

# “ONE BELT, ONE ROAD” – SECURITY ANALYSIS

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## ABSTRACT

The People’s Republic of China is taking serious steps in accordance with its global development strategy “One Belt, One Road”. This geopolitical and geo-economic mega project meets the positive and the negative connotation on the road that passes through over 65 countries of different civilizations, religious, cultural, economic, political and other values and orientation. Only a superficial analysis of the security aspects of the mega project points to numerous difficulties and obstacles that must be neutralized to the common economic interests of all participants along the way realized. Security analysis of the “One Belt, One Road” initiative in the paper has been implemented through a description of the basic factors that determine the security aspect of this mega project. Only the security situation of the countries along the way, their grouping in the security and defense alliances, crisis centers and intertwining interests of the major actors in the international arena, provide a clear factual picture that leads to the understanding of security difficulties along the way.

*Key words:* “One Belt, One Road”, security environment.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The concepts of the “New Silk Road” and the “Maritime Silk Road” were launched in 2013 by the President Xi Jinping when he revealed Chinese plans for the two infrastructural paths that will connect East Asia with Europe, the

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“Silk Road Economic Belt”<sup>2</sup> and the “21st Century Maritime Silk Road”<sup>3</sup> Since then, any Chinese foreign policy initiative with a transport component is considered as a part of the “One Belt, One Road” (O.B.O.R.) diplomacy policy.<sup>4</sup> The O.B.O.R. Initiative covers 65 countries from Asia and Europe. There are differences in consideration of China’s O.B.O.R. initiative. Most foreign analysts have considered it as a comprehensive strategy or a geopolitical and diplomatic offensive. Opposing them, Chinese officials consider it as an economic vision aimed to build a common area of interests and responsibility. Anyway, the O.B.O.R. initiative indicates China as the main actor in the integration of the Southeast Asian region and important international player in the globalized scene. The objectives of the O.B.O.R. may be summarized in following: to enhance diplomatic relations and cooperation; to expand China’s geopolitical influence; to improve and expand international trade routes with benefit for all involved countries; to develop and stabilize China’s western regions by integrating them in trade routes and by opening markets to goods produced in those regions. The O.B.O.R. initiative is supposed to be a new Eurasian Land Bridge, China - Mongolia-Russia, China - Central Asia - West Asia and China - Indochina Peninsula economic corridors, as well as a China - Pakistan Economic Corridor and a Bangladesh – China – India - Myanmar economic Corridor. Chinese initiative is welcome in a numerous Eurasian and European countries, but there are mixed considerations about China’s rise in many areas. While some countries, including Kazakhstan and Pakistan, will be grateful for Chinese investments, fear of a flood of goods and workers from China could lead countries along the O.B.O.R. to think about Chinese investments with suspicion. Furthermore,

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<sup>2</sup> The Silk Road Economic Belt seeks to connect China, Central Asia, Russia and the Baltic states; linking China with the Persian Gulf and the Mediterranean Sea through Central Asia and West Asia; and connecting China with Southeast Asia, South Asia and the Indian Ocean.

<sup>3</sup> The 21st-Century Maritime Silk Road will connect China’s coast to Europe through the South China Sea (SCS) and the Indian Ocean, and China’s coast via the SCS to the South Pacific.

<sup>4</sup> On March 28<sup>th</sup> 2015, the National Development and Reform Commission, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the Ministry of Commerce published the first document titled “Vision and Actions on Jointly Building Silk Road Economic Belt and 21st- Century Maritime Silk Road”.

European countries could welcome Chinese funding in key industries, but European leaders increasingly fear that building trade links with China could deepen the trade imbalance. In parallel, China's vulnerability to geopolitical and security challenges will increase. Chinese investors need to deal with political risk and insecurity in Central Asia, South Asia and the Middle East. Additionally, Chinese interests could also become threatened in domestic politics. More fundamentally, the biggest challenge for China will be to communicate its intentions and its vision for the O.B.O.R., as they represent China's views of its reemergence as a regional and global power. Other regional and global powers, such as Russia, India, Japan, and the U.S., may view the O.B.O.R. as infringing on their areas of influence, driving competition rather than cooperation. Many of the O.B.O.R. projects are linked with underdeveloped or conflict-ridden regions, which could generate additional security challenges. To protect its interests and combat these transnational risks, China will negotiate and provide assistance for domestic security organizations in countries along the O.B.O.R. networks.<sup>5</sup> However, there are many challenges for China as well. These will be discussed in the following sections: current global political and security environment, relationships with great power rivalries and international organizations, domestic constraints and tensions in the neighborhood.

