

The Origin of the Belt and Road Initiative and Mongolia's Participation

Bayasakh.J, Shanshan Tian

National University of Mongolia, Ulaanbaatar 999097, China.

Abstract: For global stability, each country must grasp peace, prosperity, and development. Amid today's intricate global dynamics, understanding international affairs is crucial. The world faces a slow economic recovery, rising anti-globalization, and prolonged repercussions of the financial crisis. Unilateralism, protectionism, and power politics threaten peace, and nations confront severe development challenges. Strengthening regional cooperation is pivotal amid global transformation. Nations explore self-development, maximize interests, and navigate challenges. China, a crucial player, underpins the Belt and Road Initiative, advocating an open world economy and sustainable development. It signifies China's commitment to fair international economic governance. This analysis explores China's initiative and Mongolia's active role, offering theoretical insights for future research on their collaboration.

Keywords: Economic Development; One Belt One Road; Regional Cooperation

1. Introduction

The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), also known as "One Belt One Road" (OBOR), includes the Silk Road Economic Belt and the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road. The historical Silk Road, dating back to the Han, Tang, Yuan, Ming, and Qing dynasties, laid the foundation for today's BRI.^[1] The term "Silk Road" was coined by Ferdinand von Richthofen in 1877. Historical phases include the Han Dynasty's pioneering journey, Tang Dynasty's combination of land and sea routes, Song Dynasty's maritime dominance, Yuan Dynasty's prosperous maritime routes, and Ming Dynasty's maritime prohibitions.^[2] Today, the BRI symbolically connects to the Silk Road, fostering new models of international cooperation, global governance, and contributing to world peace and development through economic partnerships and cultural inclusiveness.

1.1 Introduction of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI)

The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), also known as "One Belt One Road" (OBOR), was proposed by China on September 7, 2013. It was initially mentioned during a speech at Nazarbayev University in Kazakhstan, emphasizing the joint construction of the Silk Road Economic Belt. Subsequently, on October 3, 2013, during an address to the Indonesian parliament, President Xi Jinping proposed the establishment of the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) and suggested the joint construction of the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road with ASEAN countries. The Belt and Road Initiative comprises the land-based Silk Road Economic Belt and the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road.^[3]

The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) consists of the land-based Silk Road Economic Belt and the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road. The land-based belt spans the northwest and southwest regions of China, connecting Europe, Central Asia, Russia, West Asia, and Southeast Asia. The Maritime Silk Road involves coastal provinces, linking China to the Indian Ocean, South China Sea, South Pacific, and Europe.^[4] Over the past decade, BRI has achieved success, emphasizing open cooperation, mutual prosperity, cultural exchange, and global economic stability. The initiative enhances political reforms, cultural influence, and a "community of shared destiny," contributing significantly to international interconnectedness and shared development.^[5]

1.2 Characteristics of the Belt and Road Initiative

In 2015, China strategically aligned with Belt and Road countries, making significant progress in the Eurasian region with agreements signed with over 20 nations. By 2016, the initiative garnered support from 100+ countries. The signing of the "Outline of the Plan for the Construction of the China-Mongolia-Russia Economic Corridor" in June 2016 marked the first multilateral cooperation plan under the Belt and Road framework.^[6] Key features include: 1. Shared Development: Aiming for mutual prosperity along the route. 2. Global Free Trade:

Commitment to preserving the global free trade system. 3. Strategic Alignment: China's alignment with route countries and multilateral cooperation, reflecting broad international support for the initiative's cooperative and globally inclusive goals.

2. Coordination and Actions of Mongolia's "Steppe Road" with the Belt and Road Initiative, and Exploration of Trade Facilitation

2.1 Coordination between "Steppe Road" and the Belt and Road Initiative

In September and October 2013, China proposed the "Belt and Road" initiatives, and on September 2, 2014, Mongolia launched the "Steppe Road," upgrading the planned "Five Great Passages." President Xi Jinping's 2014 visit enhanced Sino-Mongolian ties, leading to the China-Mongolia-Russia Economic Corridor formation in 2015. This strategic alignment aimed at synergizing China's "Silk Road Economic Belt," Russia's "Trans-Eurasian Main Railway," and Mongolia's "Steppe Road." The trilateral cooperation leverages each country's geopolitical advantages, aligning with Mongolia's diplomatic policy. The joint vision released in March 2015 emphasized diverse, autonomous, balanced, and sustainable development for countries along the routes.

