

BOOK REVIEW

INITIATIVES OF THE 'NEW SILK ROAD' – ACHIEVEMENTS AND CHALLENGES

Duško Dimitrijević, Huang Ping (Eds). *Initiatives of the 'New Silk Road'- Achievements and Challenges*, Institute of International Politics and Economics, Belgrade, 2017. pp. 529.

The Collection of papers “*Initiatives of the 'New Silk Road'- Achievements and Challenges*” represents a research study composed of academic articles dealing with global Chinese development strategy known as the “New Silk Road”. This collection of papers was created during the international conference which took place in Belgrade on 12 and 13 July 2016. Besides the distinguished scientists from Serbia and China, the conference was attended by respectable experts and researchers from Russia, the USA, Great Britain, Germany, Bulgaria, Romania, Poland, Greece, Montenegro and Bosnia and Herzegovina. This collection of papers has 529 pages, and it was published in Belgrade in 2017. The articles are organized in 3 sessions. The sessions are: “New Silk Road”- Chinese Strategy of World Development, Geopolitical Visions and Actions of the “New Silk Road” and Goeconomic, Legal and Cultural Visions and Actions of the “New Silk Road” Initiatives.

The first session is composed of fifteen scientific articles. In these articles is emphasized that the “New Silk Road” is a big project for intensified economic, cultural and scientific cooperation among the nations of the world, also stating that it is a new platform for peace through global development. The articles analyze the importance of the “New Silk Road” for world peace. Furthermore, they provide a brief overview of the progress of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and point out the main challenges facing the BRI. Additionally, this section has also analyzed the relationship between the BRI and the UN 2030 Agenda and their importance for the realization of the Sustainable Development Goals.

In the first session are presented the priorities of the BRI project. These priorities are the coordination of security policy, infrastructural connectivity, unimpeded trade, financial integration and people-to-people connection. As the most important BRI principle stands out human development which transcends above the short-term economic or political interests and recognition, and it is supported by all participating countries. In the first session are presented the

potentials of economic exchange and cooperation between China and other countries along the “Belt and Road”. In this part, the authors point to the importance of the BRI project for local development, like in Southeast Europe.

The book in the first session analyzes the current relations between China and the EU. It also describes the relationship and political influence of China on the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, which stems from economic cooperation and infrastructure investment, which represents a source of fear for the EU. The authors believe that in the future there will be significant cooperation between the EU and China, which will affect the development of this region.

In the second session are contained studies on the potentials of the “New Silk Road” project for the development of border regions, especially given the current trend of globalization and greater autonomy of the region in relation to the central government. China sees these regions as very attractive for investment. At the end of the first session of the collection of works, the authors analyze the cooperation between Greece, Poland, Bulgaria and China and their contribution to the “New Silk Road”.

At the end of the first session, it is concluded that the BRI is a complex project with enormous potential, but some various risks must be overcome. The text analyzes the perspectives of the project, in particular, infrastructure investments and the possible role of the project in the future. The importance of the BRI project is reflected in the fact that the majority of the world’s population is critically dependent on the existing and planned infrastructure.

The second session is composed of ten scientific articles. In the introductory text of the second session, the authors point out that China is a new globalist. Then the authors analyze the confrontation of the great powers along the “New Silk Road”. In this part, it is noted that the great powers China and the USA have agreed to establish a strategic partnership to prevent possible confrontations between themselves and control of all threats to military interventions. Further analysis examines the influence of China in the Balkans through the cooperation mechanism 16+1 and China’s relationship with other great powers in the region. This part of the book draws attention to the geostrategic importance of cooperation between Russia and China.

Subsequently, the papers describe the risks and disadvantages that the “New Silk Road” faces. Above all, they emphasize the risks of building the Eurasian Economic Corridor. The articles describe the significance of energy in the “New Silk Road”. This part of the book supports the opinions that energy cooperation under the “Belt and Road” initiative is all-dimensional and multi-tiered and has made fruitful achievements, offering vast potential for development in the future.

At the end of the second session, the authors have concluded that one of the challenges and security risks which will appear in the “New Silk Road”

project might be caused by migrant workers. Particular attention is devoted to migration that takes place along the Balkan route and security challenges that it brings with special emphasis on Serbia.

The third session is composed of fifteen scientific articles. This session analyzes the change in the Chinese economic development strategy and emphasizes the significance of the “New Silk Road” for the construction of transport infrastructure at the regional level, with particular reference to Serbia’s experience in cooperation with China in this area.

In this part, the authors point out that the initiative includes 16 + 1 cooperation in various areas between the countries of Central and Eastern Europe and China. After a comprehensive analysis of the cooperation of each individual country and China in all areas, the authors have concluded that not all countries have used the opportunities provided by this initiative in the same way. In the articles of the third session, the authors have also considered the economic effects of the “New Silk Road” initiative and the Eurasian Union cooperation, as well as the opportunities for regional cooperation in the Western Balkans within the New Silk Road project.

The third session brings an interesting comparison between the EU, Serbia and China as signatories to various treaties devoted to the protection of the environment. The main noticeable difference is the speed of the adoption of certain protocols and amendments adopted and the speed of implementation of the agreement. This session analyzes the cultural dimension of the 16 + 1 project as well as the model of cultural dimensions developed by Geert Hofstede which is used to conclude if cultural differences can be the obstacle for mutual cooperation.

In the end, we need to mention an article dedicated to cooperation between Serbia and China on food safety. Highlights of the signed agreements allow for greater export of Serbian food to the Chinese market and investments of China into Serbian agriculture. The last article deals with the modern character of diplomatic protection and disadvantages occurring in the EU. The contribution and impact that the “New Silk Road” has on diplomatic protection are described.

The collection of papers “Initiatives of the ‘New Silk Road’ - Achievements and Challenges” should be read because it provides a comprehensive, detailed analysis of the largest economic and political project in history. The opportunities and potentials for improving this project as well as the challenges it faces are very well presented. The most interesting observation after reading the collection of works is that we can more clearly understand China’s foreign policy and how China has come to be one of the leading economic powers of the world.