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STUDIES IN TERMS OF  
ECONOMICAL AND SOCIAL  
ISSUES  
I**

*Edited by  
Ahmet OĞUZ*

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### **THE STRATEGIC IMPORTANCE OF NEW SILK ROAD IN THE CONTEXT OF TURKISH, AMERICAN AND RUSSIAN FOREIGN POLICY PERSPECTIVE**

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#### **Introduction**

It can be seen that the roads that play an important role in conveying the ideas of humanity, as well as the knowledge, the values and the beliefs, also have a special position in international relations. This way, the use of geopolitical power over geography is achieved via the control of environmental factors through people. The Silk Road, the first and the most important intercontinental trade route, is a general name given to trade routes that start from China, go through Anatolia and the Mediterranean, and end in Europe. The route which gets its name from one the most precious commodities of the time, silk, has also enabled intercultural interaction and the exchange of ideas. Even though the Silk Road had lost its importance with the discovery of alternative routes, it has become one of the key issues in international relations in recent times.

China's geopolitical importance has grown immensely with the fast-financial development and economic growth of China beginning

from the 2000s. China is taking important steps in the name of the New Silk Road Project, also known as the "One Belt One Road Initiative," which is considered to be the largest transportation project in the world. The countries that the historical Silk Road passes through are making an effort to make the New Silk Road stronger than before. With China leading the project, this project closely concerns Turkey and Russia, along with the former Soviet Central Asian Republics that gained their independence after the dissolution of the Soviet Union and who are now trying to be integrated into the world economy.

The new prospective route that will be built will represent the economic belt that will connect China, Central Asia, Russia and Europe by land. Also, railways, airports, ports and new energy routes will be constructed rapidly with the development of the project's infrastructure. The New Silk Road Project is aimed to connect 65 countries in total via sea, air and land routes. The project will approximately cost 21 trillion dollars. A project like this involving China and Russia creates a threat to the national interests of the United States and its Asia-Pacific policies.

### **1. The Historical Importance of the Silk Road**

The phrase "Silk Road" was first coined by Baron Ferdinand von Richthofen at the end of the 19th century in his writings about the west of China (Akkaymak, 2009: 7). Richthofen has made an important contribution to historical and geographical literature with this coinage. The Silk Road begins from China and continues into Europe without interruption. The reason the Silk Road came to be is the silk production in China, which it gets its name from and that silk reaching Western civilizations with the purpose of trade. The Silk Road trade began with silk and in time, it expanded to many commercial goods.

After the Silk Road emerged as a trade route between the East and the West, it included three different routes within itself. These routes ran along between the Greek civilization and China or between the Roman Empire and China. The first of these routes is the Northern Silk Road. The main route of the Northern Silk Road would circle back from around the Aral Sea to Khwarezm, then would continue onto the northwest and end up in the southern riverbed of the Ural River. Another route that the Northern Silk Road contained would pass across the Aras River and end up in Iberia, which is within

Georgian territory today and then continue onto Kolais, which was situated on the Black Sea coast (Haussig, 1997: 37).

The most natural boundary that separates the Northern and Southern Silk Roads is the Tian Shan range. These two routes connect to each other on three points on the Tien Shan Mountains. The first connection is made with a road between Chiao-ho city and Beshbalik. The second connection is between Turpan and Urumqi. The third connection reaches from Karashar to the valley of the Ili River (Gökalp, 1973: 41). The starting point of the Southern Silk Road was China and it reached all the way to Smyrna. There is also a third route of the Silk Road other than the Northern and the Southern Silk Roads. This route is called the "Maritime Silk Road." This route connected Egypt via the Red Sea and the Indian Ocean to the ports of Western India. One of the branches of this route led to the Persian Gulf, while the other went eastward, to the Malabar coast, to Sri Lanka, to the Ganges Basin and finally to Indochina. After the Guangzhou port, the Maritime Route reached all the way to Sri Lanka, India, and East Africa over the Strait of Malacca (Stavisky, 2002: 225).

The Silk Road remained under the control of the Turks for a long time from the 3rd century BC up until the Middle Ages. By controlling the Silk Road, the Turks controlled the silk trade. Then the Huns dominated the trade between the East and the West by taking over the Silk Road in the year 216 BC (Ögel, 1981: 447). The Huns' domination over the Silk Road lasted until the 5th century AD (Kafesoğlu, 1984: 80-81).

