



BRI: Xi Jinping's Path to Complete His Historical Task

R. Tuty Nur Mutia^(✉)

History Department, Faculty Of Humanities, Universitas Indonesia, Depok, Indonesia
tutymuas@ui.ac.id

Abstract. When entering the 21st century, China's spectacular progress, especially in the economic field, has led to the emergence of the opinion that the 21st century is the 'Chinese Century.' Xi Jinping, who started leading the PRC in 2012, seemed to want to emphasize that opinion and started by propagating the 'Chinese Dream.' A year later, Xi floated the idea of revitalizing the Silk Road, which later developed into the Belt-Road Initiative (BRI). BRI is projected to connect China directly to three of the seven continents in the world, in which infrastructure development and trade cooperation are the primary concerns. This article uses a historical approach to discuss how the BRI can be seen as a process of completing Xi Jinping's historical tasks. The review focuses on tracing the sustainability of the PRC leaders' policies and the BRI policy's operational basis. From there, it was revealed that after the PRC succeeded in developing the rhetoric of the presence of the 'Chinese Century,' the BRI, with all its implications, was a process to realize the Chinese dream, formulated in the Liangge Yibai target. The whole process is Xi Jinping's historical task that must be completed.

Keywords: BRI · Xi Jinping · the Chinese dream · liangge yibai

1 Introduction

The President of the People's Republic of China (PRC), Xi Jinping, for the first time, put forward the idea of the 'Silk Road Economic Belt' when he gave a speech at Nazarbayev University Kazakhstan on September 7, 2013. Furthermore, during his visit to Indonesia in October 2013, in his speech at the Indonesian Parliament/DPR RI, President Xi put forward the idea of a '21st Century Maritime Silk Road'. The two concepts were then packaged into the 'one belt one road initiative/*yidai yilu*/一带一路倡议/ One Belt One Road initiative/OBOR' or the 'Belt-Road Initiative/BRI.'

Since its launch, the idea has sparked reactions for and against it. Currently, if we enter the keyword 'China BRI' into the Google search engine, then in a matter of 0.66 s, the number 38,700,000 appears, and if we search via the academia.edu page, the number 56,396 results will appear as research results. These figures can be an initial indication that, within a decade of its implementation, BRI has attracted the attention of almost all people in the world. The Chinese government, to reduce the development of negative interpretations of BRI, in September 2015 issued provisions regarding equivalent words

related to the BRI concept. Especially in terms of the equivalent for the phrase 倡议 (*chàngyi*), which should be translated as ‘initiative’; it should not be translated as ‘strategy, project, program or agenda’ [1]. Grzegorz Stec [2] responded to this by giving the title of his writing, “China’s Belt and Road Initiative is Neither a Strategy Nor a Vision. It is a Process”. Stec’s opinion is in line with Deng Xiaoping’s point of view, which tends to carry out China’s development without a ‘blueprint’ or detailed plan but instead relies on the process. This is reflected, among other things, in Deng’s statement that when carrying out ‘reform-openness/*gaige-Kaifang*/改革开放’ in 1978, what he did was like ‘crossing a river by feeling rocks/*mo shitou guo he*/摸石头过河’ [3]. Immanuel C.Y. Hsu [4] even said that, “... Deng had only a pragmatic instinct... He gradually found a vision of his plans for China’s future”. Based on this and observing China’s development so far, it can be seen that, although China’s growth has relied more on the process, that does not mean that it does not have goals or targets. In Chinese history, it is recorded that ‘Becoming a strong Chinese nation/*qiang Zhongguo*/强中国’ was the main target of the leaders or even the entire Chinese people because that was a dream that had been the determination of the Chinese people since the era of the dynasty [5].

