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	<p align="center">Title of research article</p> <p align="center"><b>The reality of the Sino- Algerian partnership within the framework of the Belt and Road initiative: Gains and challenges.</b></p>
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<p><b>Keywords</b></p>	<p>Algeria, China, partnership, The Belt and Road Initiative, gains and challenges.</p>
<p><b>Abstract</b></p> <p>The article discusses the impact of Algeria's accession to the Belt and Road Initiative on the Sino-Algerian partnership, after learning about the nature and level of relations between the two countries, as well as of this Chinese initiative, which expresses China's future strategic vision to enhance its international standing.</p> <p>We eventually learned through it that the Sino-Algerian partnership has entered a new stage of development since Algeria joined the Belt and Road Initiative in 2019, which will work to strengthen the bonds of partnership between them and open broad horizons for both parties. China seeks through it to strengthen its influence in Algeria, and to benefit from its resources and all its geostrategic assets, while Algeria aims to achieve significant economic growth rates and breaks free from economic dependence on hydrocarbons and the West.</p>	
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## 1. Introduction

The field of international relations has witnessed a significant transformation since the post-Cold War era, both at the theoretical level and in the nature of international relations. This shift laid the foundation for intellectual approaches aligned with the new balance of power, marking a transition from a focus on hard power to a new concept emphasizing the importance of soft power in international relations, ultimately leading to the notion of smart power.

This theoretical development was accompanied with another development on the level of the international dynamics marked by the rise of new international powers influencing the international system among which China is the most significant and most important, because of what it possesses of tremendous potentials, civilizational, cultural, military, strategic, and especially being considered as a huge economic power, with its highest economic growth rates in the world. These potentials have enabled China to actively open up to various regions of the world.

through the implementation of large-scale projects aimed at achieving both economic and political gains. These efforts support its ambitions to secure its status as a major, globally responsible power, thereby protecting its interests and preserving its freedom of action in international affairs. One of the most prominent and significant projects for China is "the Belt and Road" Initiative, through which it seeks to strengthen its influence and expand its global trade. This initiative is particularly important as it connects three continents—Asia, Europe, and Africa—inevitably leading to fundamental changes in the course of global trade.

Despite not being located on the historical Silk Road between China and Europe, Algeria represents a pivotal point in "the Belt and Road" Initiative due to its position as a connecting hub between Europe and Africa, as well as its possession of numerous elements and factors of strength. Additionally, there are strong historical ties between the two parties. With Algeria officially joining the Belt and Road Initiative in 2019, its partnership with Beijing entered a new phase by agreeing on carrying out a significant number of projects and put into action many Chinese companies, the project of building the biggest port in Africa and in the Mediterranean basin is considered as one of those most prominent projects.

Herein lies the importance of the study which revolves around trying to understand the foundations and the objectives of the Chinese new strategy through "the Belt and Road" Initiative while highlighting the position of Algeria within it, and assessing the extent to which this initiative contributes to strengthening the Chinese-Algerian partnership.

Based on this we pose our research problem as follows:

To what extent does the Belt and Road Initiative contribute to supporting the Chinese-Algerian partnership?

To thoroughly address this central question, it is necessary to formulate the following sub-questions:

- What is the reality of Chinese-Algerian relations?
- What are the objectives of the Chinese Belt and Road Initiative?
- What is Algeria's position within the Chinese strategic perspective?
- What are the most significant gains of both parties from the Initiative? And what are the main challenges they face in achieving it?

To answer this research problem as well as the sub-questions we propose the following hypothesis:

The more the partnership between China and Algeria is built on mutual gains within the framework of the Belt and Road Initiative, and the more the various challenges they face are overcome, the more successful and strengthened their partnership becomes.

To address this topic, the descriptive-analytical approach has been employed in order to examine the current state of the Chinese-Algerian partnership under the Belt and Road Initiative and assess its contribution to achieving Algeria's strategic objectives. This has been done by exploring and de-constructing the various concepts and variables of the study, interpreting their significance, and establishing connections between them to arrive at answers to our research questions. Our study is also based on the historical approach for a deeper and more accurate understanding of the subject, so we studied and analyzed the historical relationships between China and Algeria and its impact on the current state of bilateral relations.

The plan of the study has been divided into three main sections, the first section is about the nature and level of the Sino-Algerian relations, the second section discusses the contents of the Chinese Belt and Road Initiative of the twenty first century, then section three which is devoted to study the extent of the Belt and Road Initiative contribution to a new entry for strengthening the Sino-Algerian partnership.

### **First: The Nature and Level of the Sino-Algerian Relationship**

Algeria is one of the most important countries within China's foreign strategy, given the significant growth in Sino-Algerian bilateral relations. These relations are part of the broader development of China's trade and economic ties with the African continent. This growth can be attributed, on one hand, to China's economic development, characterized by rising growth rates, an increased need for raw materials, and the demand for external markets and profitable investment regions. On the other hand, it is also a result of the opening up of Algeria's economy and the trade diversification strategy adopted by the Algerian government. All of this has led to the establishment of strong relations between the two countries.