After the 5th century, The Hephthalites reigned over the region between the south of Turkestan and all the way to India. The Hephthalites subjugated the whole of the Kushan Empire in this century (Özergin, 1995: 8). During the time the Turks reigned over the Silk Road, they traded many different commercial goods and also participated in slave-trade. After the establishment of the Islamic State and the expansion of the conquest policy, the control of the Silk Road was passed from the Turks on to the Arabs. The Arab influence over this region was weakened after the death of the Abbasid governor the Silk Road once again came under the control of the Turks. This situation continued until the 16th century. Afterwards, as the Silk Road lost its importance with geographical discoveries and the Chinese, Mongol, and Safavid forces began to bear down on the

region, the Turks' reign over the Silk Road ended (Bedirhan, 1994: 31-123).

## **2. Turkey's Geopolitical Importance in the New Silk Project**

The Silk Road has an important place Turkish history and has always been important in the lands where the Turks lived and also in the culture and the history of the Turks. This road was the single most important transportation route that contributed for keeping the integrity of the wide Turkish geography and Turkic states intact with commercial activities. The Silk Road not only connected Turkic states with each other and increased their interaction, but it also brought prosperity and helped unify these states (Işık, 2017: 146-147).

In addition to the Silk Road having an important place in history, it is becoming economically important today as well. In this context, the Road is being mentioned frequently again with important issues such as energy transmission lines, railways, highways, and roads.

With the increase in global energy demand and trade made through China, it is aimed to provide transportation from China to Europe through projects that involve Turkey. The Nabucco pipeline, TRACECA, the Baku-Tbilisi-Kars railway, the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan pipeline, the New Silk Road, the Silk Road Economic Belt, and the New Silk Road Initiatives have been planned and implemented towards this goal. Just like in history, a line that begins in China and reaches Europe via Turkey to provide transportation and interaction between the East and the West is needed. The interest in the New Silk Road has increased and work is being put into the project to address this need (Işık, 2017, p. 150).

China has put the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank into service in 2015 to finance the Modern Silk Road. The 21st century Silk Road connects countries with railways and China's strategy can be considered to be a "Railway Diplomacy." China is aiming to implement many roads, railways, ports and other infrastructural projects in Asia and in the world. For this purpose, China is aiming to establish good relations with the countries on the New Silk Road line (<https://ankasam.org/author/ozlem-keyvan/>).

Geographically speaking, Turkey is geopolitically and geostrategically very important for the Modern Silk Road and it has embraced this idea in line with its foreign policy. The first overseas high-speed train project in Turkey which connects Ankara and

Istanbul began in 2005. The project was completed in 2014 and it was financed by China with a loan of 750 million dollars. This railway line has reduced the distance of 533 kilometers between the two cities from 7 hours to 3.5 hours and it is China's only overseas high-speed train project that has been completed. The successful completion of the project has increased the trust Turkey and other countries that are submitting bids within the scope of the Modern Silk Road have in China. The Modern Silk Road Project is composed of 230 sub-projects and is estimated to cost 43 Billion Dollars. Thanks to this trust, opportunities have been born for Chinese companies to submit bids within the scope of various infrastructural projects in Turkey. China and Turkey both need each other, and China is trying to develop the relations it has with Turkey and to keep these relations alive, as Turkey is the central country of the Modern Silk Road project (Kısacık and Denizelli, 2018: 880-881). Meanwhile, Turkey is need of new investments and opportunities within its rapidly growing economy. This need is crucial for Turkey to have transportation and an energy line. The provision of logistic activities to Europe through Turkey will bring the "bridge" role of Turkey more important. In addition, the Turkish part of the Baku–Tbilisi–Kars Railway Project was completed in 2017. Turkey's central location is important for this initiative which approximately concerns 65 countries (<https://ankasam.org/author/ozlem-keyvan/>).

