

JOZEF ŠVARNÝ¹**China's geostrategic imperatives for the first half of 21st Century's****Kína geostratégiai kényszerei a 21. század első felében****Abstract**

China as the second largest economy on the global scale and with significantly export oriented economy undergoes gradual process of rebalancing its foreign policy in order to continue its rise both in terms of economic terms as well as in terms of growing influence on globalization processes. Both aims do directly link to geopolitical and geostrategic challenges, which do require sound and thoroughly calculated approach in order to increase likelihood of positive engagement with other security actors both in Eurasia as well as in other continents. In increasingly globalizing world with exponentially growing interdependence, China is striving to represent one of the shaping poles of emerging new, postmodern world order. As such China pursues policy of both projecting its own national interests in vital geostrategic areas worldwide and concurrently adjusting itself to global normative and geopolitical realities of changing fabric of globalizing forces. Our main argument in this article is that China will in first half of 21st century focus on both assertively defending its particular national interests in "near neighbourhood" on the one hand and in the same time will under post-modern trends contribute to broader norm based discussion on how to shape world for modern challenges in next fifteen to thirty years. Successful implementation of right tools to do so will both, allow China to continue in its path to economic growth as well as increase its chances for successful globalization in other parts of world.

Keywords: China, geostrategic determinants, globalization, political-economic trends, political culture, postmodern transformation.

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Absztrakt

Kína, mint a világ második legnagyobb és jelentősen exportorientált gazdasága fokozatosan megy keresztül a külpolitika újbóli egyensúlyának megteremtése érdekében azon, hogy mind gazdasági szempontból, mind pedig a globalizációs folyamatokra növekvő befolyással legyen. Mindkét cél közvetlenül kapcsolódik a geopolitikai és a geostratégiai kihívásokhoz, amelyekhez jó és alaposan kiszámított megközelítésére van szükség annak érdekében, hogy fokozza a pozitív kapcsolatok valószínűségét mind Eurázsia, mind más kontinensek biztonsági szereplőivel. Az egyre inkább globalizálódó világban az exponenciálisan növekvő egymásrautaltság mellett Kína arra törekszik, hogy az új, posztmodern világrend alakulását képviselje. Mint ilyen, Kína törekszik arra, hogy a saját nemzeti érdekeit képviselje a világ geostratégiai létfontosságú területein, és ezzel egyidejűleg alkalmazkodjon a változó globalizálódó erők globális normatíváihoz és geopolitikai realitásaihoz.

A fő érvünk a tanulmányunkban az, hogy Kína a 21. század első felében egyrészt a "közeli szomszédságában" a nemzeti érdekei védelmére törekszik, ugyanakkor a posztmodern trendeket figyelembe véve hozzájárul a szélesebb értelemben vett normákon alapuló megbeszélésekhez arról, hogyan alakíthatják át a világot az elkövetkező tizenöt-harminc év alatt a modern kihívások.

A megfelelő eszközök sikeres alkalmazása lehetővé teszi, hogy Kína folytassa a gazdasági növekedést, és növelje az esélyét a sikeres globalizációnak a világ más részein is.

Kulcsszavak: Kína, geostratégiai determinánsok, globalizáció, politikai-gazdasági trendek, politikai kultúra, posztmodern transzformáció

INTRODUCTION

China has made impressive gains in national development and economic growth since the end of bipolar world order and since then emerged as one of the most vibrant geopolitical centres on the world scene. Modernization of China together with its newly acquired geopolitical strength does increase its level of ambition in shaping world order dominated by mostly western actors.

To play more significant geopolitical role however, China has to bear in mind not only its geographical location and stability of its buffer zones, but also internal integrity of predominantly Han Chinese regions while manoeuvring to avoid foreign encroachment on its coastal areas. Additionally as one of the most significant export oriented countries gaining strength from its relatively competitive labour costs it has to bear in mind globalizing forces impacting not only demographic distribution of workforce in China and continued urbanization, but also liberalization influences of rising individual, consumer based behaviour back

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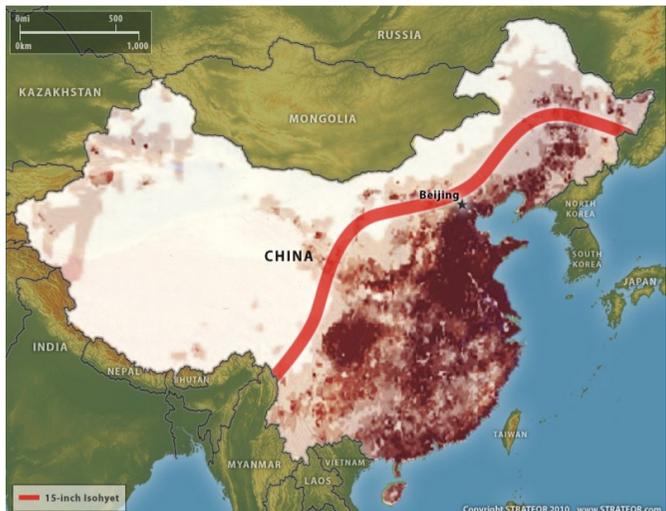
home, increasing distribution of enabling technologies to local population, impact of global economic interconnectedness on Chinese perception of uniqueness and its political order being in place since 1949.

