

**NATIONAL ACADEMY OF SCIENCES
OF THE REPUBLIC OF ARMENIA
INSTITUTE OF ORIENTAL STUDIES**

**ՀԱՅԱՍՏԱՆԻ ՀԱՆՐԱՊԵՏՈՒԹՅԱՆ
ԳԻՏՈՒԹՅՈՒՆՆԵՐԻ ԱԶԳԱՅԻՆ ԱԿԱԴԵՄԻԱՅԻ
ԱՐԵՎԵԼԱԳԻՏՈՒԹՅԱՆ ԻՆՍՏԻՏՈՒՏ**

**UNDERSTANDING THE DYNAMICS OF THE BELT AND
ROAD INITIATIVE
THE MAIN TRENDS**

**ՎԵՐԱՐԺԵՎՈՐԵԼՈՎ «ԳՈՏԻ ԵՎ ՃԱՆԱՊԱՐՀ
ՆԱԽԱՁԵՌՆՈՒԹՅԱՆ» ԴԻՆԱՄԻԿԱՆ. ՀԻՄՆԱԿԱՆ
ՄԻՏՈՒՄՆԵՐ**

**Dedicated to the tenth anniversary of the Belt and Road
Initiative**

Նվիրվում է «Գոտի և ճանապարհ նախաձեռնության»
տասնամյակին

**PROCEEDINGS OF THE INTERNATIONAL
CONFERENCE**

**ՄԻՋԱԶԳԱՅԻՆ ԳԻՏԱԺՈՂՈՎԻ ՆՅՈՒԹԵՐ
ՆՈՅԵՄԲԵՐԻ 23, 2023**

23 NOVEMBER, 2023

**N 2
ԵՐԵՎԱՆ
2023**

**N 2
YEREVAN
2023**

**ՀՀ ԳԱԱ ԱՐԵՎԵԼԱԳԻՏՈՒԹՅԱՆ ԻՆՍՏԻՏՈՒՏԻ
ՀՐԱՏԱՐԱԿՈՒԹՅՈՒՆ**

Ժողովածուն տպագրվում է ՀՀ ԳԱԱ Արևելագիտության ինստիտուտի
գիտական խորհրդի որոշմամբ
Published by the decision of the Scientific Council of the Institute of Oriental
Studies of NAS RA

Վերարժևորելով «Գոտի և ճանապարհ նախաձեռնության»
դինամիկան և հիմնական միտումներ: Միջազգային գիտաժողովի
նյութեր, Երևան, 2023

Understanding the dynamics of the Belt and Road Initiative: the main trends.
Proceedings of the International Conference: Yerevan, 2023

ԿԱԶՄՎՈՍԻՏԵ /ORGANISING COMMITTEE

Գոռ Մարգարյան- ՀՀ ԳԱԱ Արևելագիտության ինստիտուտ
Gor Margaryan- Institute of Oriental Studies of NAS RA
Արաքս Փաշայան- ՀՀ ԳԱԱ Արևելագիտության ինստիտուտ
Araks Pashayan- Institute of Oriental Studies of NAS RA
Նազելի Նավասարդյան- ՀՀ ԳԱԱ Արևելագիտության ինստիտուտ
Nazeli Navasardyan- Institute of Oriental Studies of NAS RA
Արամ Աբաջյան- ՀՀ ԳԱԱ Արևելագիտության ինստիտուտ
Aram Abajyan- Institute of Oriental Studies of NAS RA
Մուշեղ Ղահրիյան- ՀՀ ԳԱԱ Արևելագիտության ինստիտուտ
Mushegh Ghahriyan- Institute of Oriental Studies of NAS RA

ԽՄԲԱԳՐԱԿԱՆ ԽՈՐՀՈՒՐԴ/ EDITORIAL BOARD

Գոռ Մարգարյան- ՀՀ ԳԱԱ Արևելագիտության ինստիտուտ
Gor Margaryan- Institute of Oriental Studies of NAS RA
Արաքս Փաշայան- ՀՀ ԳԱԱ Արևելագիտության ինստիտուտ
Araks Pashayan- Institute of Oriental Studies of NAS RA
Նազելի Նավասարդյան- ՀՀ ԳԱԱ Արևելագիտության ինստիտուտ
Nazeli Navasardyan- Institute of Oriental Studies of NAS RA
Արամ Աբաջյան- ՀՀ ԳԱԱ Արևելագիտության ինստիտուտ
Aram Abajyan- Institute of Oriental Studies of NAS RA
Մուշեղ Ղահրիյան- ՀՀ ԳԱԱ Արևելագիտության ինստիտուտ
Mushegh Ghahriyan- Institute of Oriental Studies of NAS RA

UDC 32(082)

Understanding The Dynamics Of The Belt And Road Initiative: The Main

Trends: Dedicated to the tenth anniversary of the Belt and Road
Initiative.- Yerevan: Institute of Oriental Studies NAS RA,
2023.- 35 pages.