The former president of the Turkish Industry and Business Association (TÜSİAD) Cansen Başaran-Symes gave a speech at the "Understanding & Doing Business with China" conference organized by the Koç University - TÜSİAD Economic Research Forum and stated that the "One Belt One Road Initiative" to be "critically important" for the private sector and that they had given China priority for the last 10 years. She continued her speech by saying, "*We think that it is of critical importance for us to analyze the economic process that China is going through for the private sector, considering that China is one of the most important shareholders of the global economy today, and to closely follow the New Silk Road Project which has drawn the attention of the whole world.*" She also stated that the aim of this project was to connect many countries in Asia, Europe, and Africa through land and sea, and to build the Silk Road Economy Belt and the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road. Symes said that they believed that this big project would affect two-thirds of the world's population and a third of the global production, and also emphasized the project's global importance by adding that the project would help increase the

unilateral and multilateral relations among countries.

Through this conference, it was aimed to create awareness in the Turkish business world concerning this project, and to evaluate its effects on Turkish-Chinese economic relations. Furthermore, with this organization, major developments in China will be better understood and it will be easier to assess the current conditions when doing business with China (<https://www.dunya.com/is-dunyasi/tusiad-yeni-ipek-yolu-kritik-onemde-haberi-301123>).

President Erdogan spoke at a forum which leaders of the countries in the Modern Silk Road project attended and emphasized the importance of the Silk Road for Turkey by saying *"This initiative, which has been implemented in a vast geography, signifies the establishment of a new system in which economic, political, social, cultural areas are linked to one another. Increasing the standard of living for our citizens through the sustainable growth and development of this project will be a common success for all us."* Erdogan also emphasized that this initiative would be possible through a "win-win" approach and added that by putting the national funds of the countries on the route into action, the financial integrity of the project would be strengthened. He also stated that the Edirne-Kars High-Speed Railway Project which crossed the country from one end to the other was another important service provided by Turkey within the scope of this project (<http://www.bbc.com/turkce/haberler-dunya-39913491>).

As a result, the Modern Silk Road route will shape railways and other types of transportation, and also connect the lines that will supply energy. The increase in the economic and commercial activity on this route also carries a very important strategic significance for the Turkic world. The revival of the Silk Road will also make important contributions to the Republic of Turkey's economy. This way, Turkey can play an important role in the development of new logistic projects by meeting the energy demands and with the transportation between China, Central Asia, Turkey, and Europe. With the Modern Silk Road, Turkey would be able to procure raw materials from the Turkestan Republics at much lower prices and it would be able to easily export the goods produced by itself to the region. In addition, a safe and a risk-free transportation route would be highly attractive to an audience that aims to trade and invest. The Modern Silk Road is important for the prosperity and the politics of the Turkic world and it can lead to the formation of new economic and cultural relation models in the globalizing world and in Eurasia, which is going

through an active transformation process. Also, the effect of globalization will also contribute to the revival of the Historical Silk Road and to the integration of the countries on the route with the global economic system (Işık, 2017: 149-150).

### **3. The Importance of the New Silk Road Project for Russia, the United States, and China**

#### **3.1. Russia**

After the Cold War, especially after Putin became the head of the state, Russia's foreign policy has been reconstructed to be a "great power" rather than being a "superpower" which was born out of the necessity of using the Tsarist and Soviet legacy during the Cold War. Russia wants to develop relations with the countries within the Eurasia region that it can have an influence over. In this context, it is not possible for a Eurasian Union that is not led by Russia to exist according to the Eurasianism developed by the Russians (Dugin, 2015: 339-345). Considering the particular geographic location of Central Asia, preservation of its national security has always been the most important thing for Moscow. Strategically speaking, republics in this geography can be considered to be "the soft belly" of Russia. Even though the economic, scientific and technological factors continue to be important for maintaining a country's power on the international agenda and these factors continue to determine the influence and the power of the states, politics, including power politics, has gained a greater priority recently. Increasing inequality and instability in the world, the return of the nation states as key players to the economic and political arena on a global level, the situation of transnational corporations or NGOs. The rise of Asia, which is a continent of nation-states, is also an important factor. Therefore, Turkey, Iran, China and especially the United States and NATO to potentially increase their influences is kind of perception by Russia as a threat to its regional politics (Caşın, 2015: 254). Undoubtedly, one of the most crucial issues at this point will be the fate of the energy and power transmission lines situated within this geography.