Xi Jinping, when he was elected as General Secretary of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) in 2012, carried the jargon ‘Chinese dream/*Zhongguomeng*/中国梦’ as the slogan of his main program. Through this slogan that continues to be massively propagated, Xi mobilized almost all levels of society to realize the Chinese Dream. Xi formulated the target set out in the Chinese Dream as ‘two 100 years/*liangge yibai*/两个一百’, namely the establishment of a harmonious socialist society on the 100th anniversary of the founding of the CCP, namely in 2021, and the revival of the glory of the Chinese nation/*Zhonghua Weida Fuxing*/中华伟大复兴 on the 100th anniversary of the founding of the PRC, namely in 2049 [6]. In the process of realizing that dream, Xi, a year later, floated the idea of reviving the ‘silk road/*sizhou zhi lu*/丝绸之路’, which was packaged in the belt-road initiative as described above. In historical records, the ‘Silk Road’ is a trade route between China and various world regions that were formed during the era of the Western Han dynasty [7]. This trade route experienced its ups and downs during the Chinese dynasty era, until the Ming dynasty era, it developed rapidly, especially in maritime routes which, among other things, were recorded in the history of Admiral Zheng He’s voyage [7].

Based on the chronology above, the revitalization of the Silk Road, which is packaged in the Belt-Road Initiative, appears as an extensive plan that can be seen to be correlated with Xi Jinping’s desire to realize the Chinese dream. If BRI cannot be seen as a strategy or program and not a project or agenda, what if BRI is seen as a process to realize China’s dream? Stec [2] has emphasized that BRI is an evolutionary process. For example, BRI’s focus has progressed from building infrastructure to incorporating industry, technology, culture, and the environment. Spatially, BRI’s reach has gone from limited to developing countries on the traditional silk road to worldwide, while what remains inherent in BRI is its tendency to change. The basis of Stec’s analysis is limited to the development of these initiatives in the five years (2013–2018). In addition, Stec does not directly link BRI with efforts to realize the China Dream. This article will look at the other side of Stec’s opinion, which is to analyze the issue more broadly within the framework of a

historical approach, that BRI is a historical task that Xi Jinping must complete, namely realizing the Chinese Dream.

The discussion will depart from the word 'process,' defined in KBBi as "a sequence of changes or events in the development of something, or a series of actions, manufacturing, or processing that produces a product." In line with this understanding, history as a science seeks to reconstruct everything that happened in the past; the object of its attention is mainly placed on 'events' that bring significant changes and, of course, the processes attached to them. Based on this framework, BRI is positioned as a series of events/policies that bring changes to something. In this case, what is meant by 'something' is the 'Chinese Dream.' The reconstruction of the sequence of events was carried out using the historical method, which includes four stages: heuristics, verification/criticism, interpretation, and historiography. In the heuristic or data collection stage, Mao Zedong's writings, speeches by Deng Xiaoping and Xi Jinping, and material from the official Chinese government website were used as primary sources. In addition, several secondary sources in the form of books, articles, and newspaper reports are also used as supporting data. The verification phase is carried out very carefully by comparing various sources so that the interpretation can still be based on accountability. At the same time, the historiographical stage is carried out within the framework of descriptive analysis, where the presentation is carried out based on the results of data analysis so that objective conclusions can be drawn. The temporal boundaries included in the study are from the Deng Xiaoping era to the Xi Jinping era. The discussion will begin by explaining how the 'Chinese Dream' can be seen as a historical task for Chinese leaders, followed by a sequence of policies and achievements by Chinese leaders in fulfilling their historical task, and to what extent BRI can be seen as a process of completing Xi Jinping's historical task.

2 The Chinese Dream and Historical Task of China's Leaders

Euphoria about the 'Chinese Dream' swept over China and even the world after Xi Jinping as the leader of the CCP in his speech at the "Road of China Revitalization" exhibition in Beijing in 2012, expressed his opinion as follows:

“每个人都有理想和追求，都有自己的梦想。现在，大家都在讨论中国梦，我以为，实现中华民族伟大复兴，就是中华民族近代以来最伟大的梦想。这个梦想，凝聚了几代中国人的夙愿，体现了中华民族和中国人民的整体利益，是每一个中华儿女的共同期盼。历史告诉我们，每个人的前途命运都与国家和民族的前途命运紧密相连。”^[8]

“Everyone has goals and efforts to achieve them; everyone has personal dreams. Now, all of society is talking about the China dream. I believe realizing the revival of the Chinese nation's glory is the Chinese government's most crucial dream today. This dream, encompassing the aspirations of generations of Chinese people, reflects the overall well-being of the Chinese people and ethnic groups and is the common hope of every son and daughter of the Chinese nation. History tells us that the future fate of every person is closely related to the future destiny of the country and state.”