## **2. CURRENT GLOBAL POLITICAL AND SECURITY ENVIRONMENT**

Important factors, political and security developments at the global level are stable categories in the previous period. The most important factor that contributes to increasing instability represents a projection of power around Washington's hegemonic bloc to the growing forces. More and more the intensive Russian-Chinese cooperation in economic and defense spheres represent the most active American dominance challenger. Tensions in the Asia-Pacific Region (A.P.R.) manifested by the militarization of the area. Besides the Pacific, tensions are manifested in Eastern Europe, where after

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<sup>5</sup> For example, Beijing and Islamabad appear to have secured an agreement under which Pakistan will allocate 10,000 troops specifically to protect Chinese workers, many of whom will be working on infrastructure projects in the province of Balochistan.

the Warsaw NATO summit continued militarization of both sides. Expressed strengthening tensions in Ukraine, a mutual plan for the reconstruction of tactical and strategic nuclear arsenals indicate that Moscow is preparing to resume antagonistic posture toward NATO and the U.S. In such circumstances, the divisions among the European Union (E.U.) member states reinforced, which were previously incompatible on issues relations with Russia. The situation is further complicated by the fact that, after the British decision to abandon membership in the E.U., this organization opens the debate on internal reforms. Most states seek to take advantage of this situation to ensure their own interests, with the obvious gap between the core European countries that seek to ensure the deepening of integration, the countries of southern Europe which are primarily interested in the financial aspects of future relations with the E.U. and Eastern European member states, led by Poland which oppose centralizing of the E.U. Such a performance of Eastern European countries, primarily Polish, fueled by the U.S. encouraging Warsaw to relying on the Visegrad Group, constitutes an alternative power center that could act as a corrective to the activities of Berlin and Paris that could be an exponent of American interests in the Union. The weakening of unity among NATO members is further threatened by Turkey's willingness to carefully take into account Russia's political and security interests in the Levant. Partly deterioration of relations between Ankara and the West adversely affect the security of the European continent, since the Turkish authorities periodically point out the possibility of further suspension of the Agreement on readmission, if Brussels does not approve visa liberalization for Turkish citizens. The main tendencies in the creation of the political and security environment in the world are related to: 1) create new intensification of the current crisis and their sudden and unpredictable escalation, 2) further strengthening of extremism and terrorism as a result of an increase in racial, ethnic, religious and social intolerance, 3) increasing the possibility of outbreaks of new and intensifying the existing asymmetrical, but also classical military conflicts, and 4) the continuation of conflicts of interest from major and regional powers. Rivalry between the bloc led by the U.S. (and NATO member countries on the periphery of the Pacific China) and collaborative Allied-Moscow-Beijing axis (often supported by other members of the group BRICS<sup>6</sup>) increases the possibility of destabilizing the sensitive region: 1) Asia-

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<sup>6</sup> Brazil, Russia, India, China, South African Republic.

Pacific Region, which moves the focus of economic and political power; 2) Middle East, whose economic importance and the energy accumulated internal contradictions continue to have a destabilizing potential; 3) the area of Central Asia, where the intersecting interests of the West and the growing power and 4) the European periphery, especially in the east and south. The military dimension of the Asia-Pacific's international politics was as prominent as ever, with China adopting an increasingly assertive posture in relation to its territorial claims in the East China and South China seas. The U.S. maintains its rebalance towards the region, tensions continuing on the Korean Peninsula and many regional states expanding their capability developments. Tensions significantly escalated during 2015 over China's accelerating construction on the features it occupied in the SCS. In the Spratly Islands, China expanded some of the existing reefs into islands, while also enlarging Woody Island in the Parcels group to the north.<sup>7</sup> Construction effort seems to be part of a wider plan supporting long-term strategic purposes, notably protecting China's sea-lanes of communication as well as transit routes and, eventually, deployment areas for its missile submarines as it develops a credible second-strike nuclear deterrent. Washington opposed any further militarization of disputed features and expanded the US Navy freedom of navigation patrols in the SCS, to challenge assertions of sovereignty that were not recognized in international law. The U.S. aircraft were already challenging China's attempts to control the airspace over the features that it had recently enlarged and militarized. As counter-measures, the US DoD released a new Asia-Pacific Maritime Security Strategy in August 2015. An unstable security situation in the Middle East and North Africa is characterized by: (1) spillover of the conflict in Syria and Iraq to the territories of other countries - Libya, Tunisia, Egypt, Niger, Algeria and Mali; (2) a large number of foreign fighters from Western countries who are fighting on the territory of the Middle East and North Africa and (3) the humanitarian crisis caused by the large number of internally displaced

