



THE MARITIME SILK ROAD: GLOBAL TRADE AND CHINA'S GEOPOLITICAL IMPACT

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Abstract

This article analyzes the economic, logistical, and geopolitical significance of the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road within the framework of the Belt and Road Initiative. The study examines the role of the Maritime Silk Road in the global trade system, the network of strategic ports, and China's expanding international influence. Particular attention is paid to the geostrategic importance of ports such as Gwadar, Hambantota, and Piraeus, as well as the role of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) in ensuring energy security. The article also discusses both the economic opportunities created for developing countries and the challenges associated with debt dependency, geopolitical competition, and strategic control.

Keywords: Maritime Silk Road, BRI, geopolitics, port diplomacy, Gwadar Port, logistics, global trade, China's foreign policy, CPEC, strategic ports.

Introduction

ANNOTATSIYA

Ushbu maqolada Belt and Road Initiative doirasidagi "21-asr Dengiz Ipak Yo'li" ning iqtisodiy, logistika va geosiyosiy ahamiyati tahlil qilinadi. Tadqiqotda Dengiz Ipak Yo'lining global savdo tizimidagi o'rnini, strategik portlar tarmog'i va Xitoyning xalqaro ta'sirini kengaytirishdagi roli yoritilgan. Shuningdek, Gwadar, Hambantota va Piraeus kabi portlarning geostrategik ahamiyati hamda China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) loyihasining energiya xavfsizligidagi o'rnini tahlil qilingan. Maqolada Dengiz Ipak Yo'lining rivojlanayotgan davlatlar uchun yaratadigan iqtisodiy imkoniyatlari bilan birga qarzga bog'liqlik, geosiyosiy raqobat va strategik nazorat kabi muammolar ham ko'rib chiqiladi.



Kalit so‘zlar: Dengiz Ipak Yo‘li, BRI, geosiyosat, port diplomatiyasi, Gwadar porti, logistika, global savdo, Xitoy tashqi siyosati, СРЕС, strategik portlar.

АННОТАЦИЯ

В данной статье анализируется экономическое, логистическое и геополитическое значение Морского шелкового пути XXI века в рамках Belt and Road Initiative. Исследуется роль Морского шелкового пути в глобальной торговой системе, сети стратегических портов и расширении международного влияния Китая. Особое внимание уделяется геостратегическому значению портов Гвадар, Хамбантога и Пирей, а также роли Китайско-пакистанского экономического коридора (СРЕС) в обеспечении энергетической безопасности. В статье также рассматриваются экономические возможности для развивающихся стран наряду с проблемами долговой зависимости, геополитической конкуренции и стратегического контроля.

Ключевые слова: Морской шелковый путь, BRI, геополитика, портовая дипломатия, порт Гвадар, логистика, мировая торговля, внешняя политика Китая, СРЕС, стратегические порты.