The Sino-Algerian relations are considered as one of the strongest interactive relations in the international environment thanks to the common historical ties, among which is the mutual support of each other's causes, notably through their historical support for liberation movements, and their unconditional mutual alignment on various political and economic issues whether nationally or internationally.<sup>1</sup>

The relations between China and Algeria have passed through numerous main transformations over the past half century. These shifts have been shaped by factors related to China's strategic outlook, internal dynamics within Algeria, and broader changes in the international landscape. It can be said that this relationship has passed through three main phases, shifted between the intense mutual interest mainly on China's side during the 1960's and 1970's when Algeria was viewed as a region of strategic interest (the era of Maoist China), then the phase of Perceived neglect from the late 1970's until the early 1990s (China's reform period after 1978 under Deng Xiaoping's rule), finally China renewed interest to Africa in general and to Algeria in particular (China's growing role period in the world and Africa) beginning in the late 20th century till the present day.

**The First Phase:** The establishment of the People's Republic of China by Mao Zedong in October 1949 coincided with the launch of Algeria's liberation revolution against French colonialism. The historical support that China committed to the Algerian liberation movement is considered the foundational pillar that laid the groundwork for the current state of Sino-Algerian relations. China was the first non-Arab country that admit "the Provisional Government of the Algerian Republic" early in December 1958, then established diplomatic relationships in the same month, in addition to China's full support for the independence of Algeria in 1962.<sup>2</sup>

Therefore, the nature of interest during this phase was primarily political ideological, since China was supporting the discourse that characterized the Third World "South- South" established over the past, by a call to collective struggle against all forms of imperialism, what led to a tremendous consensus on positions between China and Algeria regarding several issues most importantly "supporting liberation movements", in addition to the positive position of Algeria towards China regarding Taiwan's independence and China's restoration of its permanent seat at the United Nations Security Council in 1971.<sup>3</sup>

**The Second Phase:** Since the death of Mao Zedong in 1976 until the early 90's, China concentrated on implementing a broad internal reform process mainly in the economic field under the rule of "Deng Xiaoping" what affected its foreign policy, China distanced itself from its third world traditional allies, gradually reduced its foreign aid and adopting a more subdued stance in opposing the "irrational international system" dominated by the West, this position was reflected in China's relationship with African countries, including Algeria, where there was a significant decline in China's diplomatic, economic, and trade activities in the region.

**The Third Phase:** however, since the end of the Cold War, a new phase emerged, China renewed and intensified its interest in Algeria, this return was affected by the changes of the international environment on one hand, and by the pressing priorities of the Chinese strategy on the other hand, particularly after pursuing economic reforms and the tremendous growth after following a more liberalized economy governed by market logic, the Sino- Algerian relations transformed from being " ideological commitment" to be economic " pragmatic" relations built on mutual interest and independence,<sup>4</sup> This shift was further solidified with the launch of the Forum on Chinese-African Cooperation (FOCAC) in October 2000, which became an effective mechanism for dialogue and cooperation between the two sides,<sup>5</sup> as well as the establishment of the China-Arab States Cooperation Forum in September 2004 as an institutional framework for Sino-Arab relations. Additionally, China adopted a firm stance against internationalizing the crisis of deteriorating security conditions in Algeria during the "Black Decade" affirming its commitment to non-interference in Algeria's internal affairs and its full respect for Algerian absolute

<sup>1</sup> - Hanina Rajouh and Atiqa Kouachi, "The Sino- Algerian Partnership in Light of the Belt and Road Initiative: Gains and Risks," Journal of World Politics, Algeria: Political and International Studies Laboratory, Volume 06, Issue 01, 2022, p 215.

<sup>2</sup> - Khoueildat Saleh et al, "The Belt and Road Initiative: Sino-Algerian Strategic Relations in Times of Pandemics", *Al- Ijtihad Journal for Legal and Economic Studies*, Algeria: University Center of Tamamrasset, Volume 10, Issue 03, 2021, p 1056.

<sup>3</sup> - Ahmed Hadjadj, "International Competition over Africa: China Rediscovered Africa," International Politics, Cairo: Al-Ahram Center for Strategic Studies and Research, Volume 42, Issue 163, January 2006, p138.

<sup>4</sup> - George Tharwat Fahmy, "the Sino-African relations: an economic partnership without political conditionality", Political International, Cairo: Al-Ahram Center for Strategic Studies and Research, Volume 43, Number 167, January 2007, p 89.

<sup>5</sup> - L'hassan Al-Hasnawi, "International Competition in Africa: Goals and Means," Arab Journal of Political Sciences, Beirut: Center for Arab Unity Studies, Issue 29, Winter 2011, p 107.

sovereignty Besides, while Europeans hesitated to invest in Algeria during this decade because of the security situation, the Chinese inflows have reached its peak, with investments reaching around 800 million dollars.<sup>1</sup>

Accordingly, trade between the two countries have known a huge expansion within the beginning of the year 2000, mainly by granting the Chinese companies contracts to execute work projects of large- scale, and which witnessed a noticeable acceleration until the present time, as the bilateral trade relations growing steadily from 191 million dollars in 2000 to 1.75 billion dollars in 2005, reaching 2 billion dollars in 2006.