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<sup>7</sup> Beijing established a 3km-long runway to support military air operations on Fiery Cross Reef. Another runway was being built on Johnson South Reef, together with a port and surveillance towers. It was possible that a runway was being built on Subi Reef. There was speculation that China's new island airfields and radars would ultimately be used to enforce an air-defence identification zone over at least part of the South China Sea.

persons and refugees. The security and humanitarian situations in Libya, Yemen and Syria worsened, while there is no decisive improvement in Iraq. ISIS remained in control of significant parts of territory in both Syria and northwestern Iraq. Despite the operations of an American-led air coalition, the jihadist organization continued to resist and expand showing its resilience, adaptability and brutality. Meanwhile, the regime of Bashar al-Assad received a boost in late 2015, when Russia deployed military force to assist its ally and increased attacks on ISIS. Regional states' military activities against ISIS in Syria were joined by another operation in March 2015, when the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states began a military operation in Yemen. Regional armed forces, particularly those of the United Arab Emirates, also suffered what were for them significant casualties. While regional states are concerned about the rise of extremism, GCC countries also have long-standing concerns about Tehran's growing influence, the actions of its proxies and its military capabilities. The nuclear agreement with the P5+1 and the E.U. also begins to open the way for Iran to revamp its equipment inventory, with China and Russia potentially major suppliers, though sales of conventional systems remain embargoed for five years. Central Asia was the scene of wars and color revolutions. Active conflict still rages in Afghanistan and spread to Pakistan. Instability in Kyrgyzstan threatens to spill over into neighboring countries, and any future conflict in which are included Iran, Syria and Lebanon, may be reflected in Central Asia. Control of Central Asia would upset the project O.B.O.R. and because of this U.S. strategy in Central Asia seeks to prevent the emergence of China as a global superpower, and China on the way to disable access to energy resources. For several Southeast Asian governments, concern over China's activities and possible further ambitions in the SCS has increasingly influenced capability-development efforts. By August 2015, Vietnam had commissioned four of the six submarines ordered from Russia in 2009, which could, in time, provide Vietnam with a strategically important anti-access/area-denial capability in parts of the SCS. Vietnam has a stronger military tradition and more operational experience than any of its Southeast Asian neighbours. Residual sensitivities and restrictions on both sides have meant that a growing U.S.–Vietnamese defence relationship has been slow to develop, although there was a partial lifting of the ban on U.S. defence sales in late 2014, and an intention to expand defence trade and to collaborate more on maritime security was declared in a 'joint vision statement' in June

2015. China has good relations with each of the five Central Asian countries - Kazakhstan<sup>8</sup>, Kyrgyzstan<sup>9</sup>, Uzbekistan<sup>10</sup>, Turkmenistan<sup>11</sup>, and Tajikistan<sup>12</sup>, especially compared to its relationships with its neighbors to the east and south. Even though China shares over 3.000 km of borders with three of the Central Asian states, the last border normalization was resolved in April 2010. European security is characterized by the continuation of the Ukrainian crisis and confrontation of the West and Russia. Supplemental contributes to the destabilization of the terrorist attacks in European capitals, as well as the escalation of instability in the wider Middle East area, which has launched a wave of migration. European stability is defined and the continuation of negative economic developments in the Eurozone and the process of reviewing the political basis of the E.U. Globally, the strongest non-military threats as terrorism and religious extremism on the territory of the Arabian Peninsula, North and West Africa, as well as the threats arising from the wave of migrants from the Middle East and North Africa to Europe.