Russia's national interests can be evaluated on global and geopolitical levels. Russia's "Greater Eurasia" ideology gives the impression that it is increasingly becoming more valid in the face of the Atlanticists. The Moscow administration sees the former Soviet countries, which became independent after the end of the Cold War, as its backyard and a geography to be controlled and defines these countries' target

borders and security under the concept of "Eurasianism" ([https://www.wilsoncenter.org/publication/russian-eurasianism-ideology-empir to](https://www.wilsoncenter.org/publication/russian-eurasianism-ideology-empir-to)). For Russia, a geographical and strategic unity in Eurasia is a given and Russia believes that it must be located at the center of this union. Russia has recently been surrounded by Eastern Europe due to the Ukrainian crisis. This means an important economic loss for Russia.<sup>1</sup>

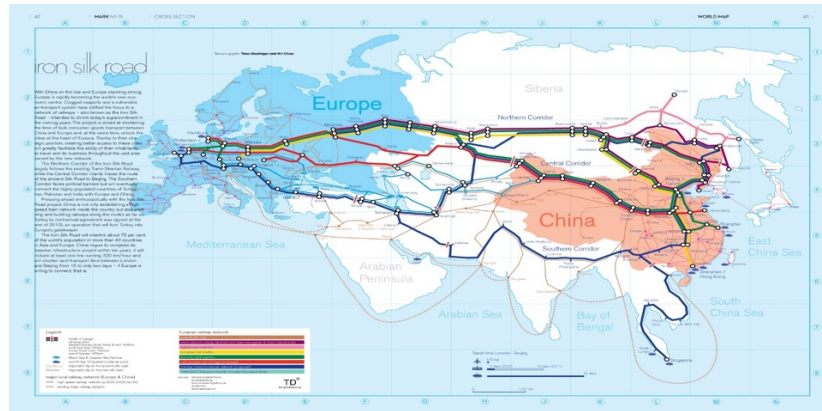
Therefore, while the New Silk Road Project is of great importance to the national interests of Russia, it can be said that the concept of "Eurasianism" is at the forefront in this context. When assessed practically, the concept of Eurasianism only reflects its geographical importance and Russia's involvement in Asian affairs. Russia's main purpose is to be in a universal cooperation with Asia. In addition, the "Eurasia Partnership," which has recently become a valid concept, has played a pioneering role in the design of a new geoeconomic and geopolitical environment, with the addition of China and the other members of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, and ASEAN along with Russia. According to Dr. Altay Atlı, a scholar at the Asian Studies Stream of Istanbul Policy Center, the primary objective of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization is to cooperate on issues like security and war on terrorism. However, due to the recent difficulties the economies of China and Russia have faced, the two countries have had to turn to an economic cooperation. Therefore, Russia should cooperate with China to profit both economically and politically from the New Silk Road Project. China's diplomatic and military potential powers are increasing with each passing year. Therefore, Russia may have an even stronger neighbor in the East in a few years. But one of the most important issues during this process is to establish the necessary conditions to use new opportunities and for China's newly emerging power to not be seen as a threat by other countries and Russia, and to prevent another division in

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<sup>1</sup> For more info on this issue please see, Sina Kısacık and Şeniz Denizelli, "Rusya Federasyonu'nun Avrasya Birliği Politikaları Çerçevesinde Ukrayna Politikalarını Anlamak / Understanding The Ukraine Policies of the Russian Federation in terms of Its Eurasian Union Policies", in *Karadeniz Jeopolitiği / Black Sea Geopolitics*, Hasret Çomak, Caner Sancaktar, Volkan Tatar and Burak Şakir Şeker (eds.), İstanbul, Beta Basım Yayım Dağıtım, Ocak 2018, pp. 163-185.

THE STRATEGIC IMPORTANCE OF NEW SILK ROAD IN THE CONTEXT OF  
TURKISH, AMERICAN AND RUSSIAN FOREIGN POLICY PERSPECTIVE

Eurasia(<https://thediplomat.com/2015/06/eurasian-silk-road-union-towards-a-russia-china-consensus/>).



Source: <http://natoassociation.ca/bridging-eurasia-the-new-silk-road/>.