China has additionally take into account global megatrends like resource stress and increased competition among different interest groups on international stage as well as impact of climate change, which can be solved only in unified and continued effort of leading global power centres to address those issues diligently. In next few chapters we will elaborate on geopolitical determinants and consequent geostrategic choices China needs to follow in order to continue its rise without disrupting enabling factors on its way to become one of the pivotal centres in newly emergent world order. China will likely strive to follow this path by integrating itself in the existing world order without ambition to openly challenge dominant global powers given that dominant powers won't directly attack core interests of growing China.

1. GEOPOLITICAL DETERMINANTS OF RISING CHINA

China's identity and core geopolitical heartland is located within so called 15-inch isohyet² line and is to a great extent identical to predominantly Han Chinese ethnical group³ occupying that territory. Geographically it is historical core territory from which current China both expanded and defended its borders from outside. "Its boundaries are spreading from the skirts around the heartland of Manchuria from the northeast, run parallel with the present Great Wall in the middle, and curves south-westward to separate Kokonor (Wikileaks.org),"⁴ "The vast majority of Han Chinese live east and south of this line — in the Chinese heartland.

"It is important to understand that more than a billion people live in this area, which is about half the size of the United States (STRATFOR, 2012)." Within this territory Confucianism was established during Zhou king-



15-inch Isohyet and China Population Density Source: STRATFOR

² A line on a map connecting points that receive equal precipitation.

³ Han China as expression of geographical of majority Han chinese living inside 15-inch isohyet line.

⁴ Qinghai province close to East Godavari district, Andhra Pradesh, India.

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dom (around 1045 B.C.) and during Han dynasty was fully implemented within bureaucratic system. Its main principles of expected obedience, exercise of authority and implementation of hierarchy of Chinese society are still traceable within this territory and to some extent are undergoing revival within broader population. Outside 15-inch isohyet line are geographical territories which historically were considered as buffer zones.

Tibet, Xinjiang province, Inner Mongolia and Manchuria were considered as outside areas with partial implementation of tributary system to Han China⁵, when Han China was strong and as latent threats from which security challenges emanated, when China was weak. Nevertheless Han China considered itself as unique and morally superior whether undergoing periods of strength or weakness. “China—the Celestial Empire—was seen as the centre of the universe, with only barbarians on its peripheries and beyond. To be Chinese meant to be cultured, and for that reason, the rest of the world owed China its due deference (BRZEZINSKI, 1997, s. Kindle Locations 232-234).”

China’s geopolitical imperatives in its close geographical proximity are similar to the ones when Han China was strong, namely to maintain dominant influence on evolution of bilateral relations with its neighbours and develop relations with them in the way that China would be considered as source for cooperation not competition. By doing so, China’s own “buffer zones” outside of 15-inch isohyet line as well as its core Han territory will remain safe. While from historical point of view foreign trade was less significant for the gigantic agricultural empire, this significantly changed during Deng’s drive to transform mostly agrarian economy to modern one, significantly dependent on exports and stability on its periphery. Internally, since then China needs to maintain stability and security of both buffer zones as well as its core territory, while maintaining its economic growth which is to the significant extent export based and therefore determined by geography and geopolitical constellations of regions through which its exports flow. Otherwise, China will lose its main source of strengths and culmination of external pressures and internal dissatisfaction with diminishing economic opportunities and wealth will hamper its further development and potentially would cause destabilization of country. China is aware of this possibility and tries to use geopolitical determinants in the Eurasia to its advantage, while trying to avoid overextension outside regions of vital national interests.

China needs to keep peaceful rise in order to be able to redistribute wealth it is accumulating from trade surpluses and thus avoid potential for internal instability stemming from its own rural citizens. China’s geography to a significant degree forces China to depend on sea lines of communications and thus, China needs to improve to protect not only coasts from encroachment, but also increase its power projection to safeguard its sea lines of communication. While this task is far from being accomplished, China also plans to revive land silk road lines of communications. Both sea and land lines of communication are part of One Belt One Road (OBOR) Initiative, China introduced in 2013.

⁵ Like under rule of the Qing-dynasty.

Geostrategic location of planned OBOR initiative both land and sea is challenging and runs through or close to volatile as well as potentially hostile territories. China's primary focus in being successful while building OBOR will be based on building mutually beneficial long term synergic relations with all parties involved. This will likely bring China more on the forefront of globalization processes and China will have to open itself more to the world as one of its leaders. However "China, even after a quarter-century of urbanization and globalization, remains the home of more than 800 million peasants (HORNER, 2009, s. 147)."⁶ As such China's main geopolitical challenge will be how to transform itself to global power and not alienate its own peasants who do not feel positive effects of economic growth to the same degree as Chinese living in industrial hubs in coastal cities.

2. POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC TRENDS IN CHINA

China since 1949 underwent significant political and economic evolution and transformation of priorities. For over last three decades, China's political and economic evolution was focussed on gradual openness to the world and on economic integration. This evolution was slow and occurred, when leadership changed and paradigms of China's development adjusted.

First generations of Chinese Communist rulers under Mao and Zhou (1949–1976) as leading forces of political struggle against Kuomintang and its leader Chiang Kai-shek established not only one party rule in China, but also in some cases forcefully communized and collectivized economic life and suppressed all potential upheavals in China. "Mao's China was, by design, a country in permanent crisis; from the earliest days of Communist governance, Mao unleashed wave after wave of struggle. The Chinese people would not be permitted ever to rest on their achievements. The destiny Mao prescribed for them was to purify their society and themselves through virtuous exertion (KISSINGER, 2011)." There was no room for liberation of economic life and thus significant economic growth. Additionally implementation of communist ideas and world order was main ideology of China.⁷

Second generation of China's leader under Deng leadership (1977–1989) shifted focus from strictly self-sufficiency driven and strictly controlled economic life by allowing private enterprise to emerge. It slowly side-lined political ideology and focused on improving economic performance. "A pragmatist, Deng believed that economic reform was necessary and developed his political power through advocating reform. He saw central planning in industry and collectivization in agriculture as inflexible and unable to deal with the economic problems China was facing (GUTHRIE, 2006)." China under Deng developed potential

⁶ In 2017 there are less than 600 million. Those moving to cities while trying to improve their social and economic standing are still considered to a significant degree to be part of peasantry (partly due to hierarchical system of the society, but also due to low education and related work opportunities provided to them).

⁷ . At the same time in this period China has become an independent country; retrieved the periphery (Xinjiang, Tibet), and became an important power under Nixon's triangular diplomacy, etc.

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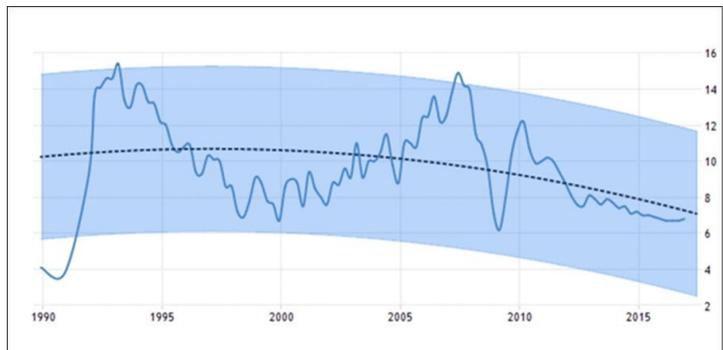
for economic growth and further re-evaluation of its geostrategic place within world affairs. However Deng made clear, that economic shift from collectivism to individual economic gain principles wouldn't mean political liberalization and one party system will remain un-touchable. This was most vividly exemplified during Tiananmen protests in 1989, which were quickly suppressed. Deng's policies set the course of action in political and economic areas and are applied till nowadays.

Third generation of China's leaders Jiang Zemin, Li Peng, Zhu Rongji(1989–2002) increased potential for foreign investment from abroad and thus accelerated economic growth. They fully validated correctness of Deng's strategic understanding, that only way to prevail in the world affairs as relevant force is though opening its economy, even if at the beginning though partial, semi-market economic principles. During this period China starts to fully grasp with globalization forces and starts to understand inevitability to shape those forces, if political system wants to remain internally relevant and stable. „As President Jiang Zemin noted at the February 2001 Boao Forum for Asia, it is important that Asian countries “stand up to the challenge of globalization” (David ZWEIG, Chen ZHIMIN, 2007, s. 109).“ China starts to hint its preparedness to be „heartland“ of Asia and driving force to shape it.

During fourth generation of leaders, Hu Jintao and Wen Jiabao (2002–2012), China started to implement⁸ policies rejuvenating political system of one party by supporting technocratic rule of most prepared leaders and thus avoiding potential for repeating mistakes made in Russia and elsewhere, where leaders remained in office till the end and where political system slowly decayed due to increasing lack of competent technocrats. Chinese leaders start to feel confident enough to encourage open strife to transform economic power to military power and increase of China's prestige in its “near neighbourhood”. Main “ideology” is economic growth.

Current generation of China's leaders under President Xi and Premier Li rules

since 2012 up to 2022. Politically China remains under one party rule, while tries to adjust of world's saturation for exports. China starts to curb inflation, stabilize economy and contemplates how to shift economy from export oriented to consumption oriented.



