. “Today (19.06.2015), the rector of the University and his colleague from the Xinjiang Agricultural University signed a Memorandum on the establishment of the Institute. The Chinese side will send about 80 thousand dollars annually to Finance the Institute”<sup>65</sup>.

China promotes its cultural influence in Tajikistan. On September 29, 2015, Dushanbe celebrated “Confucius Institute day”. “The highlight of the program”, as journalists write, was a festive concert “Beautiful China”, in which teachers and students of the local center “Confucius” performed. China's actions in Tajikistan are not limited to the capital. On August 21, 2015, The Confucius Institute was opened in Chkalovsk, Sughd region<sup>66</sup>.

The Confucius institutes are also being opened in Uzbekistan. The first was opened in 2005 in Tashkent, and the second in Samarkand in the summer of 2014<sup>67</sup>.

Thus, there is a growing cultural expansion of China in the Central Asian region. There is no doubt that it is complex and long-term. The opening of Chinese centers in perspective is designed to ensure the smooth penetration of Chinese economic power in Central Asia, which will result in the region being “tied” to Beijing by a network of economic and cultural threads. All this will create a fundamentally different platform for promoting Chinese interests in this region. Beijing’s focus on improving China’s

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<sup>64</sup> Aktlkuov, A. (2011), In Aktobe Was Opened The Institute Of Confucius. URL: [Http://Www.Diapazon.Kz/Aktobe/Aktobe-City/38618-V-Aktobe-Otkrylsja-Institut-Konfucija.Html](http://www.diapazon.kz/aktobe/aktobe-city/38618-V-Aktobe-Otkrylsja-Institut-Konfucija.Html)

<sup>65</sup> Kulmaganbetova, D. (2015). “Astana will open the Confucius Institute”, [Online], available at: <http://informburo.kz/novosti/v-astane-otkroyut-institut-konfutsiya-6867.html>

<sup>66</sup> Independent opinion (2015). “In the northern Tajikistan opened Confucius Institute”, available at: <http://nm.tj/society/33115-na-severe-tadzhikistanaotkrylsya-institut-konfuciya.html> (Accessed 11 January 2016).

<sup>67</sup> Center for the Study of Regional Problems «Continent-A» (2014). “In Uzbekistan will open the second Confucius Institute”, available at: <http://e-center.asia/ru/news/view?id=4598> (Accessed 18 February 2016)

image in Central Asia indicates serious interest in the Middle Kingdom in the markets of countries in this region.

### **5.3 Double First-class University Plan.**

The goal of the “Double First-class University Plan” program is before the 100th anniversary of the People’s Republic of China, it means until 2050 to make all 42 Chinese universities recognized worldwide and to make China the leader in the field of education. To implement this plan, three stages were identified. First, at the global level, China must establish a list of universities and educational disciplines by 2020; secondly, China should replenish the list of universities at the world level, as well as several of them should be leading all over the world until 2030; third, until 2050, Chinese universities on the world stage will be leaders in the quantity and quality of higher education. And so, China will be the force of education in the world. In addition, the government provides financial assistance to universities and this project explains this at a general level. Provincial governments will promote regional universities, and in addition they can mobilize other industries. Universities that participate in this plan will be evaluated, and if their results do not fit the status of a world-class university, they will drop out of the plan. Chinese higher education institutions will soon be divided into groups based on the data of their functions and descriptions; in addition, they will create something in common to strengthen education and improve global competitiveness. The implementation of this plan facilitates the participation of China in major projects of other countries, as well as organizes exchange and cooperation at the international level and participation in general educational projects. In the field of higher education, China will play a significant role in creating rules at the international level<sup>68</sup>. In China, current official documents promote influencing international standards<sup>69</sup>.

## **6 Conclusion**

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<sup>68</sup> “Tongchou tuijin shijie yiliu daxue he yiliu xueke jianshe shishi banfa (zanxing) 统筹推进世界一流大学 和一流学科建设实施办法 (暂行)” [Implementation measures to coordinate the building of world-class universities and first-class disciplines (provisional)], Ministry of Education 教育部, Ministry of Finance 财政部, and National Development and Reform Commission 国家发展改革委, January 24, 2017, [http://www.gov.cn/xinwen/2017-01/27/content\\_5163903.htm#1](http://www.gov.cn/xinwen/2017-01/27/content_5163903.htm#1)

<sup>69</sup> See e.g.: “Gaodeng xuexiao rengong zhineng chuangxin xingdong jihua 高等学校人工智能创新行动计划” [Innovation action plan for artificial intelligence at institutes of higher education], Ministry of Education 教育部, April 2, 2018, [http://www.moe.gov.cn/srcsite/A16/s7062/201804/t20180410\\_332722.html](http://www.moe.gov.cn/srcsite/A16/s7062/201804/t20180410_332722.html)