Russia connects the continents of Eurasia and Europe and is geopolitically important. Oxford Economics estimates that Asia's share will to about 45%. By 2050, it will exceed 50% of Asia's global economy

(<https://www.uschina.org/sites/default/files/oxford%20Economics%20Us%20jobs%20and%20China%20trade%20report.pdf>). Therefore, this geostrategic reality has caused arguments among the Europeanists and the Eurasianists of the political and intellectual elite circles of Russia about which region their country would be integrated. But as it can be seen, with the position of Eurasianism with the New Silk Road Project, Russia's position will become a more special. The integration of Eurasia is of great importance to Russia's New Silk Road concept. In this context, the natural resources of Central Asia are also important. Eurasia is a large area that includes the new world's ambitious and dynamic countries, along with the Silk Road. 21. With 75% of the world's population, 60% of the global national income and 75% of the world's energy resources at the beginning of the century, Eurasia is at the center of the global economy. Located on both sides of Eurasia, Western Europe, and South Asia are two major centers of world economy besides North America.

Russia's ultimate goal is to fill the economic gap between Europe and East Asia. The ongoing political breakdowns in Europe and energy are the greatest powers Russia holds. Russia wants to be a European-Pacific state on the global map. Relations with the European Union

countries and Russia's relations with China, India, Japan, Korea and its former Soviet neighbors on the other hand, are to create a region that is not under the authority of a single power and a region that binds it under a common geographical name, which defined by Russia as Eurasianism. Although China is not at the center of Russia's strategic concerns, Russia regards China as a great threat in the context of its national interests. Therefore, the New Silk Road Project for is an important step for European integration, which Russia considers a national policy. This way, Russia will have the chance to use its geopolitical position in the most efficient way and on the other hand, it will be possible to keep the conflict risk in its geography at the lowest level.

In this context, it should be considered that the historical Silk Road will also make a great contribution to railway networks. The project, which is also called the "Silk Railway," is connected to the European railway route by the Marmaray railway tunnel which passes the strait in the west and to Kazakhstan and China with railway lines in the east. This way, a train departed from England can go all the way to China without interruptions ([the http://www.tasam.org/tr-tr/icerik/24/demirden\\_ipek\\_yolu\\_traceca\\_proje](http://www.tasam.org/tr-tr/icerik/24/demirden_ipek_yolu_traceca_proje)).

A new geopolitical order has been established with the disintegration of the Soviet Union. The energy resources and transportation routes located in the Central Asian region are important in this geopolitical order. Therefore, due to the discovery of the energy reserves of global economic importance in this region, the region has become the focus of attention of states such as Russia, China, Turkey, Iran and the United States, which also due to historical, political and security parameters. Russia's objectives in Central Asia and the New Silk Road Project are the outcomes of geography, history, economy, and culture and should enable Russia to closely monitor the region (Rumer, 2006: 3).

### **3.2. The United States of America**

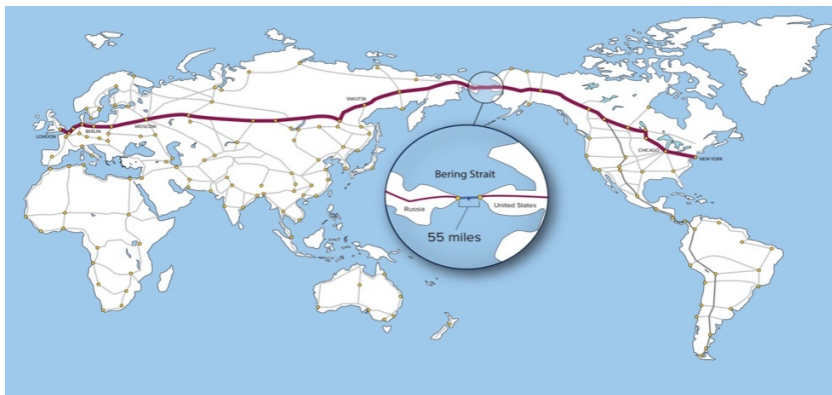
The Asian continent is of great importance for the United States' national interests. The United States has entered into a struggle with the Russian Federation over the republics that left the Soviet Union and gained their independence after the end of the Cold War. The United States aims to develop relations with the countries that it regards as Russia's backyard to make its global dominance sustainable. One of the most important issues for the United States'

national interests is energy security. Energy security can be defined as the securement of an economic energy source at a level that sufficient to meet the vital needs of a state, including during an international crisis or conflict.