China GDP Annual Growth Rate

Source: tradingeconomics.com

⁸ These aims were laid down first by Deng.

While officially the fast economic growth was an important aim for the CCP's since 1949, during Mao's period they were significantly influenced by political considerations. However since Deng's period China's main ideology shifted from pursuing policies contradicting economic growth to policies which boost economy and do not threaten one party system of the country. Main "ideology" is economic growth and stability. Stability is increasingly important as China deaccelerates economic incentives for growth and tries to manage shift from lower end industries to high-tech. This period is marked by decreasing GDP growth, which is however more sustainable (for trends in GDP growth since 1990's see chart above). China starts to link its economic growth with geostrategic vision of connecting whole of Eurasia by OBOR initiative as mentioned above. Seriousness to be leading globalizing force starts to materialize through this initiative, while China tries to rebalance its economy and increase domestic consumption.

Change in geopolitical and internal, economy and stability based policies are most visible in its latest, 13th Five-Year Plan. "China has been underpinned by a major economic transformation, which was conveyed by its leaders under Chinese Communist Party (CCP) General Secretary Xi Jinping during the 18th Central Committee's Third Plenum in 2013. The term "New Normal" was adopted during the Fourth Plenum in 2014 to describe the gradual shift from government stimulus and export goods towards a consumer demand-driven and services-oriented economy (Embassy of SUI in CHN, 2016)." Major economy based principles of further development of China are focussed to adjust to deaccelerating GDP growth while maintaining its cohesion of the country, both of its core area as well as its "buffer zones".

3. READING GEOPOLITICAL ASSUMPTIONS FROM CHINA'S 13th FIVE-YEAR PLAN

National People's Congress of China (NPC) ratified 13th five-year plan (FYP) on National Economic and Social Development in March 2016. It was first five-year plan formulated under President Xi Jinping's leadership. Under the plan China aims to double its 2010 GDP and per capital of both urban and rural residents by 2020. Given decreasing pace of economic growth it is quite ambitious goal, goal which China needs to achieve, if it wants to remain stable and increasingly relevant in global affairs. Plan shifts focus from high economic growth to "a moderately prosperous society in all respects" and focus on five areas to achieve that goal.

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Those areas are – innovation, coordination, green development, opening up and sharing. “The first principle is innovation, primarily as a driver of economic development and to shift China’s economic structure into a higher-quality growth pattern. The document pledges openness, stating that China should utilize both domestic and global markets and be more active in global governance. Green development means protecting the environment and pursuing environmentally friendly economic growth. (APCO, 2013).”

Economic growth–“medium-high” plan⁹ targets 6,5 % average growth, improvement of business transparency as a main condition for continued foreign investment inflow. It does focus on building “China brand” in high tech industries, on strengthening potential for its currency to become convertible on world financial markets and be part of basket of world reserve currencies. China also does abolish one child policy to revert potentially negative birth to death ratio in long term, while it does increase focus on social programs for all citizens, targets reaching urbanization of 60 % by 2020, reducing emissions per unit of GDP by 40 % to 45 % by 2020 compared to 2005 levels, increasing the share of non-fossil fuel energy to 15 % by 2020 and Chia’s leaders do highlight anti-corruption drive within top level leadership on national and provincial level. Compared to previous five year plan we see adjusted level of ambition in economic areas, while keeping formal interest in improving environmental protection as part of its developmental goals (see table above).

Driver 12. FYP (2011-2015)	Degree of achievement expected by the end of 2015	Driver 13. FYP (2016-2020)*
GDP growth +7%	 An average growth of 7% was achieved	Moderate GDP growth >6.5%
Raise urban & rural incomes +7%	 An average growth of 7% was achieved	Strengthen local consumption
Enhance private sector	 There is the need to further enhance and support small startup businesses	Increasing local innovation
Develop service sector (+4% share)	 The service sector share of GDP was raised from 43% to 47%	Enhance foreign investment
Increasing Urbanization (+4%)	 4% growth from 47,5% to 51,5% of total population	Upgrading industrial infrastructure
Environmental protection	 Far off the expectations. The new environmental law is expected to bring change.	Enforcing environment law

Comparison of last and current five year plan

Source: China Government, D. Slevogt

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⁹ Term to accommodate both prospects, for medium as well as high potential for economic growth. Medium-high economic growth ambition indicates, that China no more strives for high economic growth and accepts slower pace of growth but more sustainable one (indirectly targeting overproduction capacity in specific economic sectors).