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<sup>8</sup> Kazakhstan's close defence relationship with Russia, reinforced through its membership of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (C.S.T.O.) and Shanghai Cooperation Organization (S.C.O.), has been a key part of this recapitalization process.

<sup>9</sup> Kyrgyzstan maintains a close strategic relationship with Russia, being a member of both the C.S.T.O. and the S.C.O., and an agreement for Russia to fund a modernization and re-equipment programme was reportedly signed in late 2014.

<sup>10</sup> Uzbekistan maintains an ambivalent strategic relationship with Russia. Although it still maintains bilateral defence ties with Moscow, uses mainly Soviet-era equipment and is a member of the S.C.O., it suspended its membership of the C.S.T.O. in mid-2012. The security situation in Afghanistan, and the possibility of instability spilling over across Uzbekistan's border, is a primary concern.

<sup>11</sup> Turkmenistan declared its neutrality in 1999; it is therefore not a member of the Russian-backed C.S.T.O.

<sup>12</sup> Tajikistan is member of the C.S.T.O. A 2014 deal on military modernization with Russia has opened the possibility of military aid from Moscow including platforms, weapons and personal equipment. The extended border with Afghanistan, and the possibility of a spillover of violence, is a priority concern, and border deployments have been stepped up in response.

### 3. RELATIONSHIPS WITH GREAT POWER RIVALRIES AND INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

In current global political and security environment, besides the U.S., China is the only power capable to practice its maritime and continental dimensions of power. Other great powers with own geopolitical, geoeconomic and geostrategic projects for Eurasia, consider O.B.O.R. initiative as a security threat. Russia, the U.S., India, and Japan are all important players in the O.B.O.R. countries and could use their power to block China's plans. Relations between China and Russia can be defined as a rival-partner. With the battle for dominance in the region of Eurasia, Middle East, South and Southeast Asia, two countries are developing partnerships to strengthen counterbalance pressure from the West. China and Russia are found in all major integration processes, above all in the format of BRICS, the S.C.O. and the Forum "Peace ocean-Asia economic cooperation". China and Russia during 2015 signed a series of energy and trade agreements, which, in addition to joint naval exercises, indicate intentions for further development of cooperation, which indirectly causes a greater barrier to penetration into Asia and the A.P.R. Despite highly developed economic relations, China and the U.S. have a relationship rivalry and a different view of the situation in A.P.R. China insists on establishing a model of relations between big powers, which means avoiding confrontation, mutual respect and cooperation on win-win basis. It is possible that relations with China and the U.S. position "competition" move into the zone of conflict. China does not observe in good faith the U.S. alliances with Japan, South Korea and the Philippines, as well as friendly relations with Thailand, Taiwan and Australia. In this sense, it is making efforts to, as a factor of reduction of the U.S. influence in the region, which forms a homogeneous and sealed Economic Community of Southeast Asia, expand economic impact on the state Association of Southeast Asian Nations (A.S.E.A.N.), establishing transport routes directly from the U.S. west coast and enhance impact on both Korea. It is possible that China will try to create a military-political alliance of Southeast Asian nations relying on A.S.E.A.N. countries. India sees China's O.B.O.R. initiative as a new strategy designed to encircle India. Secondly, the border disputes, as well as Chinese support for Pakistan, make the trust between China and India remain low in the military sphere. China and India economies have strengthened, so they have new reasons to focus on achieving their own interests. In the long term, this may make competition inevitable.