From the excerpt of the speech above, it can be seen that Xi has shown that the main dream of the Chinese nation at that time was to realize the rise of the glory of the Chinese government. The 'revival of China's glory' is a sensitive issue that has always united all

components of Chinese peoples. This is closely related to a bitter historical experience, namely when foreign powers ravaged China's glory at the end of the nineteenth century, so China was divided into concession areas. Mao Zedong describes the state of China after the various wars against foreign nations as follows,

“...帝国主义列强强迫中国订立了许多不平等条约, 根据这些不平等条约, 取得了在中国驻扎海军和陆军的权利, 取得了领事裁判, 并把全中国福分为几个帝国主义国家的势力范围” (Mao, 1939/1960: 622)

“...the imperialist powers have forced China to sign various unequal agreements, based on these agreements, (they) have obtained the right to station land and sea forces in China, the right to make decisions, even dividing all of China into spheres of influence (concessions) imperialist countries”.

The experience of being colonized by more than one country at the end of the Qing dynasty made the Chinese feel very humiliated. The desire to rise and regain its honor in international relations has made Chinese nationalism more prominent. This bitter historical record has created ‘historical outrage’ in the heart of the entire Chinese nation. It has fostered a determination to strengthen itself, restore glory, and even rule the world [3]. This determination was then formulated as *qianguomeng*/强国梦 or ‘dream (of becoming) a strong country.’

Based on the views above, it is certainly understandable that every leader of the People's Republic of China must also be bound by this dream and make this dream a historical task that must be completed. The slogans propagated by PRC leaders in their respective eras reflect the efforts that have been or will be made in fulfilling this historical task, namely realizing the Chinese Dream. Thus every PRC leader carries a historical task to realize the Chinese Dream. Still, each has a different dream formulation and implementation, depending on the challenges of the times and the leader's own experiences [9]. The following discussion will describe a series of policies Chinese leaders took to fulfill their historical tasks: realizing the Chinese Dream from Deng Xiaoping to Xi Jinping.

3 Ongoing Historical Tasks

Currently, China is known as a country with spectacular progress, especially in the economic field, so its existence and role in international relations are getting more prominent and recognized. Looking deeper, of course, no one can deny that the success of China's current development cannot be separated from Deng Xiaoping's persistence in carrying out the four modernization programs/*sige xiantaihua*/四个现代化. The four modernization programs are a development program inherited by Zhou Enlai. Deng Xiaoping then outlined the program in the *gaige-kaiifang* policy proclaimed in 1978. The *gaige-kaiifang* policy that focuses on economic development efforts has made the business world the main hope of the Chinese people. Huang Dagen described the situation at that time in these words,

“中国自1978年起实施四个现代化措施, 接着 又开始采取改革开放 的政策。邀请外资流入 并鼓励联合投资。在社会上成一般企业主义浪潮, 中国年轻一代及知识阶层已有了新认识。加上经济持续开放, 似乎显示出这个亚洲巨人正面临着缓慢 而深刻的转型, 它 正重新燃起外国人涉足 这个全球最大的潜在市场的希望之火”[10]

“Since 1978, China has implemented various facilities related to the four modernizations. Subsequently, it has implemented a *gaige-kaifang* policy, inviting foreign investment and encouraging investment cooperation. In society, there has been a general tendency towards corporate thinking. Among China's younger generations and intellectuals, a new understanding has emerged. Coupled with continued economic liberation, it appears that the Asian giants are facing a slow but profound transformation. He is rekindling the fire of hope from foreign involvement in the big world's t and most potential markets in the world”

The description of the trend of Chinese society revealed above is in line with various Chinese government policies, which make the level of productivity one of the references, as shown in the following excerpt from Deng Xiaoping's statement,

“...我们的生产力发展水平很低, 远远不能满足人民和国家的需要。这就是我们的目前时期的主要矛盾, 解决这个主要矛盾 就是我们的中心任务” (Deng, 1990)

“... The level of our productive forces is shallow; for a long time, it has not been able to meet the needs of the country and the people. This is the main contradiction that we are facing today, overcoming this main contradiction is our main task.”