The 2014 was a watershed year, as the Sino-Algerian relations were elevated to the level of a strategic partnership in fields like economics, military, technology, politics, culture...etc, as both parties signed an agreement framing that on May 25th, 2014, as a consequence, the Chinese investors became the most active in Algeria, in many sectors like public works, construction, communication, industry, energy and mining,<sup>2</sup> among others The trade volume between the two countries has significantly increased to reach 9 billion dollars in 2018, and so to become at the top of Algeria's suppliers list, and displacing the dominance of the traditional Western partners particularly France,<sup>3</sup> as a result, China became Algeria's first trade partner.

In the Political sphere, the big consensus about the political issues and the clear harmony in the diplomatic positions always existed for both countries, besides the strategic relations were never limited to the political and economic levels, but expanded to other sectors including medical domain by sending Chinese medical missions and equipment to Algeria, in addition to tourism and cultural domains, as well as the military section by importing several weapons and military equipment, the partnership also included the space sector exemplified by the launch of Algeria's first communications satellite designed for telecommunications and internet services from a Chinese launch base.<sup>4</sup>

To underscore the depth of their rapprochement, Algeria and China signed a Memorandum of Understanding on September 4, 2018, concerning cooperation in the building and implementation of the Belt and Road Initiative, during the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation Summit held in Beijing. The memorandum was officially ratified on June 6, 2019, marking Algeria's formal accession to the Silk Road Economic Belt and the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Maritime Silk Road.<sup>5</sup> From that point on, Sino-Algerian relations took an upward trajectory, evolving into a strategic alliance within the framework of a vast global initiative. This development raises important questions regarding Algeria's position within the project, and whether it will indeed contribute to strengthening and deepening the Sino-Algerian partnership.

## **Second: Contents of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Chinese Belt and Road Initiative:**

This section contains a detailed overview of the Belt and Road Initiative proposed and implemented by China since 2013, by examining the background that led to the establishment of this Initiative in order to revive the ancient Silk Road but with new objectives.

### **2. 1. An Ancient Initiative with New Perspective: The Ancient Silk Road/ and The New One**

The Belt and Road Initiative is considered the greatest project in the human history, as it is the primary driver of China's domestic policy and a cornerstone of its foreign diplomacy, it aims to rise high the banner of peaceful development on the basis of the ancient Silk Road history back to 2000 years ago,<sup>6</sup> which is a naming for a couple of land and maritime roads connected to each other as ships and caravans traversed linking China and Europe mainly for the Chinese silk but also perfumes, incense and spices trade It stretches over approximately 12,000 kilometers, extending from the commercial hubs in northern China then splits into two routes, the northern route which traverse Eastern Europe, the Black Sea, and the Crimean Peninsula all the way to Venice, then the Southern

<sup>1</sup> - Mohammad Hamshi and Samia Rabiei, "Sixty Years of Sino-Algerian Relations," Scientific Journal of Sino-Egyptian Research, Helwan University: Center for Chinese-Egyptian Research and Studies, Volume 02, Issue 01, January 2013, pp 71-72-87.

<sup>2</sup> - Ibid, p. 88.

<sup>3</sup> - The Algerian National Agency for the Development of Investment, "Foreign Trade Statistics in Algeria," on: <http://www.andi.dz/index.php/ar/statistique/bilan-du-commerce-exterieur>

<sup>4</sup> - Ben Djeddou Mohamed Al-Sharif, "The New Silk Road and Algeria's Accession to the Initiative," Al-Asala Journal for Studies and Research, Volume 01, Issue 02, 2019, p. 24.

<sup>5</sup> - Abdelrazak Benabdellah, "Algeria joins China's Silk Road Initiative", on: [www.aa.com.tr](http://www.aa.com.tr)

<sup>6</sup> - Lamia Makhouloufi, "China's New Belt and Road Strategy and Africa," Madarat Siyassiya Magazine (Political Horizon Magazine), Algeria: Madar Knowledge Center for Research and Studies, Issue 03, December 2017, p174.

route that passes through Syria and end up into Egypt and north Africa, or through Iraq and Turkey all the way to the Mediterranean Sea.<sup>1</sup>

The Silk Road's origins are back to the reign of the Han Dynasty in China, around 200 BC. The term was given in 1877 by the German geologist Ferdinand Von Richthofen.

