

**“SILK ROAD” RICHTHOFEN’S GEOECONOMICAL PARADIGM  
IN CHINA EURASIA RESOURCES DIPLOMACY**

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*The article devoted to China elite’s Silk Road concept and the other countries Eurasia projects’ analyze.*

Now China diplomacy shows desire to enhance cooperation with its Central and South-east Asia Border States in tradition of what is called “new silk road” diplomacy. The ancients did not use a comparable term for their own networks. This china product was among other important goods and minerals. The “old” Silk Road that in this article is described was as much an invention as these new China, US and Russia concepts.

The German geographer Baron Ferdinand von Richthofen (1833–1905) coined die Seidenstrasse in 1877. F. Richthofen worked out geological paradigm of „silk road”. European and American business corporations in their “grate game” had financed Richthofen’s 1868–1872 geological surveys of China. Behind China approach are mostly domestic rationales: a need to preserve stability on its borders and in the western part of China, secure export markets and energy supplies, develop inland transport routes as an alternative to unstable sea lines, and to narrow the development gap between the eastern and western parts of China [13–15].

British Captain T. W. Blakiston’s post-Opium War explorations of coal and mineral deposits herald the beginning of “the era of the development of China for science, China’s full practical exploitation through world-traffic and transformation into a new arena of competition” [5]. Richthofen’s China is not G. W. F. Hegel’s China, geographically doomed to its essentialized, isolated, family-centered antiquity when

the pendulum of world history first swung from East to West [20, 275–342]. Commerce and colonialism were integral to German science Richthofen’s advancement of geological exploration works and vice versa.

Now pendulum of world economy swung from West to East. And China now is a country of 1,3 billion people, almost 20 % of the world’s population. It consumes 11 % of global oil or 27 % of the world’s soybeans. China has discovered 171 varieties of minerals, and 158 of them with proved reserves. There are 10 energy-related minerals, including oil, natural gas, coal, uranium. But now it is also the world’s second-largest importer; in 2013, it alone accounted for 31 % of global growth in oil demand. Now that China is the workshop of the world, its demands for electricity, resources and modernization has increased [1; 12–15]. In exploring its road to modernization and learning from modernization theory, China has adopted the useful and formed its own modernization stratagems. K. Polanyi [30] was among scientists who turned their attention to the study of the alternative ways in which people dealt with the material aspects of life and modernization. One of the main concerns was to show that the self-regulating markets had not been the only way mankind found to organize the production and distribution of goods, and in some cases it had not been the best one. Instead of the economy being embedded in the social relations, social relations are embedded in the economic system” [31, 60]. Gregory Baum char-

acterizes this approach as showing that throughout history the economy “was accessory to society” [4, 12]. Polanyi’s student Marshall Sahlins in his classic study of anthropological economics described diplomatic nature of the primitive trade and logic of reciprocity [35]. Francois Julien developed the view on such of reciprocity of using natural resources in form of stratagems. He thinks that “the key to Chinese strategy is to rely on the inherent potential of a situation and to be carried along by it as it evolves” [25, 20]. The Silk Road provides a model of idealized natural event that evolves in exchange. Like Marcel Mauss’s archaic logic of reciprocity, Silk Road commerce brought otherwise hostile communities into peaceful relations. Such exchanges effectively served as diplomatic contracts [29]. Thus the historical Silk Road offers a template for modern international commerce, a kind of geopolitical chronotope, that is, a condition or strategy for geo-economics thought and action. As well as a background context which was invention of the German geographer Ferdinand von Richthofen. Richthofen’s published works introduced two Silk Roads: a plural *Seidenstrassen* that delineated the historical routes of silk exports from China; and, far more prominently, a singular *Seidenstrasse* of the Greek geographers Marinus and Ptolemy. The ancients did not use a comparable term for their own cosmopolitan networks and practices. Immanuel Kant’s cosmopolitan “right of common possession of the surface of the earth”, for example, had a long footnote on the historical geography of silk trade between “the Land of the People of Ser” and Europe. I. Kant had explicitly distinguished between contact and forcible entrance, and this cosmopolitan ancient traffic stood in contrast to Kant’s own age when “the inhospitable behavior of the civilized states in our part of the world, especially the commercial ones” in foreign lands, have led to China and Japan “wisely, limit[ing] such interaction” [26, 82, 83*n*, 82, 84]. In stark contrast, Richthofen’s writings on the Silk Road belonged to a multivolume geological survey of China that guided the German colonial seizure of Qingdao in northern China in 1897. Richthofen’s model was part of a competitive German blueprint for a commercial railroad linking

China with European. The significance of this first iron Silk Road lies in geological as well as political history. Richthofen and Sven Hedin, who popularized the Silk Road in the 1930s, asserted the centrality of geological knowledge to geopolitical action. Recent environmental scholarship has explored modernization into geological agents [8–9; 16–19; 40].