Free access to energy resources is very important for the United States. In this context, the transportation problem of energy resources in the Central Asian region and the diversification of transportation routes are some of the important issues the United States has within its policy regarding Asia. The ability to meet the national oil demand and reach oil without any problems is important for most states, but it holds a special place for the United States. Because the United States consumes about one-fourth of the world's energy supply, and it needs to import about 7.5 million barrels of oil in a day to meet its domestic energy needs (National Energy Policy, 2001: 10). Therefore, the energy security issue has become an important policy issue for the White House administration. American leaders have developed strategies for energy security that are supported by the government and are working to reduce energy dependency.

Due to the rich energy resources it has, Central Asia attracts the attention of the United States. The energy reserves in Eurasia are of great financial importance and these are in the long-term economic and national interests of the United States, in terms of the United States' global energy supply and security. For this reason, the United States will use all the political maneuvers to be able to reach these strategic energy sources. Another important issue is the US isolating Iran economically and diplomatically for its energy security. In the National Security Strategy document published in 1998, emphasized the region's energy reserves by stating *"A stable and prosperous the Caucasus and Central Asia will help promote stability and security from the Mediterranean to China and facilitate rapid development and transport to international markets of the large Caspian oil and gas resources, with substantial U.S. commercial participation. While the new states in the region have made progress in their quest for sovereignty and a secure place in the international arena, much remains to be done in democratic and economic reforms. The independence, sovereignty, territorial integrity, and democratic and economic reform of these countries are important to American interests. To advance these goals, we are utilizing our bilateral relationships, our leadership of international institutions, and billions of of dollars in private and multilateral resources (Erhan, 2003: 2)."*

The "Silk Road Strategy Act" was passed by the Congress in July 1999 and this document forms the basis of the United States' policy towards Central Asia (Silk Road Strategy Act of 1999). The United States has tried to develop appropriate policies by keeping the history of the Silk Road in mind; however, the steps that have been taken so far have brought instability to the region. The region that is on the route of the New Silk Road has valuable energy resources that could help free the United States from being dependent on the Persian Gulf. The Silk Road Strategy Act was based on facilitating the economic and commercial interests of the United States in the region and the document focuses on issues ranging from democratization to human rights. In short, the Silk Road Strategy Act supports independence, sovereignty, and human rights, along with tolerance, pluralism, dialogue environments that help combat racism and anti-Semitism. Furthermore, the document supports resolving regional problems and removing trade barriers, economic cooperation, and US-based investments. In this context, the New Silk Road has introduced strategies such as democratization and the promotion of human rights to facilitate the United States to economically benefit from the region.



**Source:**<https://larouchepac.com/sites/default/files/bering-straight-pamph.jpg>.

One of the United States' biggest projects concerning the region has been the "Great Central Asia" project. To achieve this project, it is necessary to change the physical infrastructure that connects Asia to Europe throughout the historical Silk Road. In order for the United States to do this, it is necessary to change the physical infrastructure such as roads, bridges, ports and sea transportation as well as energy lines, and for harmony to exist between the region's countries. Today, the New Silk Road policies are defined as "trans-Eurasian security

system". In the Silk Road Strategy, the United States will use all diplomatic means to resolve conflicts in the South Caucasus and Central Asia in a just and permanent way (Silk Road Strategy Act of 1999).

As China grows with the New Silk Road Project, the United States is afraid of China systematically undermining the United States' supremacy and security. Therefore, the US's regional policy is to prevent a hostile power from dominating the region in the context of its national interests, to ensure that Asian states contribute to global wealth, and to reduce conflicts across Asia. In this respect, the United States wishes to establish constructive relations with all the countries of the region without producing a natural competitor. The United States should develop policies toward the long-term future of the region in order to establish the Asian power balance.

### **3. 3. China**

Throughout history, the Silk Road has been a trade route that begins in China, goes through Anatolia and the Mediterranean, and ends in Europe. In this way, not only the transportation of goods but also of people, cultures, and ideas is the ultimate goal. It is expected that the New Silk Road Project will carry information, ideas, beliefs and common values along with people and goods (Deniz, 2016: 196). While the historical Silk Road has provided the link between the eastern and western cultures throughout history, it had lost some of its importance with the discovery of alternative routes. However, it has begun to be mentioned on the international agenda in recent years once again. China has increased its industrialization and technological developments, particularly since the 2000s. Thanks to this, China has become a country that many other countries want to cooperate multilaterally with.