The ancient Silk Road founded many connections between East and West, enabling many civilizations to make profit from one another, it played a pivotal role in intellectual and cultural exchange, and so contributing in flourishing many civilizations such as the Chinese, Egyptian, Roman, Indian among others, as it contributed in the growth of many coastal cities located near ports and along the route, The Silk Road's function as a key trade corridor for silk came to an end with the rise of the Ottoman reign and the consolidation of its Empire.<sup>2</sup>

However coming back to the 21<sup>st</sup> century Belt and Road Initiative which was revived by the current president "Xi Jinping" just six months after being elected, he restructured China's domestic framework and adopted a bolder foreign policy than his predecessors, this Initiative's slogan is "pro-activeness" which is driven by a strong emphasis on achievement. This marked the end of Deng Xiaoping's<sup>3</sup> era of reactive foreign policy Xi Jinping introduced "the Silk Road Economic Belt" Initiative in his first official visit to Kazakhstan, during a lecture delivered at Nazarbayev University entitled "Promoting Friendship between Peoples for a Better Future".

In the following month during his visit to Indonesia, the Chinese president called for the establishment of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century "Maritime Silk Road" aimed at connecting China with ASEAN countries, as well as with South Asia, Africa, and Europe. As a result, the concept of "One Belt", "One Road" emerged as a result of the Chinese suggestion mentioned above.<sup>4</sup>

The initiative has undergone at least three name changes over the few last years: "Silk Road in 2013", "One Belt One Road in 2014" and finally "the Belt and Road Initiative" since 2015. This Initiative aims to connect China to the rest of the world through investing billions of dollars in infrastructure all along the Silk Road that connects China with Asia, Europe and Africa, to stand as the largest project in the human history for the construction of ports, roads, railways and industrial zones.<sup>5</sup>

## 2. 2. The Geographical Scope and Strategic Pillars of "The Belt and Road" Initiative:

The Chinese Silk and Road Initiative is a long term project, aiming to integrate Asia, Europe and Africa into a network of primarily economic relations by building the land-base and maritime infrastructure.

At the beginning it included 60 countries, then the number increased to become 140, what extend the Initiative's geographical scope from Eurasia to Africa, and Latin-America and the Caribbean, as well as the South Pacific region distributed as follows: 40 countries in Africa, in the south of the Sahara, 34 countries in Europe and central Asia, 24 countries in Eastern Asia and the Pacific, 17 countries in the middle East and North Africa, 19 countries in Latin America and the Caribbean, 6 countries in South East Asia, collectively, represent approximately 40 percent of global GDP.<sup>6</sup>

Therefore, the Initiative is founded on a philosophy that transcends the traditional narrow geographic conception of regional cooperation projects, Rather than being confined to a fixed geographic or geopolitical region, the Belt and Road Initiative has, from the outset, been based on an expansive and inclusive spatial scope that aims to encompass the largest possible number of countries and geographic regions.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>1</sup>- Zainab Abdullah, "The Theoretical and Conceptual Framework of the Chinese Belt and Road Initiative," in a collective book titled: "The Chinese Belt and Road Initiative: The Economic Project of the Century in the World", Berlin: The Arab Democratic Center for Strategic, Political, and Economic Studies, 2019, p. 05.

<sup>2</sup>- Hussein Qawadra, "The Significance of Straits and Sea Routes in the Chinese Belt and Road Initiative," in a collective volume titled: Global Competition for Straits and Sea Routes: Geopolitical and Geoeconomic Determinants, Batna: The Human Security Lab, Reality, Challenges, and Perspectives, 2020, pp. 151-154.

<sup>3</sup>- William A. Callahan, "China's belt and road initiative and the new Eurasian order", on: <https://nupi.brange.unit.no>

<sup>4</sup>- Nadia Kazem Al-Obaidi, "The Chinese Belt and Road Initiative: A Historical Study," in the collective volume titled The Chinese Belt and Road Initiative: The Economic Project of the Century in the World, op.cit., p. 25.

<sup>5</sup>- William A. Callahan, op.cit.

<sup>6</sup>- David Sacks, "Countries in China's Belt and Road Initiative: Who's in and Who's Out", on: <https://www.cfr.org/blog>

<sup>7</sup>- Lamia Makhloufi, op.cit. p 178.



Accordingly, China has established a group of multilateral banks namely: the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB), the New BRICS Development Bank (NDB), and the Silk Road Fund, to finance "the Belt and Road Initiative."

Regarding the scope of extension of the Initiative, it aims to connect China with the three mentioned continents through ports, highways, telecommunications networks and railways along two corridors:

- **The First Corridor: The Belt "The Overland Corridor":**

Which means the economical belt of the Silk Road, that runs from China then connects it with Middle Asia, Russia, Turkey, Europe and the Mediterranean Sea, it contains 6 connected corridors namely:<sup>1</sup>

1- The New Eurasian Land Bridge: It extends from the Chinese coastal cities of "Lianyungang" and "Rizhao" to "Rotterdam" in the Netherlands, via a railway line stretching 10800 kilometers from China through Kazakhstan, then on to Russia, Belarus, Poland, Germany, the Netherlands and Belgium"

2- The China, Mongolia and Russia Route: It extends from Northern China to Eastern Russia passing through Mongolia.