China's main geopolitical assumptions for period up to 2020 are linked to peaceful development of relations in its near neighbourhood, lack of significant security disruptions in Eurasia, relatively nonconfrontational coexistence with dominant world power, with United States of America and continued globalization of trans-Atlantic as well as trans-pacific power centres. As seen from first quarter of current year, some of those assumptions are already not valid and others are still not crystalized. Nevertheless, China so far is working its share to implement plan and it is likely that it would avoid securitization of already volatile peripheries where its national interests are focused. While China needs peaceful development and will try to avoid confrontation, it does prepare for potential need to defend its interests and therefore it invests in building both hard and soft power capabilities in order to do so, if need be. "While Beijing's continued ascendance is not necessarily assured or bound to result in a "harmonious" world its grand strategy purportedly seeks to achieve, its expanding capabilities and global role have caused apprehension among powers of all shapes and sizes (MUZALEVSKY, 2015, s. 18)." China's grand strategy is based on classical neo-realistic principles, where development needs to be protected in the international environment favouring zero sum game results.¹⁰

However China's Grand strategy changes as China becomes globally more interconnected. To continue its grand strategy China prefers peaceful development and starts slowly to divert from zero sum game scenarios by supporting strong interdependencies, where OBOR initiative is one of them. By doing so, China tries to implement developmental goals set in last five year plan— innovation, coordination, green development, opening up and sharing, goals which are inherently intertwining China's development with further globalization and development of interconnections with other global forces world-wide.

4. "ONE BELT, ONE ROAD": CHINA'S GREAT LEAP OUTWARD

As Chinese President Xi Jinping's main geostrategic visions and anticipated legacies of his tenure in office, the OBOR project is aimed at connecting Eurasia through China stimulated development of infrastructure within land and maritime areas crucial for Chinese export oriented economy. Without OBOR China would naturally saturate its growth potential and exports would stagnate. With diminishing economic growth China would risk increasing internal dissatisfaction of its population. Therefore OBOR is crucial to boost both investments and later on economic returns from its implementation. OBOR was initially built on the idea of reviving Silk Road interconnections once flourishing throughout Eurasia. Since then project broadened its scope. It started in 2013, when President Xi Jinping "... signed U.S.\$50 billion in deals with Central Asian counterparts as he unveiled the "belt" strategy to advance economic integration across Eurasia from the Pacific to the Baltic Sea. The choice

¹⁰ Zero-sum game is classical principle of mostly realist security schools defining that one state's gain would be another's loss. This thinking is build on perception of scarcity (of resources, capital etc.). China's Grand strategy is build on securing access to those resources and markets, while developing its own trade routes to access those resources.

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of “belt” over “road” presumably suggests Beijing’s attempts to showcase its “win-win” approach and desire to “widen the common ground” with participating countries.¹³ Months later, Xi announced China’s Maritime Silk Road strategy to complement the country’s geo-economic push throughout continental Eurasia. Beijing aims to link the “belt” and maritime “silk roads” via a planned China-Pakistan Economic Corridor and the Bangladesh-China-India-Myanmar Economic Corridor. A third “silk road” initiative that China is pursuing involves the building of a commercial network through the Arctic (MUZALEVSKY, 2015, s. 29).¹¹ OBOR initiative will in effect, once finished, create connect Eurasia and most of Africa into one geopolitical and economic unit, which will naturally gravitate towards China and Asia more generally.

Economically it will enable increase of trade and investment along China’s periphery by funding and building infrastructure projects. Politically, trade and investments, mostly China driven will increase China friendly environments in all states within OBOR routes and chokepoints.¹² It will incorporate involved countries into a network of economic, political, cultural, and security relations centred around China. It will allow implementing grand strategy reshaping the Eurasian regional order with new governance ideas, norms, and rules and behaviours. Internally it will boost economic life in underdeveloped parts of China, particularly in the west of the country and lesser developed regions and as such it will help to mitigate one of China’s main concerns, stability of the regime if it does not deliver improvement of those regions.

The geographical span of the OBOR project is immense and by far the most geostrategically envisioned. It potentially covers some 65 countries which would do impacted by the project and would create interconnection hub for more than half of the world’s population. Additionally it would cover around 30% of the global economy in the regions which are set to grow most significantly in the 21st century. “The Japan and U.S.-led Asian Development Bank says infrastructure development in Asia and the Pacific will exceed \$22.6 trillion through 2030, or \$1.5 trillion per year. In a recent report, “Meeting Asia’s Infrastructure Needs” issued in February, the estimate rises to more than \$26 trillion, or \$1.7 trillion a year when costs for climate change adaptation and mitigation are included (Wharton,

¹¹ China’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs states corridors as follows : „On land, the Initiative will focus on jointly building a new Eurasian Land Bridge and developing China-Mongolia-Russia, China-Central Asia-West Asia and China-Indochina Peninsula economic corridors by taking advantage of international transport routes, relying on core cities along the Belt and Road and using key economic industrial parks as cooperation platforms. At sea, the Initiative will focus on jointly building smooth, secure and efficient transport routes connecting major sea ports along the Belt and Road. The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor and the Bangladesh-China-India-Myanmar Economic Corridor are closely related to the Belt and Road Initiative, and therefore require closer cooperation and greater progress.” (http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/zxxx_662805/t1249618.shtml) Additionally Arctic is not officially part of OBOR. Nevertheless both land and maritime corridors will highly likely in later stages incorporate also Arctic.