2.2 Harmonizing Paths: The Coordinated Integration of the Grassland Road with the Belt and Road Initiative in China and Mongolia

The integration of the "Grassland Road" with the "Belt and Road" initiative involves coordinated efforts at governmental, business, and societal levels in China and Mongolia.^[7] Governments and judicial departments focus on economic development with diverse wealth acquisition strategies, while businesses aim for external relations and concentrate on fostering profound cooperation. Societal participation, including political parties and NGOs, drives collaboration in culture and the economy. Comprehensive governmental plans emphasize synchronized development, leveraging policy frameworks to mitigate risks. Businesses seek international collaboration, mutually supporting each other for shared prosperity.^[8] Societal engagement promotes cultural exchange, deepening mutual understanding, and supporting the connection between the "Belt and Road" and the "Grassland Road." Both strategies share key points of interest, emphasizing connectivity and mutual benefits, demonstrating a shared emphasis on the historical development and principles of the "Grassland Silk Road." This mutual interaction showcases the effectiveness of the two strategies working in tandem to strengthen regional economic and comprehensive cooperation.

3. Diplomatic Significance for China and Mongolia and Significant Gains for Mongolia

3.1 Boosting Cooperation as an Economic Catalyst for Mongolia

According to the plan, the "Grassland Road" initiative, with a total investment of approximately 50 billion USD, consists of five projects. These projects include a 997-kilometer highway connecting China and Russia, a 1,100-kilometer electrified railway, the expansion of a trans-Mongolian railway, and natural gas and oil pipelines. This initiative holds crucial importance for Mongolia's development. Positioned between the two major nations of China and Russia, Mongolia's strategic location in the heart of a large market highlights its transit transportation significance. Cooperation has far-reaching effects on Mongolia's globalization, regional integration, diplomatic policies, international standing, and development prospects.

The Mongolian National Parliament^[9] passed a resolution, and the two southbound railway segments close to China will adopt the same standard gauge, reducing the cost of cross-border railway transportation. The implementation of this initiative will promote infrastructure development, improve border and customs structures, and simultaneously advance educational exchanges through the development of Sino-Mongolian platforms.

3.2 Market Expansion as Potential for Mongolia's Economic Revitalization

Mongolia envisions economic revitalization through flexible utilization of its resource advantages, aiming to diversify from mining dependency. Collaborating with China, it focuses on industries like cashmere, dairy, and livestock processing, creating large-scale enterprises for economic advancement. Simultaneously, Mongolia seeks to unlock the potential of its abundant livestock resources through in-depth

collaboration, boosting the livestock industry's value and overall economic growth. In the context of the Belt and Road Initiative, China's decade-long experience contributes to global dynamics. Its leadership role, vibrant tourism route, cultural exchanges, and educational cooperation demonstrate a market-oriented approach. This model not only aligns with global cooperation but also creates opportunities for comprehensive collaboration between China and Mongolia in economic, cultural, and geopolitical domains.

4. Conclusion

"The Belt and Road Initiative" marks its decade with Chinese and Mongolian scientists actively implementing policies, benefitting both nations. In-depth research into surveyed areas enhances economic and cultural exchanges. Challenges persist, notably the need for China to deepen its openness. Both nations contribute to development, recognizing the call for concrete actions. China aims for profound openness, and Mongolia finds opportunities in this collaboration. Harmonious inclusiveness, respect, and mutual benefit guide their efforts, addressing concerns collectively. Leveraging wisdom and creativity, they aim for outstanding achievements, aligning interests, and providing a broader cooperative platform, collectively advancing the Belt and Road Initiative.

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