3-The China-Central Asia-West Asia Corridor: It extends from western China to Turkey, beginning in Xinjiang and passing through Central Asia to reach the Arabian Gulf, the Mediterranean Sea, the Arabian Peninsula, and 18 countries in West Asia (the Middle East).

4- The China-Indochina Peninsula Corridor: It extends from southern China to Singapore, serving as a land bridge connecting China with the Indochina Peninsula—and Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, Thailand, Myanmar and Malaysia in Southeast Asia.

5- The China- Pakistan Corridor: It runs from Southwestern China to the Gwadar Port in Pakistan, it contains a trade network of highways, railways, pipes lines and fiber-optic cables.

6- The Bangladesh- China- India- Myanmar Corridor: it connects Southern China to India through a network of roads and railways and others.

The main corridors can be illustrated through the following map:

**The Second Corridor: The Road Which Means "The Maritime Road Silk Of The Twenty-First Century":**

This road or corridor aims to develop the infrastructure of the partner countries and extends through 3 routes namely:

1- The Western Maritime Route: it extends from the China Sea to the Indian Ocean passing through the Arabian Sea and the Red Sea, then reaching the Mediterranean Sea.

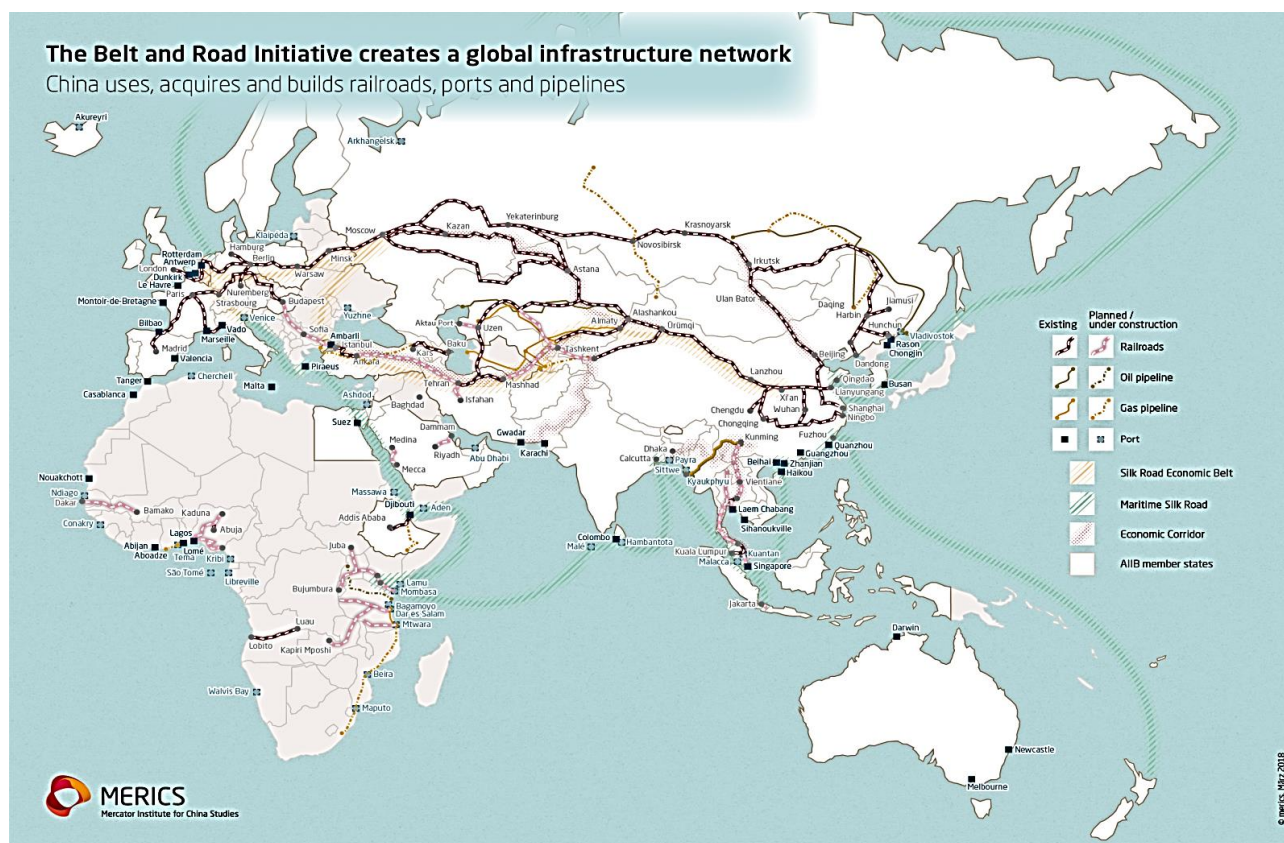
2- The Southern Maritime Route: it extends from the southern China Sea to the Pacific Ocean.<sup>2</sup>

3- The Polar Silk Road: Announced in January 2018, this route reflects China's aim to establish maritime corridors through the Arctic; it is expected to shorten shipping times to Europe by up to 20 days compared to the traditional route through the Suez Canal, which takes approximately 48 days.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> - Sharifa Kalaa, "China's Belt and Road Initiative: Motivations, scopes and Challenges", Research Journal, Algeria: Ziane Achour University Djelfa, Volume 06, Issue 02, 2021, p 159.