Proceedings of the international conference were dedicated to the tenth anniversary of the Belt and Road Initiative (Yerevan, 23 November, 2023). In this proceedings was discussed them like The Saudi-Iranian Reconciliation: The Trends Of China's Transforming Role In The Middle East, The Dynamics Of Iran's Integration Into China's Belt And Road Initiative: Geopolitical And Security Issues, Politics, Economy, And Security: A Comparative Analysis Of China-Armenia And China-Georgia Relations and other important issues.

**ՎԵՐԱՐԺԵՎՈՐԵԼՈՎ «ԳՈՏԻ ԵՎ ՃԱՆԱՊԱՐՀ
ՆԱԽԱԶԵՆՆՈՒԹՅԱՆ» ԴԻՆԱՄԻԿԱՆ. ՀԻՄՆԱԿԱՆ
ՄԻՏՈՒՄՆԵՐ**

DOI: 10.54503/978-9939-9313-3-3

ISBN 978-9939-9313-3-3

© Institute of Oriental Studies NAS RA, 2023

CONTENTS

Araks Pashayan

THE SAUDI-IRANIAN RECONCILIATION: THE TRENDS OF CHINA’S TRANSFORMING ROLE IN THE MIDDLE EAST 7

Nazeli Navasardyan

THE DYNAMICS OF IRAN’S INTEGRATION INTO CHINA’S BELT AND ROAD INITIATIVE: GEOPOLITICAL AND SECURITY ISSUES..... 9

Aram Abajyan

CHINA’S PUBLIC DIPLOMACY: THE TOOL OF GLOBAL SUCCESS..... 12

Lilit Harutyunyan, Tatevik Manukyan

CHINA’S NARRATIVES ON THE SYRIAN CRISIS: FROM THE NEUTRAL STANCE TO THE “POST-CONFLICT” INVOLVEMENT ... 14

Gor Gevorgyan

EGYPT-CHINA COOPERATION IN THE CONTEXT OF CHINESE “SOFT POWER”..... 18

Kristine Rafayelova

THE LEARNING AND RESEARCH PROCESS OF CHINESE LANGUAGE AT THE BSU: ACHIEVEMENTS AND PERSPECTIVES .. 20

Mushegh Ghahriyan

POLITICS, ECONOMY, AND SECURITY: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF CHINA-ARMENIA AND CHINA-GEORGIA RELATIONS 21

Armen Manvelyan

THE ARMENIAN FACTOR IN INTERNATIONAL TRADE NETWORK: THE HISTORICAL CONTEXT..... 23

Qnarik Sargsyan

QATAR-CHINA: FROM CONSTRUCTIVE TIES TO STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP..... 25

Harut Matevosyan

UNDERSTANDING CHINA’S POLICY IN THE TALIBAN-LED AFGHANISTAN 27

Garnik Sahakyan

A COMPARISON OF CHINA-INDIA “SOFT POWER” IN SOUTH CAUCASUS IN THE CONTEXT OF GEOPOLITICAL TRANSFORMATIONS 29

Davit Gritsenko

THE CULTURAL CONNOTATION OF METAPHORICAL EXPRESSIONS OF THE CONCEPT OF “ONE BELT, ONE ROAD” IN CHINA’S PRESIDENT XI JINPING’S SPEECHES..... 30

Davit Nadiryan

THE PERSPECTIVE OF THE ARMENIA-CHINA POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC RELATIONS IN THE CONTEXT OF THE “NEW SILK ROAD”..... 32

Hovhannes Bardakchyan

THE ROLE OF CHINESE PRIVATE MILITARY COMPANIES IN THE SECURITY ENSURING OF THE BRI 33

Vladimir Ruzhansky

BELT AND ROAD INITIATIVE AS A FOUNDATION FOR SOLVING INTERNATIONAL SECURITY PROBLEMS..... 35

Araks Pashayan

Armenia, Institute of Oriental Studies, NAS RA

Researcher, araks.pashayan@ysu.am

THE SAUDI-IRANIAN RECONCILIATION: THE TRENDS OF CHINA'S TRANSFORMING ROLE IN THE MIDDLE EAST

The transformation of Saudi Arabia-Iran relations

Iran and Saudi Arabia have been engaged in an ongoing struggle for influence in the Middle East since the Islamic revolution in Iran. The radical differences in foreign policy between these two Muslim states exacerbated the negative impact on regional stability and hindered the establishment of Iran's multilateral cooperation with GCC countries for decades. On the other hand, the antagonistic attitude of the US towards Iran contributed to the marginalization of Tehran in the region, which negatively affected Saudi Arabia-Iran relations as well. The rivalry between Saudi Arabia and Iran over a number of key issues in the Middle East entered a new phase of tension after the fall of Saddam Hussein's regime in 2003 and the post-Arab Spring events (2011–2016). The interests of Saudi Arabia and Iran clashed in Syria, Iraq, Lebanon, Yemen, Bahrain, and beyond. Riyadh and Tehran severed ties in 2016 after finding themselves on opposite sides of the Yemen conflict. On March 10, 2023, Saudi Arabia and Iran announced the normalization of ties brokered by China. After seven years of tensions, Saudi Arabia and Iran resumed diplomatic relations after negotiations in Beijing□

The main goal of the deal is to reestablish diplomatic relations between two countries and to respect “the sovereignty of states and the non-interference in the internal affairs of states.” Additionally, both parties agreed to implement two bilateral agreements, the General Agreement for Cooperation in the Fields of Economy, Trade, Investment, Technology, Science, Culture, Sports, and Youth, and the Security Cooperation Agreement, which were signed in 1998 and 2001, respectively. This research looks into the growing influence of China from the viewpoint of the Middle East and the Chinese mediation policy and tries to understand how the region will benefit from it in terms of security. Can China replace the US in the Middle East? Can China's growing role ease the conflicts in the Middle East and Saudi-Iranian tensions as well? How effectively can China deal with Israel, one of the main actors in the region? Can China stand by the Saudi-Iran peace treaty?