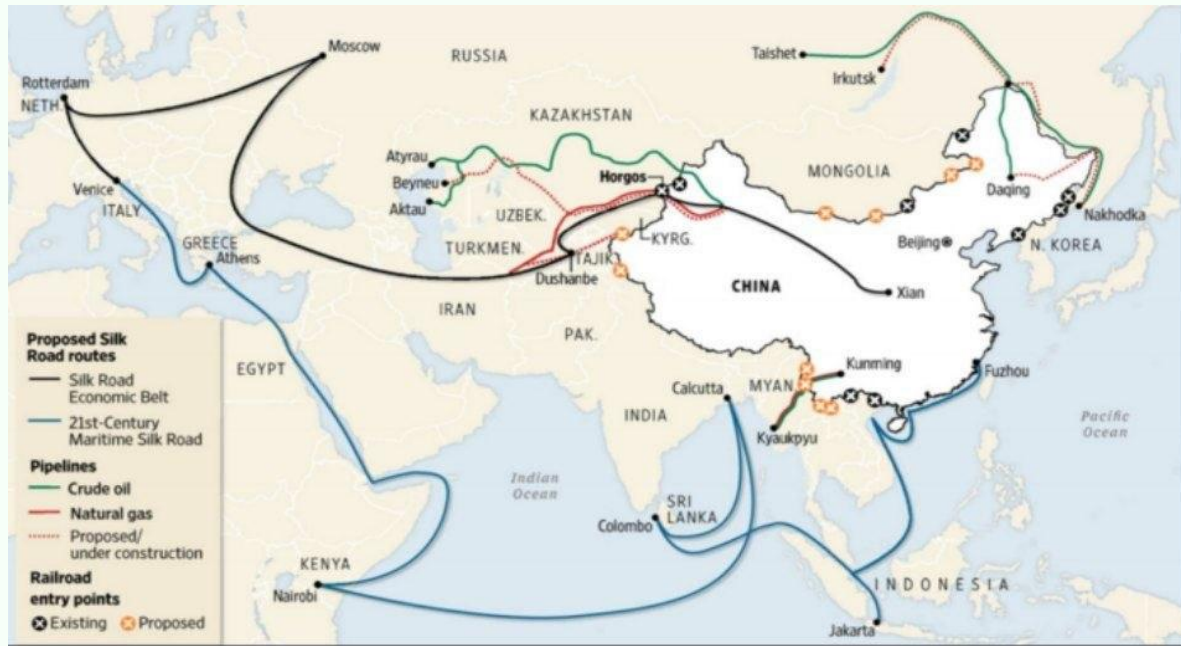
INTRODUCTION

In recent years, the economic system has further increased the importance of maritime trade routes in the era of globalization. In this process, the “One Belt, One Road” project put forward by the People’s Republic of China is seen as one of the major initiatives reshaping the international political and economic system. The “21st Century Maritime Silk Road”, which is a part of this initiative, is a tool for expanding China’s global trade flows and expanding its geopolitical influence. The “21st Century Maritime Silk Road” is the largest maritime logistics network implemented within the framework of China’s “One Belt, One Road” project, and is a modern, sea-based successor to the ancient Silk Road.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The main objective of the “21st Century Maritime Silk Road” is to connect China’s coastal ports with Europe through the South Pacific. This route will operate as a

strategic network that will reorganize global trade flows, passing through the South China Sea and the Indian Ocean (Figure 1).



(Figure 1) [1].

The economic significance of the Maritime Silk Road can be seen from its role in global trade and resource distribution. The MSR connects China with important economic regions such as Southeast Asia, South Asia, and the Middle East, providing broad access. In particular, this route provides China with the following resources:

1. Oil and gas (via the Middle East and Africa)
2. Iron ore
3. Copper and other industrial raw materials [2].

This situation will further strengthen China's industrial production chain. The "21st Century Maritime Silk Road" is geographically a maritime route connecting China's coastal regions with Southeast and South Asia, the South Pacific, the Middle East, and East Africa with Europe. These regions are not only global trade centers, but also strategic zones for energy resources and raw material flows. Therefore, this project is not just a simple transport corridor, but also an integrated system that connects the global world. The BRI initiative also has a very broad economic reach, covering around 65 percent of the world's population and one-third of global gross



domestic product (GDP) [3]. This shows that the BRI is not only a regional but also a global integration tool.

Another important aspect of the Maritime Silk Road is that it will reduce transportation costs and increase the speed of trade, while making global supply chains more efficient. This will increase China's competitiveness in international markets and support an export-oriented economy. Strategic ports and logistics networks are of great importance for the effective functioning of the BRI.

These ports will serve as a key instrument for directing global trade flows and expanding China's economic and geopolitical influence. The main ports within the MSR are:

1. Piraeus (Greece)
2. Mombasa (Kenya)
3. Gwadar (Pakistan)
4. Colombo and Hambantota (Sri Lanka)
5. Jakarta and Batam Island (Indonesia)
6. Kyaukpyu (Myanmar)
7. Kuantan (Malaysia) [4].

Due to their geographically strategic location on trade routes, these ports provide China with free access to European, African and Asian markets. The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor corridors have been launched, connecting the Gwadar port in Pakistan with the Xinjiang region of China, the Myanmar oil pipeline with the Chinese city of Kunming, and the Khur Strait in Thailand [5]. The Gwadar port is located on the Indian Ocean and has land connections with western and southern China, providing an alternative to the Malacca problem.

The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor includes logistics and energy security through the Gwadar-Xinjiang link. From a geopolitical perspective, China's presence in Gwadar will expand its influence in the Arabian Peninsula, the Indian Ocean, and the Pacific Ocean through the expansion of its rail network, the construction of railway lines, and investments in natural gas and oil pipelines in Pakistan. Located only 1,200 kilometers from Kush in Turkmenistan to Gwadar (3,400 kilometers from the nearest Black Sea port of Odessa), Gwadar will be a unique location for the flow of energy reserves from Central Asian countries.

Pakistan's Gwadar port, where crude oil from the Middle East is processed before being shipped to China via pipeline and rail, is seen as a trade and energy route to



China [6]. Sri Lanka is also strategically well-positioned at one of the key points of China's recently launched Maritime Silk Road (MSR), with three international shipping ports: Colombo Port, Tricomalee Port, and Hambantota International Port. About 30% of these ports' trade is handled by the Port of Colombo. The Port of Colombo also has great potential to attract new and larger cargo ships due to its port technology, warehousing and support services. To facilitate this, the Sri Lankan government, with financial support from China, has begun developing three major ports in Sri Lanka: the Port of Colombo, the Port of Hambantota and the Port of Trincomalee [7].

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, through the “21st Century Maritime Silk Road”, China is expanding its opportunities to expand global trade routes, access international markets, and develop logistics systems. This project plays an important role not only in economic integration, but also in expanding China's global influence.

However, this initiative is not limited to only positive aspects, its negative aspects are also visible. In some developing countries, problems such as debt dependence, control over strategic infrastructure, and increased geopolitical competition are emerging. Therefore, the MSR can be viewed not only as an economic initiative, but also as a geostrategic tool that changes the global balance of power.

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