Today the Silk Road western paradigm looks as premodern Afro-Eurasian trade network between Byzantium and Beijing, Samarkand and Timbuktu that somehow historically anticipated the hyperconnected, globalized world and that might, through collaboration across traditional divisions, offer ways to rethink the present and to reimagine the future [10]. In Chinese-language studies the Silk Road begins with diplomacy in Central Asia in the second century BC and turns history to “open” empires instead of isolated civilizations. In Central Asian studies, by contrast, the Silk Road begins with Indo-European migrations four millennia ago and ends with Russian and Qing imperial expansion into Central Asia in the XVII century. The period between II BC to X AD is interpreted as the most splendid time in the commercial road communication from the East to the West. There were two great centralized empires: Roman Empire and Han Dynasty Empire; Byzantine Empire and Tang Dynasty Empire. It was only one difference since II BC: the trade was with an intense diplomatic activity, which was guided by Han dynasty (206 BC–220 AD). The only precedent in this diplomatic activity was Alexander the Great’s empire, which joined India and Greece together [2; 3; 8; 22–23; 29; 32; 34]. Aside from that, the name of the Road was incorrect about what products were exchanged. The Silk Road’s products were: materials (silk, medicaments, spices, wood, iron, copper, gunpowder, and gems), technology (compass) and ideology (different religions). The first who described the Road and told about mineral resources of some kingdoms was Shiji of Sima Qian [39].

Scientist Tait Robert [42] explained that “The minerals were very important strategic goods, as the government tried to control its extraction in centralized empires. An example of this mineral

production's control is China, in s. 1 BC, where it was necessary to state made a monopoly of production and marketing of salt and steel. This monopoly could be possible thanks to the management of mines and furnace. This monopoly was repeated during Tang dynasty (618–907), several centuries after Han Dynasty's fall" [42, 7]. Hansen V. told that: In the Roman Empire we must remind the restrictive laws over silk trade, the Roman Senate issued in several times to check the precious metal flight when Oriental products import were paid. In II BC the diplomatic and trade relations were managed from Han Dynasty to Eurasia. The precursor of diplomatic relations was emperor Wudi of Han Dynasty (141–87BC.), who – in 138 BC – sent an embassy to Central Asia with Zang Qian as ambassador to find allies to harass Xiongnu kingdom in its rearguard. Shiji related to the Zhang Qian's periplus, describes several kingdoms of Central Asia: Yuezhi kingdom, in Afghanistan, and others countries in extreme West. These kingdoms were unknown to Chinese, and in his account, Zhang Qian described their costumes and products, and, tells us that in 166 AD "the king of Da Qin, Andong (Marcus Aurelius Antoninus), sent an embassy" [16, 82]. Sevillano-López D. indicates that Byzantine Empire sent embassies in 643, 667, 701 and 719. On the other hand, Han Dynasty sent General Gan Yin to Persia in 97 AB; and the Tang Dynasty sent Wang Xuance as ambassador to India in 643, 646 and – sometime – between 657 and 661. The Buddhist monks Xuangzang (600–664) and Yijing (635–713) made their pilgrimages to India's centers. In this relations were mixed different mining areas, mineral substances and its elaborated products are related. The minerals and their derivative products object of trade can be classified: prestige goods (gold, silver, gems, glass, and asbestos); common use goods (steel, copper, and lead, tin)" [37, 51–53]. This information was used by Richthofen's in 1870–1872 who reported to the European-American Chamber of Commerce in Shanghai on China's regional commercial, mining, and railroad prospects highlighted the significance of future lines running west from Xi'an to coal-rich "northern route" around the Tarim Basin [10–11].