The pressure on productivity was later manifested in the movement of ‘down to the ocean/*xiahai*/下海,’ which allowed the Chinese people to develop private businesses [11]. This movement received a strong impetus because, at the same time, China was implementing a market economy system. The target set by Deng Xiaoping for the *gaige-kaifang* policy was to increase per capita income to US\$1,000 at the end of the 20th century, and the rise of China so that it became a respected nation in the world [12]. Although since 1980, Deng Xiaoping officially only served as Chairman of the Central Military Committee, while Zhao Ziyang has held the Prime Minister and Hu Yaobang held the General Secretary of the Chinese Communist Party, Deng Xiaoping's role in controlling the implementation of China's reform program is undeniable. Therefore, the target set above can be designated as Deng's interpretation of the Chinese Dream and realizing it is the historical task he must carry out.

The primary efforts to achieve this target are by radically carrying out regulations in the economic sector and inviting foreign investment. The most formidable challenge in achieving this target is changing the perspective and mindset of the people who were previously accustomed to living with an allotment system, which gave almost no opportunity for competition. On the other hand, being a trader is traditionally not a desired profession. This is related to the Confucian view that considers traders the lowest class of society. All these challenges slowly but surely were overcome by the Chinese nation, and they succeeded in increasing productivity and cultivating the entrepreneurial spirit of the Chinese people, as described by Huang Dagen above. This success is getting stronger, partly due to the efforts of Deng Xiaoping's successor, Jiang Zemin, to continue increasing society's production power. Jiang then formulated the concept of the ‘Three Representatives’ or *sange daibiao*/三个代表 as an umbrella for increasing the productivity of Chinese society.

Jiang Zemin rose to the top of the party and state leadership when the PRC faced a crisis due to the 1989 Tiananmen incident. He was appointed General Secretary of the Chinese Communist Party to replace Zhao Ziyang, then in 1993 became President until 2003. During his 14 years of leadership, Jiang succeeded in restoring China's economy

and international position. It was also during his era that Hong Kong and Macao returned to the PRC's lap and implemented the 'one country, two systems' policy/*yiguo liangzhi* 一国两制 so that the two regions could still run their market-based economies. From the data above, it can be seen that Jiang is well aware of the historical task he is carrying out, namely, overcoming various post-Tiananmen crises, mainly so that the *gaige-kaifang* program continues and the world's trust in China recovers.

The concept of the Three Representatives developed to emphasize that, in the development of Chinese society at that time, the CCP must be able to represent the three developments of society, namely, progressive social production forces, advanced Chinese culture, and the fundamental interests of the majority. In practice, this concept has become the basis for recognizing merchants (business people) as a productive force which is the central pillar of China's economic progress. This concept has changed the perspective of the trading profession, which was previously considered lowly to be as respectable as the profession of farmer, craftsman, and laborer. This has caused the business world to develop rapidly, from retail to multi-national businesses. At the macro level, the PRC's economy has increased its growth rate by an average of 10%.

Jiang Zemin did his historical task well. He changed China's economy, devastated by the 1989 Tiananmen incident, to become one of the wealthiest countries in the world in the early 2000s. In 2002 Hu Jintao was elected to replace Jiang as Secretary of the CCP and later became President of the PRC in 2003. In carrying out his historical duties, Hu came up with a slogan based on Chinese culture, especially Confucianism, namely 'rise in peace/*heping jueqi* 和平崛起' to build harmonious society/*jianzhi hexie shehui* 建制和谐社会.' It should be noted that achieving a 'society of peace and harmony' was a basic tenet of Confucius in managing the country.