Summing up, the advantages and achievements of the Chinese Belt and Road Initiative are worth highlighting that this initiative is a bridge that allows you to share knowledge, develop and improve relationships, follow common interests, adhere to common values, work harmoniously and create educational cooperation Initiatives one belt and one way . According to many researchers, in the near future in China, within the framework of the Belt and Road Initiative educational projects and grants will increase. China has invested a huge amount in higher education in the form of state implement on the world stage. China can safely say that they have universities of higher education that are considered top-level at the world level. Every year, the list of countries that are members of the Initiative is growing. Many countries should pay attention to this Initiative. Because the Belt and Road Initiative has achieved significant results and is one of the main focus of China's foreign diplomacy<sup>70</sup>.

The rapid creation of the Silk Road Economic Belt and the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road provides economic growth among the countries of the Belt and Road Initiative, it can enhance further strengthen the inter-regional economic partnership, improve exchanges and general education among different civilizations<sup>71</sup>.

According to Lyudmila Ponomarenko et. al., the Initiative proves that the geographical location is not a barrier to the development of countries. It contributes to strengthening and development around the world. The goals set earlier for the implementation of various projects are being implemented and bring benefits. This Initiative can establish global trade and contributions in the future<sup>72</sup>.

China created the Belt and Road Initiative to develop and strengthen cooperation. China does not plan to follow all the general rules. The last part of the Education Action Plan states that it is necessary to create a connection of resources in the educational associations of the countries of the Belt and Road

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<sup>70</sup> Lyudmila Ponomarenko, Anastasia Zaballa (2019). China's Higher Education Cooperation Within the Framework of "the Belt and Road Initiative.

<sup>71</sup> Ma Lili, Ren Baoping (2015). "Report on the development of the economic silk route — 2015": Chinese Economic Press, Beijing.

<sup>72</sup> Lyudmila Ponomarenko, Dmitry Sidorov, Anastasia Zaballa. China's "the Belt and Road" Initiative as a method of connecting China with the world// International Conference on Contemporary Education, Social Sciences and Humanities (ICCESSH 2017). Advances in Social Science, Education and Humanities Research, volume 124. URL: <https://www.atlantis-press.com/proceedings/iccsh-17/25878788> (Accessed: 20.01.2019).

Initiative, but it is also stated that China can occupy a meaningful and demonstrative role<sup>73</sup>. And therefore, it is better for us to follow and study Chinese rules and goals to achieve common goals. Higher Education in China and scientific research are interconnected with the strains of each country which are aimed at development in the sphere of economy, science and innovation. These strategies are designed to enable China to compete with other countries. Especially with those countries that are the best in the above areas<sup>74</sup>.

An interesting fact is that China attaches great importance to the development of human capital. In our time, this is one of the important aspects<sup>75</sup>.

China promotes the foundation in the education system through intercultural communication and the scientific community. After various programs, China becomes independent and increases in the educational framework of Kazakhstan. China plays an important role as a partner in the exchange of knowledge and experience, it is also a partnership in higher education. On the one hand, new emphasis on the development of international relations<sup>76</sup>.

Summing up, the development of educational relations between Kazakhstan and China is not surprising, which is the result of the active development of the China-Kazakh political and economic partnership, as well as the improvement of intercultural communication. For China, education is one of the methods to improve the country's image and create variations on the Western system in the world arena. For Kazakhstan, joint cooperation with Chinese higher education institutions helps to strengthen and improve opportunities for people – to – people exchange and partnership in scientific technologies, and also helps to increase the best specialists in the country in the labor market in various fields<sup>77</sup>.

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<sup>73</sup> Ministry of Education. (2016, July). Education action plan for the Belt and Road Initiative issued by the Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China. Retrieved from <https://eng.yidaiyilu.gov.cn/zchj/qwfb/30277.htm>

<sup>74</sup> Ingrid d'Hooghe, Annemarie Montulet, Marijn de Wolff and Frank N. Pieke (2018), 'Assessing Europe-China Collaboration in Higher Education and Research', *Made in China 2025 and the Belt and Road Initiative*.

<sup>75</sup> Borzova, A. Yu., Chikrizova, O.S. & Zabella, A.A. (2018). Review of the Book: Bergamaschi, I., Moore, P. & Tickner, A.B. (Eds.). (2017). *South — South Cooperation Beyond the Myths. Rising Donors, New Aid Practices?* United Kingdom: Palgrave Macmillan, 334 p. *Vestnik RUDN. International Relations*, 18 (3), 727-739. DOI: 10.22363/2313-0660-2018-18-3-727-739.

<sup>76</sup> Peyrouse S (2016). Discussing China: Sinophilia and Sinophobia in Central Asia. *Journal of Eurasian Studies*; 7(1):14-23. (In Eng.) DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.euras.2015.10.003>

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