Conclusion

China has long-term interests in the region. At this moment, China is not challenging America's military presence in the Middle East, nor is the US challenging China's leadership in trade and infrastructure investment. Anyhow, the increasing influence of China in the Middle East and the implementation of BRI are changing the power balance in the region. On the other hand, the Saudi Arabia-Iran peace agreement is seen as a major diplomatic triumph for China. China may need to play a larger security role in the Middle East, particularly in the Gulf, over the coming decades.

Dr. Nazeli Navasardyan
Armenia, Institute of Oriental Studies of NAS RA
Researcher, naznav24@gmail.com

THE DYNAMICS OF IRAN'S INTEGRATION INTO CHINA'S BELT AND ROAD INITIATIVE: GEOPOLITICAL AND SECURITY ISSUES

The topic discusses geopolitical and security aspects of the Islamic Republic of Iran's (IRI) integration into the Chinese project One Belt, One Road initiative (Belt and Road Initiative/BRI). It assesses the challenges and opportunities for implementing the Iran-China 25-year agreement for the "Comprehensive Strategic Partnership."

Iran's geographic location has geopolitical and geoeconomic advantages for the BRI. It is unique for penetrating distant neighbouring regions and transporting goods and energy resources to the world markets. Iran is the shortest transit to the Persian Gulf and Europe and is cheaper and safer than other routes. In turn, for an internationally isolated Iran, China is a vital power as the world's largest energy importer, a state with a clear ambition in the Middle East region, and the leading competitor to the USA new impetus for the Iran-China partnership was the wide-ranging 25-year bilateral agreement for the "Comprehensive Strategic Partnership" on economic and security issues, which was negotiated in 2016 and finally signed in 2021. Energy and infrastructure are at the heart of the agreement. Despite certain limitations, it comes to life dynamically, especially in the energy sector. It is noteworthy that Beijing and Tehran avoided any alliances for decades, and this historic agreement cost much effort for each party. In recent decades, Iran has tried to position itself as

an independent center of power in the region. At the same time, Beijing did not want to complicate relations with Iran's traditional adversaries - the US, Saudi Arabia, Israel and was interested in containing Iran's nuclear ambitions. China had an ambiguous approach towards Iran for a long time, unlike Pakistan; there was no clear definition of Iran's role and place in the BRI. On the one hand, the growing global confrontation between the US and China and the Western systemic containment of Iran significantly influenced the restart of Sino-Iranian relations. However, on the other hand, Tehran has concerns about China's dominance in Iran's economy and exploitation of the country's resources. The withdrawal of the US from Afghanistan and the establishment of the power of the Taliban strengthened the presence of China and Iran in Afghanistan as well. The deepening of Sino-Iranian relations, in turn, creates an opportunity to weaken the influence of China's geopolitical adversary, India, on Iran, especially within the competing BRI with the North-South project. At the geopolitical level, the rejection by the United States of the nuclear deal with Iran, the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), in 2018 pushed Iran further towards China.

The following stimulation between Beijing and Tehran was the admission of Iran as a full member of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) in March 2023. Russia's geopolitical isolation due to the war in Ukraine could strengthen Iran's role in the BRI to facilitate China's trade with Europe and expand its influence in Central Asia.

The active suction of Iran into China's orbit is considered in the general logic of China's Middle East policy. Every year, China has been investing more and more in the neighbouring countries of Iran, steadily building up its political and economic ties with Iraq in the framework of BRI. China is initiating and consistently

increasing its mediation role to strengthen its geopolitical position and develop the BRI. The essential indicator is the recent agreement under Chinese auspices between Saudi Arabia and Iran to reestablish diplomatic relations in March 2023. Putting regional political stability as the essential condition, Beijing actively seeks direct engagement with Saudi Arabia and Iran, recognizing the enormous benefits of their rich energy resources and geography and minimizing the risks of BRI implementation.

Opening up a space for cooperation between the Iran and Gulf monarchies, the primary beneficiary of which would be China, is a further step towards establishing a region-wide market and making it possible to transform the region's security architecture as a whole.

Dr. Aram Abajyan

Armenia, Institute of Oriental Studies, NAS RA

Researcher, aramabajyan@mail.ru

CHINA'S PUBLIC DIPLOMACY: THE TOOL OF GLOBAL SUCCESS

Today, almost everyone is talking about China's global power status and rising role in international relations. Many people say that this country is simply very powerful; it has a fast-growing economy, significant resources, and a huge, hard-working population. Thus, China's power is often characterized in such a “primitive” way, but few people discuss the preservation of the country's undisturbed statehood, long history, great philosophy, and the transmission of ideas from generation to generation.