Hu Jintao offers development to achieve a peaceful and harmonious society in the world, one of which is an antithesis to the issue of the 'Chinese threat' that has arisen in line with the PRC's economic rise. Beijing often maintains that "China is a moral force that opposes hegemony." On the other hand, the offer is also aimed at reducing domestic turmoil related to the emergence of various disparities. The drastic transition to a market economy has led to the emergence of winners and losers, causing a vast gap between urban-rural, rich-poor, and others. The Confucian-based rhetoric of a 'harmonious society' is a government policy to rebalance China's polarization of economic and social development [13].

The implementation of Hu Jintao's policies was later recognized as an attempt to use 'soft power,' which, in this case, relied on Chinese culture to spread influence worldwide. One of the institutions spearheading it is the 'Confucius Institute,' established in 2004 in various countries worldwide. The scope of its activities includes developing the teaching of the Chinese language, history, and culture. Utilizing culture as a soft power has two sides of the benefit; namely, internally, it can be part of 'nation building.' This means that spreading and recognizing Chinese culture worldwide will create pride in every citizen, strengthening their self-confidence and nationalism. Meanwhile, externally it can drive public diplomacy, reduce the stigma of 'threats,' improve the PRC's image and reputation, and provide alternatives to solving problems between nations worldwide. The PRC's increasingly prominent global economic and political role at the beginning of the 21st century made observers begin to express the view that the 21st century is the

century of China [14]. This view can also indicate Hu Jintao's success in his historical task.

At a time when the PRC's position is increasingly fluttering in the world, Xi Jinping rose to the top of China's leadership in 2013. However, on the other hand, China's economic growth rate began to experience a slowdown, especially related to the global financial crisis in 2009. China's economy experienced fluctuations; its economic growth fell to only 3% [15]. The internal and external developments faced by the PRC at that time prompted Xi to find ways for a successful PRC to continue to survive and develop. Xi must be able to revive the enthusiasm of the Chinese people and economy. Xi then propagated the slogan 'The Chinese Dream' and called on all Chinese people to achieve this dream. The saying 'The Chinese Dream' and the rhetoric of the 'Century of China' reminded the Chinese people of the 'dream of a strong China' that had been ingrained since the dynastic era. There has to be a bright idea to make both things happen; that's where the 'Belt-Road Initiative' finds its place. BRI is projected as a path for a series of changes that will connect China directly with at least three of the seven continents in the world. This is the historical task that Xi Jinping must complete.

4 Bri as Xi Jinping's Path to Complete his Historical Task

The Government of the PRC has determined that BRI is not seen as a 'strategy, project, program or agenda' but rather as an 'initiative/initiative,' as stated in the PKT decision stipulated at the 2013 PKT Central Committee Session. Viewing BRI as an 'initiative' causes it to become very flexible and can always be adapted to developments or Chinese needs [2]. On the other hand, according to Xie Tao, the word "initiative" implies a call to action and to work together for the common good. At the same time, the term "strategy" is usually an action plan to achieve specific goals that are exclusive to rules and procedures that are explicitly defined [16]. Referring to the considerations above, it can be seen that the equivalent word that has been determined already shows that BRI is a strategic policy that must be guaranteed its sustainability and success. As a historical task for Xi Jinping, the benchmark for BRI's success is, of course, the realization of the Chinese Dream as formulated by Xi Jinping himself, namely the formation of a harmonious socialist society and the revival of the glory of the Chinese nation.

Since its inception in 2013, BRI has been an ongoing initiative to realize the Chinese dream. Observation of the 'process' is carried out through a sequence of changes in BRI's implementation over the past ten years. Budi Winarno, in his book "Public Policy: Theory and Process" [17], reveals several formulations of 'policy' put forward by public policy experts. One of them was formulated by Thomas R. Dye (1992) that "policy is something that should and should not be done by the government/state." The policy process includes the stages of 1) identifying policy problems, 2) formulating an agenda, 3) formulating policy, 4) policy legitimacy, 5) policy implementation, and 6) policy evaluation [17]. Based on these stages, the following is a sequence of changes covering BRI implementation.