<sup>2</sup> - Amira Ahmed Harzali, "The Chinese Belt and Road Initiative: Background, Objectives, and Gains," in the collective book titled "The Chinese Belt and Road Initiative: The Economic Project of the Century in the World", op.cit., p. 74.

<sup>3</sup> - Sharifa Kalaa, op.cit., p 160.



Source: [https://merics.org/sites/default/files/Silkroad-Projekt\\_EN\\_2020\\_150dpi.png](https://merics.org/sites/default/files/Silkroad-Projekt_EN_2020_150dpi.png)

### 3. 3 The Initiative's Objectives and Ambitions:

The Chinese President Xi Jinping highlights the nature of China's "winner-winner" policy, emphasizes the benefits of cooperation with China in this huge project, and stresses that China ensures harmony and stability by employing soft power instead of the hard power<sup>1</sup> In a speech delivered at the opening ceremony of the first Belt and Road Forum in Beijing on May 14, 2017, President Xi Jinping stated that the initiative is inspired by the "spirit of the ancient Silk Road," which he described as "a great legacy of human civilization." He emphasized that it embodies the values of "peace, cooperation, openness, inclusiveness, mutual learning, and mutual benefit." According to him, the initiative represents a path of peace, prosperity, innovation, the linking of different civilizations, and the promotion of cultural and people-to-people exchanges through the establishment of economic corridors and cultural cooperation that yield mutually beneficial outcomes for all participating countries.<sup>2</sup>

Regarding the detailed expanded goals of the initiative, China intends to achieve the following objectives:

- Meeting the requirements of China's accelerated economic development, as a strategy to address the problem of the growing surplus in production in basic industries, by improving growth rates in Chinese exports, by finding new markets for Chinese enterprises.<sup>3</sup>
- Build and develop the infrastructure networks that connect the different regions which the road passes through such as routes and railways in order to guarantee the security of Land, sea and air shipping.

<sup>1</sup> - Gwendolène Chambon, "The Relationship between the European Union and the People's Republic of China: China's Strategy in Europe as an Illustration of European Divisions," on: <https://dumas.ccsd.cnrs.fr/dumas>

<sup>2</sup> - Hussein Qawadra, op.cit., p 157-158.

<sup>3</sup> - Lamia Makhloufi, op.cit. p181.

- Straits and sea lanes hold significant importance in China's Belt and Road Initiative, as maritime trade is the main driver for sustaining the Chinese economy. Nearly 90 percent of China's total international trade; by both volume and value; takes place via the sea, particularly along the maritime route from the Indian Ocean through Southeast Asia, especially the Strait of Malacca, which remains under the protection and surveillance of the U.S. Navy.<sup>1</sup>

- Enhancing China's energy security is crucial, as the country heavily relies on oil imports from the Middle East and Africa, all of which pass through the Indian Ocean and the South China Sea. Around 80 percent of these imports are transported by sea via the Strait of Malacca. Consequently, the Chinese navy requires reliable logistical chains to resupply food, fuel, and weapons along its sea lines of communication. This necessitates the development of logistical infrastructure at strategic locations in key countries; a strategy known as the String of Pearls.

- Strengthening the global position of the Chinese currency "the Yuan", is another key objective. The use of the Yuan in settling trade transactions between China and the Belt and Road Initiative member countries represents a significant step toward promoting the international circulation of China's national currency.<sup>2</sup>

- Strengthening the position of Chinese technology and telecommunications companies: such as "ZTE" and "Huawei" as it is meant to play a vital role in developing the information and communications technology infrastructure across numerous Belt and Road Initiative countries. This contributes to expanding their operations and increasing their share in the international e-commerce market.<sup>3</sup>

- Preserving the regional sovereignty and enhance the neighborhood relations: China seeks to consolidate ties with its neighboring countries and promote regional stability, based on the perspective that shared economic interests can enhance political and security cooperation among nations.<sup>4</sup>

- Increasing Chinese influence regionally and internationally: Through these massive investments across various continents of the world, China seeks to expand its influence and provide an alternative development model to the Western model, whether in its immediate surroundings or in the Eurasia region, in addition to the African continent and other regions of the world. This has positioned the Belt and Road Initiative as a key instrument of China's soft power, which it seeks to leverage in asserting its peaceful rise as a global power.<sup>5</sup>