Hedin effectively set Central Asia history and world politics to geological time. Hedin's bid to "Plan for the Revival of the Silk Road" transformed geological Richthofen's Silk into an urgent geopolitical strategy. His first Sino-Swedish scientific expedition (1927–1928) in Central Asia sought the best airline route between Berlin and Peking-Shanghai on behalf of the German government ay Lufthansa; his third Sino-Swedish expedition (1933–1935) plotted a motor-road route between Europe and China financed by the Chinese Nationalist government. Hedin's in famous diplomacy enabled him to negotiate large-scale international collaborations between Nazi Germany, Chinese Nationalists, and European and US governmental and private sponsors during Uyghur uprisings in Xinjiang, the Chinese Red Army's Long March, and emergent conflicts in East Asia and Europe [44]. In his diplomacy with China, Hedin [18–21] influentially made the Han dynasty imperial embassy to the West the narrative starting point of the Silk Road. The "Silk Road" chapter of his international bestseller [19] begins: "In the year 138 B. C., the great Emperor [Wudi], of the older Handynasty, sent an embassy of a hundred persons, headed by [Zhang Qian], to the modern Ferghana." The chapter ends with Hedin's exhortation that was constructed the "the world's longest motor-road" spanning Europe and China along this historical pathway.

Marlène Laruelle, Jean-François Huchet assesses the dimension of Central Asia's XXI century as "Great Game" [11]. They analyzed new Silk Road's diplomacy of the major players: one is an "external" party – the U S – insofar as it has no shared borders with the region while the two others – Russia and China – are neighboring countries. Russian influence has been historical and remains preponderant. The US is actor of the more recent past, but remains tenacious about expanding its presence. China, on the other hand, has had an extraordinary run to leadership in the region.

The proposal for a "New Silk Road" from US diplomacy dates back to the 1990 s., when Republican Senator Sam Brownback, who closely cooperated with Prof Frederick Starr in his legislative initiative "Silk Road Act", echoed a

strikingly similar initiative. The plans original architect, Frederick Starr, chair of the Central Asia-Caucasus Institute, advanced the proposal in conjunction with the Centre for Strategic and International Studies. At the Istanbul Conference of 2011, Western leadership introduced a controversial template for new security architecture for Central and South Asia. The US diplomacy was going to build "New Silk Road" project as quintessentially of its Greater Central Asia strategy dating back to the George W Bush presidency for such purposes. Imas Eugene in his investigation "The New Silk Road to Nowhere. U.S. post-2014 development plans for Central Asia" explained that "for facilitating Central Asia's efforts to return to its historic role as the gateway between East and West necessary that Turkmen gas fields could help meet both Pakistan's and India's growing energy needs and provide significant transit revenues for both Afghanistan and Pakistan; Tajik cotton could be turned into linens; Furniture, fruit from Afghanistan could find its way to the markets of Astana, Mumbai; the construction of the nearly one billion dol. Central Asia-South Asia electricity project (CASA-1000)" [24, 62]. The CASA-1000 line runs 759 miles through four of the most unstable countries for number of tasks: connect surplus summer hydroelectricity in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan to electricity-starved Afghanistan and Pakistan; create alternative energy corridors for post-Soviet countries; break their dependence on Russia's infrastructural ties. It appeared to be that the high-profile nature of the project will make it a target for competition and risks to destabilize the region. The ability of local forces to coordinate and secure of infrastructure alone will be extremely difficult. The U.S. is wary of Russian involvement in the region and its attempt to control any arrangement and undermine Washington's efforts to decouple Central Asia from Moscow's influence.

Russia's interests were confirmed when Russia's Inter RAO-United Electrical Systems signed a 25-year contract with China. Russia has chances and risks in Central Asia but has shown a possibility to reach its diplomatic interests. Russian leaders understand that Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Kazakhstan can go in more

integrative relations only in terms of widening energy market. And not only becoming energy exporters, importers, transit countries but member of energy club of equal interests in deal with China, India, Pakistan. Russia's experience with Central Asian electrical systems and its own vast hydroelectric potential makes Russia ready to facilitate Central Asia's hydroelectric needs. It also blends in with the concept of an Energy Club of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (CSO). The elite of Russia in its decision to participate in the creation of energy and transport corridors in Eurasian region have far reaching geopolitical goals. They are: Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India (TAPI) pipeline, Iran-Pakistan pipeline; the rail-road transport corridor from Tajikistan to Pakistan (cutting across the Wakhan sector, will ensure Russia and Central Asian countries getting an access to the Arabian Sea and Indian Ocean through the Gwadar port, with Pakistan getting access to Russian and Central Asian markets). If this corridor is linked up with the Karakoram highway, China too becomes a part of this sector. Chinese companies already have a major footprint in this corridor by virtue of their operational control over the Gwadar port (Pakistan).