The stages of identifying policy issues and formulating agendas are closely related to Xi Jinping's efforts to anticipate internal and external developments surrounding the PRC at the beginning of his leadership. The Belt-Road Initiative aimed at creating

regional infrastructure connectivity [16] became part of Xi Jinping's foreign policy; it significantly focused on PRC diplomacy in 2014–2015. This cannot be separated from China's efforts to develop domestic economic reforms and encourage the development of the western region of the PRC [18]. Therefore, BRI is also known as China's economic diplomacy through infrastructure development and trade. Then, in the development of its implementation, BRI is also associated with several conditions surrounding China, including China's competition with the United States (US) and Russia in influencing the Eurasian region, the need to rebalance economic growth, and the need for adjustments in China's periphery diplomacy. Specifically, Joel Wuthnow [19] formulates that the main benefits of the implementation of BRI for China are to increase regional stability, secure China's energy supply, and increase China's influence in Eurasia.

The series of changes in the policy formulation stage up to the ratification of BRI can be traced from the fact that since the beginning, BRI implementation was projected in two schemes, namely the 'Silk Road Economic Belt/SREB' and the '21st-century maritime silk road'. The two schemes were not disclosed by President Xi Jinping simultaneously; each was conveyed at a different place and time. SREB was delivered in Kazakhstan on September 7, 2013, while the 21st-century maritime silk route was delivered in Indonesia on October 3, 2013. Even in his speeches at each of these places, Xi offered different cooperation targets. In his speech in Kazakhstan, among other things, Xi said,

"...we can innovate the mode of cooperation and jointly build the "Silk Road Economic Belt" step by step to gradually form overall regional cooperation. First, to strengthen policy communication...Second, to improve road connectivity...Third, to promote trade facilitation... Fourth, to enhance monetary circulation... Fifth, to strengthen people-to-people exchanges." [20]

Meanwhile, in his speech in Indonesia, among others, Xi stated,

"...we should focus our efforts in the following areas: First, build trust and develop good-neighborliness ... Second, work for win-win cooperation... China will strengthen maritime cooperation with ASEAN countries to make good use of the China-ASEAN Maritime Cooperation Fund set up by the Chinese government and vigorously develop maritime partnership in a joint effort to build the Maritime Silk Road of the 21st century... Third, stand together and assist each other... Fourth, enhance mutual understanding and friendship... Fifth, stick to openness and inclusiveness." [21]

The different offers are, of course, closely related to the historical background of the relationship and other interests. Since the dissolution of the Soviet Union (USSR) in 1991, the PRC, which at that time had to rise from its downturn due to the 1989 Tiananmen incident, has continued to strive for more intensive cooperation with various countries in Central Asia which were a fraction of the Soviet Union. These efforts, among others, began with the formation of the 'Shanghai Five group in 1996, which later developed into the 'Shanghai Cooperation Organization' (SCO) in 2001.

The countries that are members of the SCO are China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan. Although many people see the SCO as part of efforts to control US dominance in Central Asia, China and SCO members are more focused on stabilizing their respective governments. For China, stability in the region is essential to reduce separatist movements, especially among the Uighur tribe in Xinjiang [22]. Apart from that, Central Asia is also one of the PRC's oil and gas supply lines, channeled

through pipelines built from Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan. Efforts to connect China with Central Asia are not new; Xi Jinping is only continuing what he started 25 years ago [19]. Based on these conditions, it is understandable that the target of cooperation offered by China through SREB is more directed at strengthening economic, social and political “connectedness.”

Meanwhile, ‘building trust and good neighborhood’ is the first item of cooperation targets offered by China to Indonesia in particular or ASEAN in general through the 21st century maritime Silk Road and followed by the goal of win-win cooperation, mutual assistance, promoting mutual understanding and friendship, and adhering to openness and inclusivity. The choice of these targets clearly shows that the PRC understands the concerns of Indonesia and other ASEAN members. Countries in the Southeast Asian region tend to be still influenced by the perception of the ‘China threat.’ The perception of this ‘threat’ stems from communist hegemonism and the past use of the Huaqiao (Chinese decent) by the PRC government, which often harmed Southeast Asian countries [5]. The maritime route that the PRC wants to build can only be realized if the countries through which it passes have confidence in the good intentions of the PRC and the benefits they will get from the BRI implementation.