China stands out in regard to being the next "superpower" of the world and it is developing important policies to pass the "One Belt One Road" initiative, also known as the Modern Silk Road Project, which is considered to be the world's largest transportation project. The Chinese economy has maintained its advantageous position in exports despite all the global depressions and China has gathered the attention of the countries that will be on the New Silk Road route on this project. Along with China, the former Soviet Central Asian Republics that gained their independence after the disintegration of the Soviet Union, Turkey, Iran, and Russia are important actors in the

New Silk Road Project (Karagöl, 2017). In this context, states such as China, Russia, and Iran have recently accelerated their rise on a global scale. They have also strengthened their cooperation in issues such as the energy supply, the transportation of goods, the currency used in trade, the protection of national borders, fight against terrorism and the protection of national sovereignty.



Source: [https://www.huffingtonpost.com/brhma-chellaney/chinese-subs-in-indian-ocean\\_b\\_7320500.html](https://www.huffingtonpost.com/brhma-chellaney/chinese-subs-in-indian-ocean_b_7320500.html).

Thanks to the power China has accumulated in an economic sense, Western powers cannot make an economic attack, which means that China has the advantage of being able to reach its political objectives more freely. Providing the security of the sea borders, expanding its influence and commercial facilities throughout the continent, and avoiding any economic sanctions in doing so are among these conveniences. Therefore, as China's weight increases in the global economy with each passing day, furthermore, the fact that the Central Asian countries have rich energy resources. These two factors make the logistical costs of international trade more affordable in the energy market. And this encourages new ideas for the development of the New Silk Road Project. The fact that the energy resources are concentrated in the countries located in the middle of the New Silk Road, and also transferring this energy to the world energy market symbolizes the alternative rise of the Silk Road. The energy issue plays a bigger role than commercial priorities in creating a Chinese interest in the Central Asia region with this project. To ensure the continuity of its economic growth, instead of attempting to send goods to the West through the Silk Road just like in ancient times, China is now struggling to keep up with its ever-growing energy demand.

In terms of the development of the Chinese economy in the context of the New Silk Road Project, the strategic importance of the five Central Asian countries has been determined as follows (Wu and Chen, 2004: 1059-1080):

- 1- Economies that have separated from the Soviet Union should be regarded as transition economies. For this reason, the political leaders of these countries have been authoritarian because of the habits left behind by the Soviet period.
- 2- The Central Asian countries are crucially important for the struggle between the United States and China. China is one of the major ways out of the region that has rich energy resources. If China can develop a strategic cooperation with the Central Asian states, it will have strengthened its hand against the United States in global trade.
- 3- Central Asian economies have a strategical geography that would link China, one of the world's new superpowers, to Europe and the Middle East. It is the region that will determine the relations with Russia. Also, the rich energy resources of the region are very important to China.
- 4- Energy is the most strategical factor that binds the fate of China and the Central Asian countries together. Due to the rapid growth of China, its need for energy resources is met by a region that is located right next to it.
- 5- One of the factors that will be determining the relations between the Central Asian countries and China is the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. The SCO is engaged in talks with the countries of the region about investments. The revival of the Silk Road, which passes through the region, and the development of trade, warehousing, and financial cooperations are elements of cooperation between China and the Central Asian countries.

Trade corridors will be formed that link China, Central Asia, Europe, the Middle East and Africa with East and Southeast Asia through the "New Silk Road Economic Belt" which was mentioned by the Chinese President Xi Jinping on his visit to Kazakhstan in October 2013 and the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Maritime Silk Road, or the One Belt One Road Initiative. China's new vision includes railways, roads, air routes and submarine pipelines. China has allocated approximately 40 billion dollars to the New Silk Road Project (Minghao, 2015: 6). Chinese President Jinping has stated that the New Silk Road Project is a "win-win" proposal. He has also noted that this project would concern a

population of 3 billion people and that it would be a free trade zone with access to the major energy resources in Europe and the Middle East (Kadilar and Koparan, 2016: 47).

Beijing does aim to revitalize the historical Silk Road. China targets to complete this project as of 2049, the 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Chinese Revolution. By this project, the following targets have been put forward;

- Political cooperation,
- The institution of structural connections network,
- The elimination of political obstacles,
- Financial integration and
- Setting up bridges among the people (Kısacık, 2017, <http://politikaakademisi.org/2017/11/14/cinin-yeni-ipek-yolu-projesi-kapsaminda-baku-tiflis-kars-demiryolunun-onemi/>).