China believes that India aims to become a major power, to play an important international role, and to create an external environment favorable to achieving its aspirations. However, India aims to achieve this objective not by relying on China's economic power, but by using U.S. military might. China and India have a border dispute in Kashmir. Because of the intransigence of both sides, and the inability to reach a compromise, and in order to establish control of the territory, formed the factual line of demarcation. To this primarily contributed the cooperation between the two countries within the framework of BRICS and the assessment that economic cooperation between the two countries produces benefits that transcend differences. It is expected that the trend of improving relations between the two sides would continue, although it will still be burdened developed with the cooperation of China and Pakistan. The open question is the concern of New Delhi because of the economic corridor China is building with Pakistan, which crosses the territory of Kashmir. Bilateral relations between China and Japan have been disrupted following a dispute over islands in the S.C.S., despite considerable economic cooperation. The difficulties in bilateral relations are the result of Japan's unilateral resolution of the status of the Diaoyu Islands (Senkaku). The Japanese government has a series of actions (appointment of the islands in the archipelago, landing in the land of the island, their purchase from the Kurihara family, etc.) threatening bilateral relations. It is estimated that the islands are above the great natural resources of oil and gas, although neither side had conducted research. China is determined not to compromise on this point, but for stability and peace in the region is ready to joint exploitation of resources. In relations with the countries from the African and South American continent is visible tendency towards increased Chinese presence, primarily to ensure the natural resources that these countries and regions have. The most typical in this respect is Africa, which confirms the existence of Sino-African Committee, which reviews relations between the two sides. China has an interest in securing mineral and other resources, and in turn invests in their impoverished and poorly developed infrastructure. China is the largest contributor of peacekeepers from all permanent members of the UN Security Council. China will increase the number of combat units in multinational operations. President Xi, during last year's address to the UN promised that China would increase the number of deployed forces in multinational operations to 8,000 members, train up to 2,000 peacekeepers from other countries at the training center in China and provide military aid to the African

Union in the amount of \$ 100 million. China has abstained in building relations with NATO, whose actions “outside the zone of responsibility” is seen as a challenge to the national interests. The impact on Washington’s policy of NATO, its presence near the border with China (Afghanistan and S.C.S.), as well as interest in further expansion to the East (Caucasus, Central Asia) and partner strategic alliances with Japan, South Korea, Australia and some A.S.E.A.N. members, are the main problem for cooperation. Despite concerns over the presence of foreign military forces in Central Asia, Beijing believes that a complete withdrawal of NATO from Afghanistan influenced the increased danger of terrorist threats in the region. Therefore, Chinese politicians think about the risks of failure to provide support to the Afghan government in the fight against the Taliban, given that they believe that other regional actors, such as Pakistan, Iran, and Russia, will not have the capacity to fill the security vacuum that will be after withdrawing from the Afghanistan. The E.U. is heavily courted by China for its project. China is looking to increase synergies between the O.B.O.R. initiative and the European Fund, especially in the regions between China and Europe.<sup>13</sup> Except for certain trade disagreement, there are no security tensions between China and the E.U. and none of them is a security threat to other.<sup>14</sup> The two sides are committed to promoting the E.U. - China Comprehensive Strategic Partnership. Both sides jointly adopted the EU-China 2020 Strategic Agenda for Cooperation<sup>15</sup>, which includes four main areas of cooperation: peace and security, prosperity, sustainable development, and people-to-people exchanges.<sup>16</sup> The O.B.O.R.

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<sup>13</sup> In June 2015, Hungary became the first European country to sign a memorandum of understanding with China. Additionally, China and France signed a landmark agreement prioritizing their cooperation in third-party markets. China also has various railways and harbors’ projects with Poland, Serbia and Greece.

<sup>14</sup> The project supports Brussels, which is why the European Commission in the program Connecting Europe Facility predicted that from 2014 to 2020 for the improvement of transport, energy and digital networks set aside more than 26 billion euros from the budget E.U.

<sup>15</sup> “EU-China 2020 Strategic Agenda for Cooperation.” *European Union - External Action*. [http://eeas.europa.eu/china/docs/eu-china\\_2020\\_strategic\\_agenda\\_en.pdf](http://eeas.europa.eu/china/docs/eu-china_2020_strategic_agenda_en.pdf) (28.08.2016.)

<sup>16</sup> During 2015, agreement was reached on the following: (1) connecting the initiative O.B.O.R. the European development strategies, (2) linking the Chinese production capacity with the Investment Plan of Europe (“Junkers plan”) and (3) the harmonization of cooperation between China and 16 countries with total cooperation of China and EU.