The two schemes later became part of the “Decisions of the 3rd Plenary Session of the PKT Central Committee on key issues related to the comprehensive expansion of reforms,” dated November 12, 2013. This was a process of legitimizing the implementation of BRI as a strategic policy for the PRC government [16]. Furthermore, in the 2013–2015 period, the PRC government made various efforts so that BRI implementation could run smoothly. Steps taken include agreeing with ASEAN to strengthen maritime cooperation with Russia on constructing the Eurasian railroad, forming the Asia Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB), and holding several multilateral conferences to socialize BRI implementation. Meanwhile, the BRI Executive Leadership Group, led by Zhang Gaoli, the Deputy Prime Minister of the People’s Republic of China, was only formed in early 2015. Then, on March 28, 2015, BRI’s ‘Vision and Action’ was announced, which was coordinated by three Chinese government agencies, namely, the National Reform and Development Commission (NRDC), the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the Ministry of Trade. In the opening words of BRI’s ‘vision and action’ document, among other things, it is written,

“The Belt and Road Initiative is a systematic project, which should be jointly built through consultation to meet the interests of all, and efforts should be made to integrate the development strategies of the countries along the Belt and Road. The Chinese government has drafted and published the Vision and Actions on Jointly Building Silk Road Economic Belt and 21st-Century Maritime Silk Road to promote the implementation of the Initiative, instill vigor and vitality into the ancient Silk Road, connect Asian, European and African countries more closely and promote mutually beneficial cooperation to a new high and in new forms.” [22]

The quote above confirms that the implementation of BRI is directed at fulfilling the interests of all the countries involved in it, integrating the development strategies of countries on the BRI path, and connecting Asia, Europe, and Africa in mutually beneficial cooperation. Even so, the implementation of BRI policies is still not easy; not all countries immediately welcome this initiative. As mentioned above, countries in

Central Asia tend to admit it, but some ASEAN countries need extra efforts from the PRC to convince them. Meanwhile, with India, the PRC needs to change its approach from ‘inviting’ to offering ‘connection and coordination.’ On the other hand, the PRC must also be able to dispel the notion that BRI is part of China’s ambitions to dominate Asia. Even though BRI’s pressure is on economic cooperation, the PRC must also anticipate the accompanying socio-political consequences [16].

In its implementation, BRI also goes through the stages of the evaluation policy process, which are carried out on an ongoing basis. Several adjustments and changes will still be and must be made by China in line with various developments and challenges faced in implementing BRI. On the other hand, even though BRI tends to be presented as an effort to connect nations and countries between continents, the dominance of PRC interests in it cannot be denied. This is in line with what Zhang Yungling has said that,

“It is clear that BRI will help improve China’s geographical environment — especially in the west — and open new space for economic development. It is also clear that BRI is not a counter-strategy to the American “pivot to Asia,” rather it is an initiative rooted in China’s own needs.” [23]

Zhang’s statement emphasizing China’s interest in implementing BRI further assures that the PRC, especially Xi Jinping, will make every effort so that BRI will succeed and its targets embodied in the Chinese Dream can be achieved. Thus BRI will continue the process, namely the process of realizing the Chinese Dream, which is a historical task that Xi Jinping must complete.