As a result, a significant body of literature; particularly from Western sources; expresses concern about China's geopolitical vision under the Belt and Road Initiative, arguing that China intends to establish a new form of economic and political dominance over participating countries. They consider that the initiative is continuously evolving, presenting itself as a land and maritime project aimed at connecting continents. It is also viewed as a redefinition of the global map according to Chinese standards and as a projection of China's power in the medium term, especially since its projects are accompanied by the necessary Chinese financing and executed exclusively by Chinese companies.<sup>6</sup>

Therefore, the regional cooperation will extend to include the "shared beliefs and codes of conduct" of the Belt and Road Initiative countries. China seeks to employ soft power to reshape the world through its ideas, aspirations and standards. Thus, the concept of a "community of shared destiny" offers an alternative moral framework for Asia; and ultimately for the world; rather than the West socializing China into liberal values, China may instead take the lead in integrating its region and the broader world through Chinese values. It is attempting to align its international development agenda with its security agenda: essentially seeking to purchase security through international development projects.<sup>7</sup>

### **Third: The "Belt and Road" Initiative A New Approach To Enhance The Sino- Algerian Partnership**

#### **3. 1. Algeria's Position and Significance Within the Belt and Road Initiative**

<sup>1</sup> - Hussein Qawadra, op.cit., p 162.

<sup>2</sup> - Amira Ahmed Harzali, op.cit., p 80.

<sup>3</sup> - Sharifa Kalaa, op.cit., p 158.

<sup>4</sup> - Hussein Qawadra, op.cit., p 163.

<sup>5</sup> - Sharifa Kalaa, op.cit., p 158.

<sup>6</sup> - Gwendolène Chambon, op.cit.

<sup>7</sup> - William A. Callahan, op.cit.



Algeria is the largest African country in terms of area "2.381.741 km<sup>2</sup>", and is considered the gateway to North Africa. It has a coastal strip of 1644 km, and shares 6343 kilometers of land borders with 7 neighboring countries. Algeria also possesses substantial natural resources, including minerals and hydrocarbons, as well as large agricultural areas, particularly along the coastal region and the highlands. Additionally, there are land reclamation experiments underway in the vast Algerian desert as in "Oued Souf". Algeria also has a population exceeding 44 million people, making it a large market for Chinese products that are no longer dominated by France and Western countries. Furthermore, Algeria serves as a transit area to the African interior and acts as a connective zone within the geographic and cultural unity of the Maghreb, the Sahel region, and West Africa. It also has a coastline along the Mediterranean Sea, positioning it as a trusted partner in a significant geostrategic location near Europe. All of this has made Algeria a pivotal hub in the "Belt and Road" initiative due to its position as a linking area between Africa and Europe, coupled with its possession of various strengths and strategic assets.<sup>1</sup>

The concept of partnership, in its general sense, refers to the active connection between two or more parties based on specific criteria imposed by the particular interests of each party in order to achieve common goals. This definition applies to Algeria and China.

From China's perspective, there are three main driving forces or major motives underpinning its relationship with Algeria, as well as the necessity to include Algeria in the "Belt and Road" Initiative, which are:

1- Strategic motive: Algeria is considered a trusted partner in a significant geostrategic location close to Europe, as well as providing access to the coast and the Sub-Saharan region, particularly through the Trans-Saharan highway. This makes it an important hub for the Belt and Road Initiative, as China seeks to control vital territories to assert its international standing.<sup>2</sup>

2- Economic motives: Algeria offers numerous opportunities for China's ongoing pursuit of raw materials necessary to sustain the growth of its economy. China also aims to expand its control over the African market to promote its low-cost goods, as well as to broaden the presence of its investment bases and companies in Algeria across various sectors, especially infrastructure, hydrocarbons, and minerals. As a result, Algeria has become a key arena for government contracts and commercial opportunities for Chinese companies.

3. Geopolitical Motive: China has benefited from Algeria's political influence in the Mediterranean region and within the African Union, as part of its efforts to secure African diplomatic support in the face of Western pressures on various issues such as human rights, Taiwan, and democracy. Moreover, China has relied on Algeria and other African countries to promote the Belt and Road Initiative, which continues to face criticism from Western powers.<sup>3</sup>

Regarding Algeria's partnership with China, it is relied on a set of key motives summarized as follows:

- The inevitability of economic emergence and diversification of the Algerian economy, which is heavily dependent on the hydrocarbons sector.
- The reliance on Chinese companies for the construction of infrastructure such as roads, ports, railways, airports, and more.
- Benefiting from incoming Chinese investments and transferred technology.<sup>4</sup>
- Diversifying its trade partners and reducing its dependency on Western powers; mainly France; known for its historical and colonial legacy in Algeria and Africa.

In this context, the Algerian Minister of Transport and Public Works stated in 2018: "We are pleased to join the initiative through which China will share its expertise and knowledge with the African continent, including Algeria, as part of a global development process".<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> - Ben Djeddou Mohamed Al-Sharif, op.cit., p 25.

<sup>2</sup> - Guendouz Aicha, "The Role of the New Silk Road in the Development of Algerian Foreign Trade: An Analytical Approach to Sino-Algerian Relations," Journal of the Economic Researcher, Algeria: Bordj Bou Arreridj University, Volume 08, Issue 02, 2020. p 128.

