

# Chapter 7

## The Role of BRI in China's Policy Toward Central Asia

**Enayatollah Yazdani**

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0462-6185>

*Sun Yat-sen University, China*

**Ji Zeng**

*Sun Yat-sen University, China*

### **ABSTRACT**

*One of China's main foreign policy destinations is Central Asia, which is in the hinterland of Eurasia. The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) has become the most significant tool for developing ties between China and the five Central Asian republics. The BRI's launch signaled the beginning of a new phase in China's foreign policy toward Central Asia and a new round of cooperation between China and the Central Asian republics. Since the BRI's implementation in 2013, China's foreign policy has made Central Asia a priority. The initiative's execution has boosted China's economic interests and influence in the Central Asian countries. Beijing's foreign policy encompasses its bilateral and multilateral interactions with the prominent Central Asian republics in the age of the multipolar world order, in which China is one of the major powers playing a prominent role. This chapter explores how China's BRI has changed China's influence and exchange connections with Central Asian nations, as well as how the BRI has operated in each of the region's countries*

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## INTRODUCTION

A previously unheard-of level of global activism, concretized in several regional and transcontinental projects, the most extensive of which is the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), proposed in 2013, has accompanied China's rise to great power status in the new multipolar world order 2.0. The BRI, China's standout foreign policy initiative for the Twenty-First Century, is quickly spreading around the world, particularly, the Global South.

The Silk Road Economic Belt (SREB), or “belt,” of overland economic corridors across Eurasia, is intended to link China to Central Asia and Europe. The 21st Century Maritime Silk Road, or “road,” is a network of shipping lanes intended to link China to the Middle East, Southeast Asia, and some regions of Africa and Latin America through the South China Sea and the Indian Ocean. More than 140 nations are included in BRI, accounting for 63% of the world's population and nearly 40% of global output. Indeed, the Belt and Road Initiative is China's leading foreign policy and economic strategy in Eurasia and beyond. It is a massive transcontinental infrastructure, trade, and connectivity project spanning Europe, Africa, Latin America, and Asia. This project aims to boost mutual development and prosperity for both China and the recipient countries. BRI has enormous potential for recipient countries' development and stability.

The fall of the Soviet Union in late 1991 signalled the start of a new era in relations between China and the Central Asian republics of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan, as well as the opening of the curtain on contemporary Chinese diplomacy in Central Asia. Since the announcement of the BRI, it has become the primary driving force behind China's foreign policy in Central Asia, as well as the primary tool for focusing on the region's countries. The BRI plays a central role in China's policy toward Central Asia, serving as a strategic framework to deepen economic, political, and security ties with the region. Central Asia is central to the Silk Road Economic Belt, with two of Eurasia's three economic corridors (the “Northern Corridor” and the “Central Corridor”) passing through the region. This reflects both the spirit of today and the spirit of the ancient Silk Road. Central Asia is strategically important and a priority area for constructing the Silk Road Economic Belt. Central Asia is an important part of China's peripheral diplomacy because of its global role in the multipolar world order 2.0, the core area of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), and the gateway to China's Western opening. Long before the Belt and Road Initiative was proposed, China and Central Asian countries had conducted extensive research into the formation of a community of common destiny.

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