5 Conclusion

What is President Xi Jinping’s wish? The answer was only one sentence: “Make China great again” [24]. Those are the opening words of Chapter VI in the book *Destined For War* by Graham Allison. The formulation of Xi Jinping’s wishes may look simple but contains deep meaning. This is closely related to the existence of ‘historical outrage’ in the heart of the entire Chinese nation due to colonialism by several countries at the end of the XIX century. The ‘humiliated’ China must rise and show its glory worldwide. That is the ‘Chinese dream’ Xi Jinping later formulated in 2012 as ‘reaching two 100 years.’ The first 100 years are the 100 years of the CCP in 2021, where the Chinese nation has become a harmonious socialist society with a per capita income of around USD 10,000. The second 100 years is when the PRC is 100 years old, namely in 2049, when it is hoped that victorious China, namely a modern, advanced, prosperous, and assertive China, is expected to have fully achieved [24]. Through the jargon of the Chinese Dream, propagated massively, Xi awakened the ‘pride of being the Chinese nation’ who had a dream of being victorious again. The rhetoric of ‘China as an alternative future world’ is growing in various walks of life worldwide. Discussions entitled “China model,” “China Megatrends,” “China Schools,” and others are scattered in multiple media with various arguments [13]. Amid this euphoria, Xi 2013 launched the Belt-Road Initiative, also known as One Belt One Road (OBOR), which will revitalize and develop the trade network on the Silk Road which was glorious in the past. It is through the implementation of the BRI that Xi wants to complete his historical task.

BRI implementation is directed at building connectivity and cooperation among the nations of Asia, Europe, and Africa. Physically this will be realized through infrastructure development on land (Silk Road Economic Belt/SREB) and at sea (21st Century Maritime Silk Road); on the other hand, connectivity, and cooperation will also be realized in the social, political, and cultural fields. Until 2022 Chinese investment through BRI in infrastructure projects around the world has reached USD 1 trillion. The participants involved got 147–150 countries and 32 international organizations. In fact, despite the Covid-19 Pandemic, several projects under the BRI scheme are still running, especially in Southeast Asia. BRI has also succeeded in reducing poverty and increasing poverty alleviation performance in several participating countries [25]. BRI's very significant achievements were also followed by several problems that were quite troubling. Chanrith Ngin [26], in his research results, among other things, reveals that controversy and economic vulnerability in BRI participating countries continue to occur, such as the loss of livelihoods of residents, land grabbing, and deforestation, which are significant adverse impacts. Besides that, there is also economic instability; several countries with debts to China are getting bigger and are likely to fall into a 'debt trap.' From 2013–2020 there were 700 incidents of human rights violations by more than 10,000 Chinese companies involved in BRI scheme projects; a third of these violations occurred in Southeast Asia, particularly in Myanmar, Laos, Cambodia, and Indonesia.

The description above shows that BRI is an extraordinary effort to unite the world; the pros and cons, positive and negative impacts, are usual consequences as long as each participant can control it so that it does not become a disaster. The increasing number of participants (countries and organizations) and the broader reach of the BRI implementation area align with Xi Jinping's desire to revive China's glory. BRI is not an initiative offered in a fully intact state. Xi Jinping introduced BRI in stages; at least it took 2–3 years to formulate it into a 'vision and action' script and gain legitimacy as a state policy. The implementation was not easy either; all went through a series of developments full of adjustments, in which the interests of the PRC became one of the primary considerations. This is proof that BRI is a process that cannot be separated from the policy sequence of PRC leaders before Xi Jinping and cannot be separated from the line of internal and external developments surrounding it. BRI realizes the Chinese dream, which is Xi Jinping's historical task. When BRI is successful, according to Francis Fukuyama [27],

"..., the whole of Eurasia, from Indonesia to Poland will be transformed in the coming generation. China's model will blossom outside of China, raising incomes and thus demand for Chinese products to replace stagnating markets in other parts of the world. Polluting industries, too, will be offloaded to other parts of the world. Rather than being at the periphery of the global economy, Central Asia will be at its core. And China's form of authoritarian government will gain immense prestige, implying a large negative effect on democracy worldwide."

As Fukuyama has written, every policy has good and bad effects. Like it or not, all must be prepared for this possibility and immediately do something to anticipate unwanted options. As a historical task that Xi Jinping must complete, BRI is still in the process of realizing the Chinese Dream to completion. The world's nations can play a role in it, directing it into the process of discovering the 'world dream.' If so, BRI

can also be seen as a historical task for leaders and various nations, namely, creating a prosperous and peaceful world.

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