It is especially important to discuss the real concepts of China's foreign policy based on the existence of all mentioned, in which public diplomacy with all its components plays a crucial role. This tool is implemented by China with enviable flexibility, and this research will be based on exploring China's use of various cultural soft power tools and their effectiveness in communicating a positive perception of China in international relations.

Recently, China has attracted more global attention by introducing different institutions and initiatives in which public diplomacy plays an essential role. Indeed, Beijing is using this tool in terms of spreading global influence and presenting the country's real image in the international arena. Having centuries-old traditional heritage as the basis of its foreign policy concepts, China forms public perceptions with the peoples of different regions. Unlike the Western model, where hard power can be used as a means of strengthening and spreading influence, the Chinese

side acts much more prudently. One vivid example of the spread of Chinese language and culture is the activity of Confucius Institutes in various countries. Meanwhile, China attaches great importance to people-to-people relations and also to an objective media. These are not only considered important parts of China's state policy, but they also help statesmen and societies of different countries gain great confidence in China, which in turn is an incentive to develop the dynamics of interaction in different fields.

The main aspects of the research will cover the real discovery and presentation of China's public diplomacy tools. An attempt will be made to understand and interpret the bases of Chinese public diplomacy, which can help find a direct connection to China's transformation into a global power.

Thus, if some scholars are discussing the classical presentation of soft power, its resources, characteristics, and implementations, this research is going to discover the real roots and meaning of Chinese soft power strategy, aiming to understand the benefits of how each tool can be used to serve the interests of the state.

Dr. Lilit Harutyunyan
Armenia, Institute of Oriental Studies NAS RA

Researcher, lilit.harutyunyan@ysu.am

Dr. Tatevik Manukyan
Armenia, Institute of Oriental Studies NAS RA

Researcher, t.manukyan@ysu.am

CHINA'S NARRATIVES ON THE SYRIAN CRISIS: FROM THE NEUTRAL STANCE TO THE "POST- CONFLICT" INVOLVEMENT

Since the beginning of the Syrian crisis in 2011, many analysts have examined the role played by a handful of key outside actors, such as Russia, Iran, Turkey, and the member states of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC). Yet China has received comparatively little attention in most discussions about the Syrian crisis. A deeper look at Sino-Syrian relations and Beijing's policies towards Syria is long overdue, as this bilateral relationship is set to become increasingly important to both China's ambitious foreign policy in the Middle East as well as the Syrian government's vision for reconstruction and redevelopment.

The future of war-torn Syria matters to Beijing for a host of reasons. Having supported Bashar al-Assad's government against both the anti-regime uprising and ISIS—albeit without being directly involved in the conflict militarily—China appeals to Syria as officials in Damascus seek to move on to the reconstruction and redevelopment phases of the "post-conflict" period. As Western-imposed sanctions continue targeting Syria, China will likely be an increasingly important global partner for Damascus that can help counterbalance Western pressure.

Since the conflict broke out, Beijing has been cautious and pragmatic about its approach. China has been in alignment with Russia on major issues related to Syria, as illustrated by its votes at the UN Security Council (UNSC). Beijing's positions have largely remained consistent, rooted in several beliefs on the part of the government: The Syrian conflict requires a political solution determined by the Syrian people; the country needs a political transition process; Syrian unity and national reconciliation are always priorities; and the international community must deliver humanitarian assistance to the country. Indeed, it was Beijing's view that "Syria's sovereignty, independence, and territorial integrity must be respected and upheld," which prompted China's Foreign Ministry to call on Turkey to "exercise restraint" shortly after Ankara launched Operation Peace Spring, a military incursion into northern Syria, in October 2019.

Two main objectives have driven China's Syria policies. First, in terms of security threats, Beijing wants to build a strong partnership with Damascus to maintain friendly ties and cooperate on counter-terrorism issues. Second, economically, the Chinese leadership seeks a Sino-Syrian relationship that helps Beijing advance its vision for the ambitious Belt and Road Initiative (BRI).

Beijing's main concerns about militant jihadists and violent extremists outside of Chinese territory have historically focused on Afghanistan. For years, militant Uighurs from groups such as the East Turkestan Islamic Movement (ETIM) and the Turkestan Islamic Party (TIP) have crossed into Afghanistan, where they have purportedly plotted actions against the Chinese state. Yet with the rise of ISIS, China has begun to see Syria as its new main concern from a counter-terrorism perspective. While the exact figures are unknown, hundreds (if not thousands) of Uighurs from Xinjiang are

thought to have joined ISIS in the Levant since the so-called caliphate's rise to power in western Iraq and eastern Syria in 2014.

Beijing and Damascus have their own reasons for sharing intelligence on Chinese citizens in Syria within the framework of a growing bilateral partnership. From the Chinese perspective, the return of these militant jihadist Uighurs to Xinjiang following their time fighting with ISIS in Syria would be a nightmare scenario. As Beijing sees it and as Chinese leaders are trying to convince their Western counterparts, the stabilization of Syria serves the global community's security interests—and that is, at least for now, only a realistic possibility if Assad remains in power.