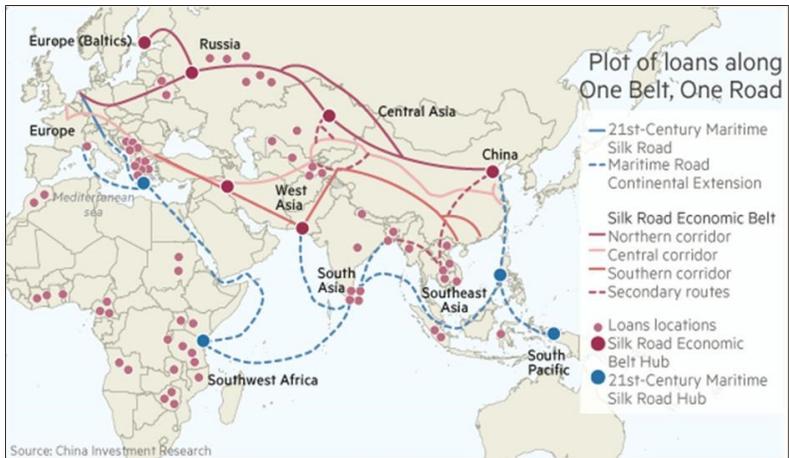
¹² On the other hand it would put pressure on domestic industries which would highly likely be not capable to compete with Chinese ones.

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2017).” Described as well as ‘Chinese Marshall Plan’ it does cover much broader geographical area, human potential and reciprocal benefits than the initial Marshall Plan. It does have also another feature, which is of great concerns primarily for countries based on democratic values, norms and principles. In contrary to Mashall Plan, where USA did provide financial support for Western European countries which shared same values, norms and principles, China does not condition its investments on implementation any given set of values, norms and principles non-related to economic development. This policy is known as “no string attached approach”, where China basically does not care for internal political environment and way of rule as far as it does not touch security of its investments and overall success of OBOR project. This approach while obviously being from geostrategic perspective much more lucrative mostly for non-democratic governments, it does potentially degrade values, norms and principles of democratic countries which strive to broaden territory, where rule of law and human rights are implemented. In a way, non-democratic countries and rulers have under such conditions free choice to maintain its way of governance, while relying on likely positive economic effect of OBOR initiative, which can be than used to placate population by redistribution of resources, where need will necessitate it, without any threat that their way of governance from the bottom-up. This is natural as China is under leadership of Communist Party, however it does also mean, that countries throughout which OBOR will be developed will be less accessible for transformation based on norm based principles and as such would be overdependent on China and success of its OBOR initiative.

China at this stage considers OBOR initiative as a way of rebalancing world affairs away from Western dominated approach to more multipolar one. “From the Chinese perspective, economic globalisation is a major driver of political multipolarisation since it promotes the diversification of centres of



One Belt, One Road Strategy

Source: China Investment Research

industrial production and accumulation with economic integration mainly on a regional basis (CLEGG, 2009).”

Some geopolitical strategists might argue that history of international relations shows that any collapse of “hegemonic order” leads more often to intermediate period of chaos, than to multipolarity and then back to new Hegemon.¹³ It is also possible to agree with the claim that “the development of China’s security environment has several features that accompany the onset of the superpowers of the past. But in particular it shows the characteristics, specifications and paradoxes that bring not only China but also other regional and global actors in decision-making dilemmas about their security (J. ŽIGRAY, P.I. NEČAS, 2016).” As such those authors indicate, China would repeat other rising powers behaviour¹⁴. But from our perspective current conditions are unique on world stage nowadays. Current destructive potential of both military as well as non-military means of main power centres are of such tremendous destructive potential and transnational factors threatening whole of humanity, both human inflicted and natural ones are so complex, that consequences of their occurrence if not managed together do by far outstrip any country’s ability to deal with them. Therefore we do assess that this mode of international behaviour will not occur this time. Additionally deepening and widening inter-state interconnections and vulnerabilities are of such nature that no single country would be able to claim any win even under zero sum game theory principles. We do assume therefore, that post-modern globalization will continue and it will in the end pull together different narratives and threat perceptions which will then drive to increasing pace of overall globalization (irrespective of local nationalistic flare-ups). China does implement mostly soft power tools, while developing hard power capabilities. It is in line with China’s ambition to apply smart power principles¹⁵ for continuation of its “peaceful rise”. By doing so, China likely would prefer to attract (through economic incentives without string attached) rather than deter and would use hard power only as last resort to protect its vital interests. China does understand that any use of hard power in regional or local scenario would hamper China’s development and thus stability of the country itself.