China Ocean Shipping Company COSCO has managed to become a major shareholder by the middle of 2016 as a result of 10 years of work in Greece's Port of Piraeus. Through this, China has completed an important step in its internationalization strategy of the "One Belt One Road Initiative" that links Europe to Eurasia. In 2016, the Greek government allowed COSCO to buy the 51% share of the Port of Piraeus for 316 million dollars for the first time. The Port of Piraeus is very important in the context of the "One Belt One Road Initiative" within China's New Silk Road policy. This initiative includes many new sea and land routes that link the Eurasian ports with each other. It also paves the way for China to be included in Europe (Mathews, 2017: 102). It would not be wrong to call China's development model the New Silk Road. This, of course, poses a threat to the United States' global hegemonic policies. The ultimate goal of Beijing's international interests is to achieve absolute integration of the countries at the center of the world and of those who are on the sidelines and also to use its sea and land power in this context (Downs, 2006). Now China has become a bridge between the East and the West, represented by itself and Europe respectively, and also between the Eurasian economic region in the north and India, Southeast Asia, the Persian Gulf and the Middle East in the south.

It would not be wrong to say that within the framework of the New Silk Road concept, China is well aware of the fact that it needs to improve its relations with Russia. Cooperation and interaction based on an egalitarian and constructive partnership between China and

Russia have become strategic and discursive and also contextually practical in the last ten to twenty years in a real sense. This can be expressed discursively as "Always a friend, never an enemy." With this, the Sino-Russian relations also offer a political vision of how the future should be in the path of strengthening the New Silk Road. It is extremely difficult to determine exactly where the New Silk Road Project will be in a future global structure. If the world enters a chaotic and unstable spiral of political systems, it will be extremely important to prevent a new phase of a new military-political split and structural military competition. While struggling with United States' resistance in the Pacific region, China also prioritizes economic expansion towards the southwest and the south, and also to India, Iran, Pakistan, Gulf of Basra, Russia, and Europe. This change encourages China to contribute to the formation of cooperation and development centers in Central Asia and Eurasia. At the same time, it also provides the base for China to expand its sphere of influence all the way to Europe, Africa, and the Middle East with the New Silk Road. China's relations with Turkey hold a special position in this project. Turkey and China are in important in long-term cooperations concerning energy, railway, and communications projects. Along with the Edirne-Kars High-Speed Rail Project and one of the most important connection routes of the Silk Road, the Baku-Tbilisi-Kars Railway, and large projects concerning nuclear energy, renewable energy resources and banking are being developed. With the "One Belt One Road Initiative" and Turkey's "Middle Corridor" project, China will have a faster and more economic connection with Europe through Central Asia and it will contribute significantly to the transportation of goods, energy, and in particular, prosperity (<http://politikaakademisi.org/2017/11/14/cinin-yeni-ipek-yolu-projesi-kapsaminda-baku-tiflis-kars-demiryolunun-onemi/>).

### **Conclusion**

The New Silk Road Project will have a huge impact on global trade and politics, just like the historical Silk Road. The Greater Eurasia Project, led by Russia against the United States' Asia-Pacific policies, and the New Silk Road Project, led by China, is of great importance in particular. In order to prevent a global dominance of a Russian and Chinese partnership, the United States wants to prevent the New Silk Road which is one of the most comprehensive economic projects in the world, from happening. This project will bring transnational prosperity along with goods and in this project; Turkey is one of the

most important countries between the East and the West. Thanks to its geopolitical significance, Turkey is a key country on the New Silk Road route. In fact, Turkey is indispensable for both sides in the ongoing heated struggle between the Atlanticists and the Eurasianists. Russia's ultimate goal is to fill the gap between Europe and East Asia. As it is commonly known, Russia's imperial strategy consists of a quest for warm water ports and to hold a permanent place in the Mediterranean. As a matter of fact, Russia's policy on the Syrian issue has been to have permanent sea and air bases in Tartus, and Lazkia in Syria. Therefore, Russia and China will act jointly to contribute economically and politically to the Greater Eurasian Union of the New Silk Road Project. And while the United States is trying to prevent this, Turkey's position will become even more important. Because Turkey represents one of the most important actors in terms of United States' regional policies as well as in Chinese and Russian Eurasianism.

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