For China's BRI ambitions, Syria and Lebanon represent a route to the Mediterranean that is an alternative to the Suez Canal. Through large investments in ports in the eastern Mediterranean, the Chinese are seeking to revive historic Eurasian trade corridors that connect China to Europe, Africa, and elsewhere. Without question, the incorporation of the port city of Tartus and Damascus into the BRI would strengthen China's economic position in the Levant.

Assad has spent years seeking to attract Chinese investment in the country's reconstruction and redevelopment. In terms of Syria's rebuilding, Beijing has some skin in the game. In 2017, China invested \$2 billion in an industrial park in Syria. Officials in Beijing know that Assad will likely favour Russia, Iran, and China in reconstruction projects and that working with governments of Assad-allied (or at least Assad-friendly) countries is more desirable for Damascus than bringing in GCC member states that supported the opposition during the Syrian civil war. China knows that it does not face real competition from the West when it comes to rebuilding Syria, as Assad has affirmed that the U.S. and Europe will not be involved in the process. Already, Huawei, a Chinese

multinational technology company, has pledged to redevelop Syria's nationwide telecom network.

A key question now is how great of a risk China is willing to accept in Syria. With the remnants of ISIS still present and significant parts of Idlib still under the control of Turkish-sponsored anti-Assad groups, violence and instability continue to plague Syria. Depending on how the war-torn country moves ahead in 2020, China may be cautious about investing more resources in Syria if the security conditions make such a move too risky.

Concluding remarks

However, it is safe to bet that China will continue efforts to deepen its partnership with Syria, not only to remain a key player in the country's reconstruction but also to invest in good relations with Damascus for geopolitical purposes. China and Russia are rising powers in the Arab world, and both are capitalizing on Washington's strategic blunders and filling vacuums in the Middle East region. For Beijing, the growth of its partnership with Damascus is in no small part related to Chinese ambitions of countering American hegemony in the Middle East and asserting its influence in West Asia while working to make China the center of global trade in the 21st century.

Dr. Gor Gevorgyan

Armenia, Institute of Oriental Studies, NAS RA

Researcher, gorgevorgyan1976@gmail.com

EGYPT-CHINA COOPERATION IN THE CONTEXT OF CHINESE "SOFT POWER"

In modern international relations, examples of promoting "soft power" or "smart power" proposed by Joseph Nye are prevalent; specifically, the implementation of this concept is more "effective" than imposing "hard power" in the classical sense.

The People's Republic of China is the leading player in using soft power when projecting its influence globally. As a relatively new superpower, China is heavily involved in the Middle East and across the African continent, promoting the Belt and Road Initiative, thus shaping a new balance of power and at the same time turning into a mover and shaker of a new regional security system.

In terms of China's use of "soft power" in Africa, the Egyptian-Chinese relations are interesting, which rose to a qualitatively new level in 2013 after Abdel Fattah al-Sisi came to power in Egypt. Egypt's dire socio-economic situation and China's strategic goals in the Middle East and across the African continent become the basis for multifaceted cooperation for both states. Moreover, China's Belt and Road Initiative and its "soft power" tactics make Egypt-China relations strategic.

Observing Egyptian-Chinese relations within the scope of the Chinese "soft power" concept, one can perhaps underscore the following important points:

1. The Belt and Road Initiative megaproject and the "soft power" initiative show that China is seeking to further increase its role in the Middle East and Africa.
2. The Suez Canal is not only an important transport route but also one of the most important links of the so-called "Silk Sea Road", and in this context, Egypt is a "strategic partner" for China.
3. The Mediterranean foreign policy direction is one of China's priorities, and therefore, by increasing its influence in Egypt, official Beijing strengthens its position in the Mediterranean region as well.
4. Egypt's role in the "African Union" is essential for China, which is also trying to increase its influence over the African continent through its relationship with official Cairo.
5. The Egyptian market continues to be one of the best for the consumption of Chinese products.
6. Despite the fact that Egypt has a rather painful attitude towards the rapprochement of Sino-Ethiopian relations, Egyptian-Chinese relations remain strategic.

Dr. Kristine Rafayelova
Armenia, Brusov State University
Researcher, krafayelova@gmail.com

THE LEARNING AND RESEARCH PROCESS OF CHINESE LANGUAGE AT THE BSU: ACHIEVEMENTS AND PERSPECTIVES

Multilingual education is a valuable tool in the modern world that provides an opportunity to get worldwide scientific, social, economic, and cultural information, as well as increases mobility opportunities around the world.

In 2007, the PRC adopted a policy of promoting science and education in China, as well as Chinese values. Since then, the teaching of Chinese has gained widespread popularity throughout the world. After the Chinese leadership launched the project Belt and Road Initiative, it further enhanced the process.

Along with the growth of Armenian-Chinese diplomatic relations and cooperation in various fields, RA schools and universities initiated the teaching of Chinese and the interest of Armenian students in the Chinese language and culture has resulted in an increased number of students studying Chinese.