5. THREATS AND OPPORTUNITIES OF MODERNITY FOR THE CHANGING CHINESE POLITICAL CULTURE

China’s identity of its population consciousness is deeply rooted in millennia’s of preserving traditional values while adapting to forces influencing its development, mainly through incorporation and assimilation of new narratives. In such a way China assimilated when it was weak Xiongnu, Vietnamese, Mongolian and other narratives and norms. When China

¹³ Like Zbigniew Brzezinski, Henri Kissinger, Alexander Dugin and others.

¹⁴ Creating security dilemma for all of them as was the case for United States, Great Britain and Germany during both world wars. Such security dilemmas nowadays if solved similarly would lead to unprecedented negative consequences.

¹⁵ For more on basic principles of hard power soft power, and smart power see article „Power and its forms within EU. Hard power, Soft power and Smart power.“ in Košická bezpečnostná revue 02/2016 (pages 407-414). <https://www.vsbm.sk/data/revue/revue-2-16.pdf>

was strong it distilled from its traditional values and ideas incorporated to its consciousness values which became part of its later political culture and part of its Anschauung¹⁶ as civilization on itself. For very long period this philosophy was encompassed in Confucianism, which to a significant degree influenced (and was influenced by) China's version of Buddhism and Taoism.

China's interpretation of itself as the Celestial Empire or "Middle Kingdom" stems from the notion, that there needs to be unity and unification of man and heaven and "the Mandate of Heaven" is given to Emperor. Thus China was ruled by Emperor and his role was to unite man with Heaven. When he was not just, when he did not brought harmony and justice to his people he lost his mandate of Heaven. This interpretation bears moral element and is alive in Chinese popular conscience. First in obliges all Confucian believers to be moral. Secondly they are obliged to follow moral leader, who has mandate of Heaven. This principle is considered as universal. As such it transcends China and requires to be applied beyond. "The Confucian vision centres on extending one's own conscience through family to local groups until the world as an organic whole has a universal character (ZHANG, 2000, s. 3)." China's uniqueness as "Middle Kingdom" is thus universal to other civilization's narratives of uniqueness and it does incorporate moral elements which are compatible with elements of justice, individual and human rights. Confucianism is experiencing slow revival in China and if managed diligently it can constitute moral base for finding common grounds not only between China, but also between China and outer, globalizing world, to which China aspires to bring itself.

Main threats of modernity for China are linked to potential inability to balance economic growth with redistribution of economic gains to population, mostly those of rural and less developed areas. Vast majority of population in China is still rural and/or economically weak. Most of this population is also bearer of Confucian ideas of justice through implementation of policies, which in effect will bring balance between still strong economic growth and distribution of resources stemming from this trend. Strength of masses was firstly in modern history identified by Mao. "Mao wrote, "China's 600 million people have two remarkable peculiarities: they are, first of all, poor, secondly blank. That may seem like a bad thing, but it is really a good thing. Poor people want change, want to do things, want revolution. A clean sheet of paper has no blotches, and so the newest and most beautiful words can be written on it, the newest and most beautiful pictures can be painted on it (THIELE, 2002, s. 253)." Societal security is paramount concern for China's leadership since then.¹⁷ Its mobilization and potentially destructive potential is colossal.

¹⁶ Uncoscious intuitive-image perception of oneself as specific group or civilizational pole.

¹⁷ For more on societal security see article „Societal identity as threat to security.“ (page 614), from 6th International Scientific Conference „National and International Conference 2016“ conducted in Liptovský Mikuláš, Slovakia.

http://www.aos.sk/struktura/katedry/kbo/NMB2015/Zbornik_NMB_2015.pdf

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While Mao might have underestimated normative strength of population's deep roots of ancient narratives linked to Confucius teachings and tried to uproot it later (they were not "tabula rasa"), he was able to use Confucian leanings of justice or better described lack of it, to mobilize peasants in fight against nationalists led by Chiang Kai Shek. When second generation of leaders came to power and Deng allowed semi-market trends to develop, he also understood, that to modernize meant to adjust its political culture in order to incorporate masses into China's rise and to perform economically while trying to satisfy those who might seek another revolution. This understanding of regime stability and changing political culture is visible since then in every consequent generation of China's leadership. Since Deng, Chinese features of communism started to be more of nominal value mainly for purposes of justifying ruling elite remaining in power and development of economy became new undeclared ideological narrative of regime for development of China. While building on Confucian unconscious beliefs within population, China started to align its righteous place as "Celestial Empire with "the Mandate of Heaven" with the need to reflect and proactively approach globalizing forces world-wide.