initiatives will greatly influence the relationship between China and the E.U. Firstly, global geopolitics may be reshaped through O.B.O.R., thus returning Eurasia to its historic place at the center of human civilization – of commerce, culture, and progress. It could also be linked with European domestic plans, especially in the context of the European interconnection plan, which will enable five-way connection in policy, trade, transportation, currency and people. According to the O.B.O.R. maps, Poland and Greece will become new gateways for China's access to Europe, especially under the 16+1 framework of dialogue between China and countries in central and eastern Europe. On the other hand, this initiative will also serve as an entry point for the E.U. into Asia-Pacific affairs, providing Europe with a greater opportunity to cooperate with China in markets like West Africa, the Indian Ocean and Central Asia. China's attitude towards the Western Balkans (WB) is in a function of both, China and the E.U. While Central Europe is important for China with direct market access to the E.U., Balkan countries, particularly those outside the Union that have signed trade agreements with the E.U. (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Macedonia and Serbia), are attractive because they are not subject to the European regulations on anti-dumping and intellectual property protection. Beijing region is also considered as a location to which it is possible to move part of the production facilities. China on WB invests mostly in the sectors of infrastructure and energy. China has its own interest in the region WB expressed through the initiative of cooperation between China + 16 countries Cieza, who attaches great importance because it is the realization of the initiative "Belt and Road". Official Beijing as one of the founders, attaches great importance to strengthening cooperation with S.C.O., promoting joint responsibility for the fate of A.P.R. The organization was formed in order to strengthen confidence between member states in the border areas, to avoid border disputes and improving military-military relations, but has grown into a significant political, security and economic organization in the wider region of Central and Eastern Asia. The members of S.C.O. support the O.B.O.R. initiative and expressed willingness to intensify cooperation with the Eurasian Union. China within the organization, together with RF, seeks to restrict the influence of the U.S. in Central Asia. However, the RF wants to take advantage of that organization as a support for the monopoly in the transit of oil and gas in Eurasia, while Beijing wants S.C.O. to become a mainstay for trade and investment, where China would be the dominant factor. S.C.O. plays an important role in preserving peace and stability in Asia, the fight against

terrorism, separatism and extremism. BRICS group represents the largest developing country in the world, which in addition to the significant economic character of cooperation, play an increasingly important and growing joint role in the international arena. The main result of the last BRICS Summit held in July 2015, is the signing of an agreement on forming a new development bank based in Shanghai with an initial capital of 50 and later 100 billion USD. Beijing attaches great importance to relations with A.S.E.A.N. as the basis for the preservation of peace and stability in the A.P.R. Format 10 + 3 (A.S.E.A.N. + China + Japan + South Korea) is the main channel of cooperation in East Asia. China has proposed speeding up the negotiation process on the promotion of regional comprehensive economic partnership, establishing a free trade zone between China, Japan and South Korea by 2020.

#### **4. DOMESTIC CONSTRAINTS**

China has achieved impressive economic growth since the 1980s and with investments concentrated in the eastern and southern coastal belt of the country, has several strengths such as: openness to the world market, concentrated investments, advanced technologies and management skills, public infrastructures, higher urbanization and density of population, and educated work force. Continental China is less developed and state sector still has a much stronger presence in that area than in the coastal regions. The regional inequality has very important social and economic consequences. It has caused a rural-urban migration as well as a massive inter-regional migration towards the Chinese coast. Finally, north and western China are the least developed parts of the country. Their disadvantages lie inclusively in their mountains and plateaus, in their less suitable climate for agriculture, and in the considerable distance to the coast. Additionally, north and western China are not dominated by ethnic Han Chinese. In spite of its many national minorities, north and western China have the richest natural resources (oil, gas, and minerals).

#### **5. TENSIONS IN THE NEIGHBOURHOOD**

One of the important aspects of O.B.O.R. initiative is the promotion of cooperation with its neighbors in areas such as counterterrorism and