Dissemination of Chinese cultural values requires not only the study of the linguistic features of Chinese but also the understanding of the history and culture of China as they are reflected in the language.

Dr. Mushegh Ghahriyan
Armenia, Institute of Oriental Studies, NAS RA
Researcher, mghahriyan@gmail.com

POLITICS, ECONOMY, AND SECURITY: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF CHINA-ARMENIA AND CHINA-GEORGIA RELATIONS

In recent years, China and the states of the South Caucasus region have been consistently developing their relations. China has interests in the South Caucasus, which are just one aspect of its broader global strategy. China has exhibited a growing interest in the South Caucasus due to the region's strategic location at the crossroads of Europe and Asia. Driven by political and economic objectives, China seeks to enhance trade relations and connectivity, invest in infrastructure projects, and foster diplomatic ties in the South Caucasus as part of its broader geopolitical and economic strategy.

In turn, those nations have their own interests in developing deeper relations with China. Armenia and Georgia have shown interest in expanding relations with China for several reasons taking into consideration China's economic prowess and the potential for investment opportunities. China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) has provided an opportunity for bringing investments in infrastructure development programs, which can help to boost economic growth, and diversify international partnerships.

The relationship between China and the regional countries encompasses various fields, including politics, economy, trade, energy, security, and cultural interactions. This study aims to explore China-Armenia and China-Georgia relations and compare them. For this purpose, I chose three aspects of those relations: political (mutual agreements and visits, relations with organizations and participation in projects initiated or supported by China),

economic (trade, investments), and security (the perception of China's role in Armenia and Georgia, potential and opportunities in military cooperation). An in-depth study of each aspect of bilateral relations will enable us to understand where their interests converge and what limitations exist. In addition to that, the comparison between Armenia's and Georgia's relations with China will demonstrate the similarities and differences and also explain why they exist.

Dr. Armen Manvelyan
Armenia, Institute of Oriental Studies, NAS RA
Researcher, armenmanvelyan@gmail.com

THE ARMENIAN FACTOR IN THE INTERNATIONAL TRADE NETWORK: HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Human history is not only about wars but also about trade. For a long period, one of the main problems has been the creation of trade relations and connections within the world's largest continent, Eurasia. World trade needed reliable and strong routes between different parts of the world. The Belt and Road Initiative is not the first attempt to create trade connections between Asia and Europe. Historically, there have been at least four attempts to establish trade networks. Armenian merchants created one of them in the 17th and 18th centuries. The paper touches on the main trade networks and Armenia's role in these projects.

The Silk Road, as the first Eurasian trade network, was active from the second century BCE until the middle of the 15th century. Its span was over 6,400 km. (4,000 miles). The Silk Road contributed greatly to facilitating economic, cultural, political, and religious interactions between the East and the West. The Silk Road was an ancient trade route linking China with the West that carried goods and generated collaboration between the two great civilizations of Rome and China. The silk went to the west, and wool, gold, silver, etc. went to the east.

The Armenian commercial capital and its significant role in international trade started in the 17th century. Armenian merchants' commercial activity was present in Russia, Persia, the Ottoman Empire, and various European and Asian countries. The Armenian merchants' success in competing with the powerful European

trading houses and mercantile bourgeoisie is a matter of deep analysis.

The activity of the Armenian merchants in the 17th and in the first half of the 18th centuries can be distinguished as a real historical phenomenon, since for the first time in world history, the Armenian merchants controlled the sea routes between Asia and Europe without the support of any powerful country or center of power. They never claimed a monopoly and were open to cooperation with other countries and trade frames. In the 18th century, the early modern Armenian trade network lost its importance and disappeared completely because of increased competition, the local economic and political situation, and other reasons.

Qnarik Sargsyan

Armenia, Institute of Oriental Studies, NAS RA

PhD applicant, kn.sargsyan.yasu@gmail.com

QATAR-CHINA: FROM CONSTRUCTIVE COLLABORATION TO STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP

Qatar-China ties have strengthened significantly in recent years. China's perception of its relations with Qatar is delineated in its understanding of the regional order in the Middle East. It shows its assessment of the geopolitical factors in Gulf countries. The diplomatic and economic aspects of Qatar-China relations are well institutionalized. China considers Qatar an essential partner in promoting the Belt and Road Initiative, especially its economic and geographical components, which are important in creating China-GCC free-trade zones. The research goals include identifying China-Qatari cooperation's primary motivations, tendencies, and prospects, pointing out Beijing's measures to formalize a strategic partnership with Qatar, and Doha's engagement and integration within the Belt and Road Initiative.

The research shows that since the introduction of the Chinese Belt and Road Initiative, the mutual relations of these two countries have been greatly affected by this initiative, and Qatar has played an essential role in Chinese BRI implementation in MENA. Qatar and China have been growing allies over the last decades. Their relations have not only been developing at the diplomatic level, but economic, energy, and, lately, military cooperation have also risen significantly over the last decade. China and Qatar also accentuate the importance of soft power and support their collaboration in culture, education, and tourism. The vital factor in China-Qatari relations is maintaining a delicate balance in the complex major

power competition and rivalries. Doha's welcome of China's rising impact in the Persian Gulf is also connected with Doha's inclination to assume a more significant role in the region to enhance its diplomatic manoeuvrability. Qatar-China relations are based on shared complementary economic and strategic interests, such as synergizing the implementation of BRI projects with the Qatar National Vision 2030.