Last 13th five year plan and its narrative to modernize, innovate but also to strengthen local consumption and enforce environmental protection, while still far of its target and partially linked to structural weaknesses of China's export oriented economy and long periods of subordinating environment to economic growth, have really more to do with understanding, that China's population starts to expect from the government more in the period of increasing wealth. This expectation is linked to inherent Confucian thinking which contrary to conventional understanding does support also western propagated individualism. ... the Confucian stress on the community should not be confused with the Maoist doctrine that each individual is merely a 'cog in the machine' and that ultimately it is the machine that matters. In all the Confucian classics, the stress is always on the development of the individual, on the process of individual learning, and on becoming a gentleman (junzi). The teachings in the Confucian classics make use of exemplary individuals with distinct and unique characteristics, individuals who are the driving force of the moral society, not anonymous and dispensable cogs of a social machine (NUYEN, 2003)."

Threats mentioned above are internal in its core. If successfully suppressed, regime will remain source of rule and China will remain stable. As such those threats can be seen as opportunities as well. Major outside threats and opportunities for changing China lie in geopolitics and geostrategic choices it will make as new global geopolitical centre. While China needs peaceful development to economically perform and satisfy its more vibrant population needs, it also brings to forefront demons of the past linked to experience of perceived "national humiliation" during last two hundred years by outside powers, when China was weak. Growing grassroot nationalism, if significantly boosted by regime under significant outside pressure, can retract not only changing political culture of China, which tries to incorporate its economic weight into shaping globalizing post-modern world, but it

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can also tear very foundations of international order established after second world war and can become fervent defender of westphalian world order¹⁸.

CONCLUSION

Can China rise peacefully? Can the world accept de-facto sinocentric OBOR project uniting much of Eurasia and Africa without direct confrontation as was iron rule since Peloponnesian wars? Is growing power causing justifying fear of dominant, western led powers? All those questions have one common root ontological question incorporated in itself¹⁹. Is globalization and technological progress driven by states and thus westphalian world order, or are they driven by post-modern ideas based on increasing interconnectivities and inter-vulnerabilities, but also increasing mutual relative gains.

Real question thus is will China as well as other main geostrategic international power centres play zero sum game or positive sum gain. If either of the players will force westphalian zero sum game principles we can expect increase of security dilemmas on geopolitical peripheries of mutual vital interests and potentially collapse of globalization as we know it. Today's way of conducting warfare is far away from direct military intervention and new "hybrid" approaches could destabilize all actors involved.²⁰ On the contrary, if China and other geostrategic international power centres will play positive sum game, we will see transformation of China from nationalistic, potentially "demon raising" nationalistic state, to state contributing with tremendous economic, intellectual and spiritual forces, which as we shown already have inherent principles of potential "universal values" already incorporated in its political culture. Those are not only potentially compatible with western states values (humanism, individualism etc.) but on which also China's leaders start to rejuvenate more in recent years (Confucian wording in China's leader's speeches).

Geostrategic imperatives for China in years to come are linked to maintaining internal stability through full implementation of its last five year plan, including environmental issues and real anti-corruption drive against major trespassers, while keeping sufficient economic growth and proper redistribution of acquired financial resources to less developed regions. Concurrently China needs to have geostrategic wisdom to not let itself be pulled into potential controversies which would hamper its drive to succeed in OBOR initiative. It will need also to have geopolitical wisdom to adjust for post-modern globalizing forces and allow more open reintroduction of China's narrative developed through millennia. Only in that

¹⁸ Significantly nationalistic in its nature.

¹⁹ For more on ontological security see article „Sources of ontological security and its application within Russian federation“ (page 506), from 7th International Scientific Conference „National and International Conference 2016“ conducted in Liptovský Mikuláš, Slovakia. http://aos.sk/struktura/katedry/kbo/NMB2016/Zbornik_NMB_2016.pdf

²⁰ For more on the topic see article „Evolution of military art from first generation of warfare up to conflict in the Ukraine. Transformation of fourth generation of warfare“ (pages 394-407) published in journal from 12th conference conducted in University of Brno, Czech republic. <http://aktivita.unob.cz/dk/Stranky/Sborn%C3%ADk-p%C5%99%C3%ADsp%C4%9Bvk%C5%AF.aspx>

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way would China be able to avoid nationalistic forces to gain momentum up to the point of potential security escalation with major power centres. Confucianism is solid base for avoiding such scenario, if managed properly, mainly because it inherently bears on justice and accountability, while taking into account all other voices. In such way, China will have not only philosophical base for negotiating other globalizing forces in post-modern world, but it will have also understanding of common universal values world is headed to discuss in 21st century. China's dilemmas are multilevel and complex. They encompass not only societal and economic sectors but also political one and others. If China decides to deal with them in Confucian way²¹, China will prevail, will achieve its ambitious plans and globalization will continue without major disruption. If not, we can expect strengthening of west-phalian, nation based zero sum destructive policies world-wide, known from the last four hundred years. China's core geostrategic imperative is to avoid such scenario and while focusing on assertively defending its particular national interests China will need to engage more vigorously on discussion how to shape post-modern globalizing world. It is in the vital interest of world and China itself.

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²¹ Negotiating peacefull settlement while assertively protecting its own interests with approach of strategic patience for aligning all requirements of parties involved.

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