In this contest Russia diplomats accelerated the deal in May 2014 between Russia's Gazprom and China National Petroleum Corp (CNPC) which has been 10 years in the making. There leaders arranged "There remains a need to reform the international financial and economic architecture, to realign it to the needs of the real economy, and to increase the representation and voting rights of emerging markets and developing countries in the system of global economic governance in order to restore confidence in the system" [36]. From China side was given proposition about the concept of a New Silk Road Economic Belt. It was presented during Xi Jinping's landmark 10-day visit to Central Asia in 2013. Xi visited four Central Asian states: Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan [27-28]. Xi was the third consecutive Chinese leader to visit the former Soviet Central Asia region, countries that no U.S. president has visited. He also took part in the 13-th SCO summit in Bishkek and went to Russia to attend

the G20 summit in St. Petersburg. The concept was announced in Xi's speech in Astana and reiterated in Xi's address at the SCO summit. Xi presented a five-point proposal to jointly build the New Silk Road Economic Belt to strengthen relations between China, Central Asia and Europe. China is also interested in its southern neighborhood, especially ASEAN. The PRC suggests establishing a Maritime Silk Road. This idea was revealed at the 16th ASEAN+China summit in Brunei and China leader's speech in the Indonesian parliament. Signs of the growing international presence of the Chinese RMB have fueled speculation that the yuan will be the world's next reserve currency. The Chinese economic miracle has catapulted the RMB to a spot among the top 10 traded currencies in the global economy, thanks to high GDP growth, consecutive current and capital account surpluses and an aggressive People's Bank of China (PBoC) policy since 2009 [33; 38–43; 45].

Iranian President Hassan Rouhani has expressed his support to the idea of the Silk Road Economic Belt which was presented by Chinese President Xi Jinping whom he met in Shanghai on the side lines of CICA Summit in Spring 2014. Details of Russian Delegation Visit to Shanghai on 20–21 May 2014 have not yet been fully discussed. It was a lot of analyses about resources part of agreements but not about agreement on Silk Road transport corridor in the content of Russian-Chinese relations. This project, which has worried Russia for a long time, is turning out to be to the benefit of Russian-Chinese cooperation. Russian leader has declared that "it considers China's initiative for the development of the Silk Road Economic Belt to be important, and appreciates China's willingness to take Russian interests into account during the course of its development and realization. Both countries will continue to search for possible ways to join the Silk Road Economic Belt project and the Eurasian Economic Union currently being created" [30] thus the new Silk Road will respond to the urgent demands of both countries, including in terms of their strategic presence in regions bordering the Silk Road route. Through joint efforts, Moscow and Beijing are completely capable of taking the area out of the hands of the

West, which would be yet another strategic risk for Washington.



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*Elite Central Asian countries, in particular, China's leaders have taken advantage of the relative decline of the influence of Russia and the planned withdrawal of United States troops from Afghanistan to expand its influence. Chinese concept of the new Silk Road is aimed at ensuring energy supplies — by land from oil and gas fields in Central Asia, and by sea through the Malacca Strait.*

*Еліта країн Центральної Азії, зокрема, лідери Китаю, скористалися відносним занепадом впливу Росії і плановим виведенням США військ з Афганістану для розширення свого впливу. Китайський концепт нового Шовкового шляху спрямовано на забезпечення поставок енергоносіїв — сушею з газових і нафтових родовищ Центральної Азії, і морем через Малаккську протоку.*

*Элита стран Центральной Азии, в частности, лидеры Китая, воспользовались относительным упадком влияния России и плановым выводом США войск из Афганистана для расширения своего влияния. Китайский концепт нового Шелкового пути направлен на обеспечение поставок энергоносителей — по суше из газовых и нефтяных месторождений Центральной Азии, и по морю через Малаккский пролив.*

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