Harut Matevosyan

Armenia, Institute of Oriental Studies, NAS RA

PhD applicant, harutmatevosyan9@gmail.com

UNDERSTANDING CHINA'S POLICY IN THE TALIBAN-LED AFGHANISTAN

The Taliban's return to power in Afghanistan brought new changes in relations with the neighbouring states of the region, as well as new perceptions of regional politics and a new round of reshaping relations with Afghanistan. It is noteworthy that China, which also has a land border with Afghanistan, plays a major role here. Afghan-Chinese relations were established in the middle of the previous century and experienced some transition until the end of the century. The situation changed dramatically in 2021, after the Taliban seized power, when China cautiously tried to build relations with the new Afghan authorities. During the rule of the Taliban, this connection was strengthened even more, and its clear evidence was that after the well-known events of September 11, the first opponent of the US and coalition forces' invasion of Afghanistan was China itself. China is circumspect about its role in Afghanistan and has only started to take a more active role given Taliban support for Uighur separatists. It is equally apprehensive of the close linkage that exists between terrorists in South Asia and Central Asia. Moreover, Russian and Indian involvement in Afghanistan made Beijing reconsider its approach towards Afghanistan. Its policies towards Afghanistan are greatly influenced by its strategic interests in Central Asia and South Asia, which could be threatened by events unfolding in Afghanistan. It is also aware of the threats posed by Islamist fundamentalism in both of these regions.

China has played a visible role in Afghanistan since the Taliban seized power in 2021. Beijing is among only a handful of countries to maintain a diplomatic presence in Kabul, where the Chinese ambassador regularly meets with Taliban officials. There has also been a surge in Chinese traders visiting Afghanistan to explore business opportunities and ink deals. The Taliban, meanwhile, has boasted of Beijing's interest in expanding trade and investing billions of dollars in Afghanistan's mining sector. China is now involved in several infrastructure projects in Afghanistan. China's Metallurgical Company has won a bid to extract mineral resources in Aynak in northern Afghanistan worth an estimated US\$88 billion and has been awarded a 30-year lease to develop copper mines there. This is the single largest foreign investment in Afghanistan to date. China plans to build a railway linking Xinjiang with Afghanistan, in line with its western regional development policy (Xibu Da Kaifa). Moreover, China is planning to build border access routes and supply depots through the Wakhan Corridor. Pakistan is not happy with the opening of the Wakhan Corridor, as it will compete with the Karakoram highway as a transit route. China is particularly concerned about the presence of three non-state actors in Afghanistan: the Al-Qaeda-linked East Turkestan Islamic Movement (ETIM), now called the Turkestan Islamic Party (TIP), the Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), and the Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA). Beijing wants the Taliban to shut these actors' bases down. The Taliban is eager to deepen its relationship with China, particularly on the trade and investment fronts, in order to circumvent Western sanctions. However, if the terrorist-related issues are not resolved and the Taliban does not show a genuine desire to move against these non-state actors, Beijing will be reluctant to commit significantly more to the relationship. Still, building on ties going back to 2014, there have been some slight movements in the bilateral relationship.

Garnik Sahakyan

Armenia, Institute of Oriental Studies, NAS RA

PhD applicant, sahakyang972@gmail.com

A COMPARISON OF CHINA-INDIA “SOFT POWER” IN SOUTH CAUCASUS IN THE CONTEXT OF GEOPOLITICAL TRANSFORMATIONS

The topic discusses the toolkits and ideological and theoretical aspects of Chinese and Indian soft power in the South Caucasus after the collapse of the Soviet Union up until now. The South Caucasus was not a foreign policy priority, not for China, nor for India, for decades. Despite this circumstance, both Indian and Chinese soft power were familiar in the South Caucasus during the Soviet Union period. The main goal of the topic is to study the transformation of Chinese and Indian soft power in the three South Caucasus republics. The main conclusion is that Chinese and Indian soft power are competing with each other for influence in the region and beyond, which is directly related to the changing new world order and geopolitical transformations.

Dr. David Gritsenko

Armenia, Brusov State University

Lecturer, david.gritsenko.97@mail.ru

THE CULTURAL CONNOTATION OF METAPHORICAL EXPRESSIONS OF THE CONCEPT OF “ONE BELT, ONE ROAD” IN CHINA’S PRESIDENT XI JINPING’S SPEECHES

In recent years, the language of politics has become the subject of study in many scientific fields, such as linguistics, cultural studies, sociology, etc. In particular, the means of expression in the texts of political speeches are of greatest interest: with their help, the speech not only acquires a certain emotional and expressive colouring, moving from “dead” clichés to “living” and figurative speech, but is also filled with new meanings and subtexts. In this regard, metaphor is considered to be the most striking and effective means of expressiveness because it not only transfers the meaning of one phenomenon to another but also forms a conceptual system and linguistic picture of the world.