economic cooperation, and forming new international frameworks where China can play a central role. China ties the neighborhood to its own development. China's economic diplomacy in Asia focuses on: free trade areas (South Korea, Australia), economic agreements (Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership, the Free Trade Area for the Asia-Pacific), regional projects (the Bangladesh-China-India-Myanmar and China-Pakistan Economic corridors), and special "Silk Road" economic zones. Meanwhile, China's peaceful rise has not been embraced by all its neighbors. This is partly due to the lack of trust between them and partly due to China's outstanding bilateral tensions with certain Asian states. China has clarified various aspects of its security policies, including through the release of its latest defence white paper, 'China's Military Strategy'. The importance of the space and cyber domains is considered essential to the Chinese national security. There is a growing emphasis on maritime security. Beijing remains committed to the military strategic guideline of active defense, which means assuming the strategic defensive, while retaining the right to undertake active, perhaps even pre-emptive, measures at operational and tactical levels. China's construction activities on the features it occupies in the S.C.S attracted significant attention from other claimants and the United States. The US defence officials estimated that China has reclaimed just under 12 square km of territory. People's Liberation Army Navy (PLAN) forces were also more active in the Indian Ocean littoral in 2015. Nuclear and conventionally powered submarines engaged in patrols and port visits. Chinese officials were also reportedly seeking to establish China's first overseas military base in Djibouti. A PLAN task force joined Russian units on unprecedented joint naval exercises in the Mediterranean, while a Chinese flotilla entered northern Pacific waters near the Aleutians. In recent years, Beijing has been more active in the South China Sea. There it is involved in disputes with Vietnam, the Philippines, Brunei, and Malaysia over the Spratly and Paracel Islands. In May 2014, China established an oil rig near the Paracels, declared a three-mile exclusion zone around the rig, and started drilling. For example, on the Paracels, China is expanding its runway and refurbishing a harbor on Yongxing Island, while on Spratly, it is building new artificial islands near Fiery Cross Reef, Johnson South Reef and Gaven Reef. Beijing plans to construct air strips for military aircraft and harbors capable of hosting military and fishing vessels. As a major claimant in the Spratly Islands, the Philippines are directly confronted by Chinese pressure in the South China Sea. The Royal Brunei Armed Forces

are an important source of employment in the oil-rich state. The sultanate has long-established defence relations with the United Kingdom (U.K.) and Singapore, and the U.K. and Brunei have renewed for another five years a long-standing agreement to station U.K. troops in the sultanate. Malaysia, another territorial claimant in the SCS, was also increasingly concerned about China's activities there. However, the country's economic slowdown and the government's prioritization of domestic spending continued to restrict efforts to develop the maritime and air capabilities that the armed forces' leadership saw as a necessary response to China. Japan is concerned with the surrounding security environment and continued to move ahead with the defence-policy and legislative reforms to enable it to play a more proactive international security role, as well as to strengthen the U.S.–Japan alliance. Japan's 2015 defence white paper continued to emphasize the risks posed by China and North Korea as the rationale behind building a stronger deterrence posture. The white paper noted China's construction of an offshore gas platform in the East China Sea since 2013 and the increasing number of Japan Air Self-Defense force scrambles to intercept Chinese aircraft around the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands. Overall, it claimed that China was engaged in activities in the South China Sea and East China Sea to alter the status quo by force. The new guidelines stress that bilateral cooperation should now be global and not necessarily geographically restricted to Japan or the surrounding region, as they were in the past.<sup>17</sup> Indonesia's security preoccupations are largely dictated by its position along strategic sea lines of communication. Internal security remains a major concern, but there has been a growing emphasis on regional and maritime security.<sup>18</sup> Pakistan's armed forces have been oriented and structured against a threat from India, but for the army, counter-insurgency and counter-terrorism are currently their main focus. The resulting 20-point National Action Plan was backed by all the major political parties, with the Chief of Army Staff stating that the security forces would apprehend all terrorists, along with their facilitators and financiers. The operation has considerably reduced the level of terrorist and insurgent violence. A spike in cross-border incidents with Indian forces since the summer of 2015 has renewed focus on the eastern border.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Military balance, International Institute for Strategic Studies, London, 2016, pg. 134.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid, pg. 164.

<sup>19</sup> Military balance 2016. op.cit.

## 6. CONCLUSION

China is more frequently presented as a great power, with a historical role in the international arena, given by its size, culture and economy. China's foreign policy could be described as a sum between the "neighbourhood diplomacy" and "great powers diplomacy". In this context, the list of China's goals includes: internal stability, maintained economic growth, deepened reform, and opening to the outside world; enhancement of its soft power, improved relations with its neighbours, energy security, and equilibrated relations with the great powers; rule maker in the global governance institutions and contributor to the global economy. The O.B.O.R. initiative seems appropriate for the present political and economic development of China, together with its considerations regarding the international relations. But this strategy is subject to several risks, such as rivalries with other great powers, tensions with its neighbours, political instability and terrorism corruption, and challenges drifted from its domestic problems. However, until now, China's O.B.O.R. initiative seems better articulated than other similar projects if we consider its soft power and other diplomatic activities, its strategic and management planning and the financial resources.

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