The concept of ‘One Belt, One Road,’ which has been featured in the speeches of President Xi Jinping for 10 years, has acquired many metaphorical expressions that form the Chinese picture of the world through the categories of history and culture. Consequently, studying the cultural connotation of these metaphorical expressions will contribute to the most profound understanding of the Chinese vision of this initiative and knowledge of its cultural and historical value foundations.

The report examines the cultural connotation of metaphorical expressions of the “Belt and Road” concept using the text of Xi Jinping’s speech at the Third Belt and Road Forum for

International Cooperation, held from October 17 to 18, 2023, as an example. President Xi's speech at the Forum is a kind of generalization of the essence of the "Belt and Road" concept, which has been forming over the past 10 years. The report explores metaphorical expressions of the concept and their cultural and historical interpretations.

Davit Nadiryan

*Armenia, Brusov State University
PhD applicant, nadiryan.d@mail.ru*

**THE PERSPECTIVE OF THE ARMENIA-CHINA
POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC RELATIONS IN THE
CONTEXT OF THE "NEW SILK ROAD"**

The scientific paper discusses the problem of involving Armenia in the Belt and Road Initiative and the prospects for further Armenian-Chinese economic and political cooperation. If the degree of scientific development of the topic of Chinese geopolitics and its various directions is quite high, then the Armenian-Chinese direction of Chinese geopolitics remains little-studied.

The scientific paper examines the prerequisites for the emergence of the Belt and Road Initiative and the history of Armenian-Chinese cooperation. It is important to note that the PRC is pursuing an active policy in the South Caucasus in order to expand its influence and ensure its own security, while the main mechanism for achieving this goal is the increase of economic ties with the countries of the South Caucasus region. The article used a historical-analytical research method, which made it possible to comprehensively consider the political, economic, historical, and other aspects of the geopolitics of the PRC and the Republic of Armenia. The scientific paper suggests ways to solve some problems associated with the involvement of Armenia in this project and the increase of Armenian-Chinese cooperation.

Hovhannes Bardakchyan
Russian-Armenian University (RAU)
PhD candidate, hovobard@gmail.com

THE ROLE OF CHINESE PRIVATE MILITARY COMPANIES IN THE SECURITY ENSURING OF THE BRI

The Belt and Road Initiative, being one of the most large-scale foreign policy actions of the PRC, has become a catalyst for several large-scale changes in the political and economic landscape of the Eurasian continent. Among such changes can be considered the increasing role of private military companies (PMCs) and private security companies (PSCs) in ensuring the security of many large infrastructure projects in the countries of Central Asia, the Middle East, and some other regions.

The reason for the increasing role of PMCs and private security companies is that, due to the unprecedented scale of the BRI, the leadership of the PRC, as well as the governments of the countries participating in the initiative, had to start looking for additional tools to ensure the security of infrastructure facilities being created on their territory. The presence of additional tools would allow us, together with law enforcement agencies and intelligence agencies, to respond much more effectively to potential and existing threats. Among such threats, some researchers note both criminal elements in the participating countries and radical groups of various kinds that can target objects under construction for religious, ideological, economic, and other reasons.

It can be said that, just as the Belt and Road Initiative is an unprecedented project in its geographical and economic scope, the growth in the number and activity of Chinese and non-Chinese PMCs and private security companies is a unique phenomenon in

the history of mankind. In this regard, the scientific community, as part of a general analysis of the Belt and Road Initiative, is faced with the problem of assessing the growth of activity of both the official security forces of the PRC and participating countries, as well as non-state actors in the field of security, such as PMCs and private security companies—their influence on the security system of large infrastructure projects, features of operation, and acquisition. Analysing the above features will allow us to understand why the private actors in the security sector have become so active and numerous in this short historical period.

Vladimir Ruzhansky
Researcher, ruzhanskij65@mail.ru

BELT AND ROAD INITIATIVE AS A FOUNDATION FOR SOLVING INTERNATIONAL SECURITY PROBLEMS

The last two decades clearly demonstrate that without taking into account the interests of China, Russia, and Iran in the areas of economics and security, it is impossible to ensure reliable stability in the world. Moreover, today we can state that ignoring the interests of the above countries in these areas and the desire of the NATO bloc led by the United States to establish its own world order regardless of the interests of countries and regions from the Middle East to East Asia have brought the world to the brink of World War III.

The current situation clearly demonstrates that the global OBOR project cannot be implemented without security guarantees. It is also quite obvious that despite its achievements in the fields of economics, science, and technology, especially the military, each of the countries discussed above cannot single-handedly implement global projects like the BRI or provide security guarantees for these projects. All this is possible only if the three main powers of Eurasia interact: China, the Russian Federation, and Iran. Moreover, the goals and objectives of these countries largely coincide, especially in matters of the territorial integrity of each of these states, economic development, scientific and technological progress, and, finally, security in all its aspects. This report is devoted to ways to bring closer the positions of the PRC, Iran, and the Russian Federation on key issues and the collective efforts of the three largest Eurasian powers to ensure the security of the BRI under construction.