<sup>3</sup> - Khallaf Mohamed and Tawil Nassima, "Belt and Road Initiative in Africa: Challenges and Stakes", Al- Mofakkir Magazine, Algeria: University of Biskra, Volume 17, Issue 01, 2022. pp 118-119.

<sup>4</sup> - Hanina Rajouh and Atiqa Kouachi, op.cit., p 221.

So from an Algerian perspective, the country sought to join the initiative in order to take advantage of the opportunities it offers to protect its interests, achieve economic development and economic independence, and play a leading role in the region.

### 3. 2 Opportunities and Key Challenges of The Sino-Algerian Partnership Within The Framework of The "Belt And Road" Initiative:

Following the signing of the Comprehensive Strategic Partnership between China and Algeria in 2014 for a 5 year period; later renewed in 2019 alongside Algeria's official accession to the "Belt and Road" Initiative; both parties have demonstrated a clear commitment to expanding their areas of cooperation. As a result, China accelerated its efforts to develop the infrastructure necessary for the new Silk Road in Algeria through large-scale development projects. By 2021, the value of direct Chinese investment had reached \$10 billion, while annual trade between the two countries amounted to \$9 billion. According to official Algerian data, China remains the leading supplier of goods to Algeria.<sup>2</sup>

This highlights the significance of both countries in each other's economic calculations, as reflected in their mutual official statements. Algerian President Abdelmadjid Tebboune described China as a "strong partner and a diplomatic priority" during the visit of Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi in July 2021. President Tebboune called for enhanced cooperation with China, particularly in the areas of economy, trade, investment, energy, mining, and infrastructure construction.<sup>3</sup>

In return, Wang Yi stated: "China will continue to regard Algeria as an important partner in promoting unity and cooperation among developing countries under the new circumstances" He also pledged that China would work to translate the mutual political trust between the two countries into tangible outcomes through cooperation, and would support Algeria in accelerating its industrialization and enhancing its capacity for independent development".<sup>4</sup>

Accordingly, the two countries seek to jointly build the Belt and Road on the basis of mutual cooperation, shared benefits, and mutual trust. The two countries are also working "to strengthen cooperation with other participant states in the initiative and to support their advancing economic development. This includes promoting mutual exchange and support in line with the Initiative's principles of cooperation, development, and mutual benefit, by making full use of existing bilateral and multilateral cooperation mechanisms that bind the parties involved".<sup>5</sup>

In this context, China has secured numerous large-scale investments in Algeria, effectively "reshaping the balance of influence"; particularly that of France; Economic experts argue that Algeria has begun selecting its partners based on the principle of "those who offer the most reliable win-win principle".

The most significant projects are the following:

- One of the most significant projects is the large-scale iron ore exploration at the Gare Djebilet mine, located in the far southwest of Algeria, specifically in the Tindouf province. China secured the agreement for this project in April 2022. Described as the "project of the century", it is estimated to cost \$2 billion and is expected to generate substantial revenues for Algeria ranging between \$10 and \$16 billion annually. This project holds the potential to help Algeria break free from its "dependence on oil." The project was carried out through a partnership between the Algerian Iron and Steel Company 'FERAL' and three major Chinese companies specializing in mining exploration and exploitation, in accordance with the 49/51 investment rule.<sup>6</sup> The mine's grey ore reserves are estimated at between 3 and 3.5 billion tons, spread across 3 exploitation zones: "Gare Djebilet West", "Central", and "East".

<sup>1</sup> - Guendouz Aicha, op.cit., p 123.

<sup>2</sup> - Younes Burnane, "China's Silk Road Grants Algeria the largest port in Africa and the Mediterranean," on: <https://al-ain.com/article/chinese-silk-road-algeria-largest-port-africa>

<sup>3</sup> - Younes Bournane, "In numbers how the Chinese dragon ended the legend of France's backyard in Algeria," on: <https://al-ain.com/article/chinese-investments-in-algeria-energy-metal>

<sup>4</sup> - Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> - Ahmed Ezzi and Wafia Tidjani, "The Belt and Road as one of the alternatives for Algeria's integration into the global economy", Journal of Financial Economics, Banking and Business Administration, Algeria: University of Biskra, Volume 10, Issue 02, 2021. p 399.

<sup>6</sup> - "Gare Djebilet... A Chinese investment awakens the sleeping iron giant in Algeria," on: <https://al-ain.com/article/algeria-china-gare-djebilet-mine-investment>

- Construction of the Largest Port in Africa: El Hamdania Port As part of China's efforts to realize its ambitious Belt and Road Initiative, the Chinese government has prioritized the maritime corridors of the initiative, having proven to be the safest routes for global trade compared to land routes. In this context, China has focused on implementing one of its largest strategic projects near the city of Cherchell in Tipaza Province.<sup>1</sup> The project, which began in May 2021 as a joint Algerian-Chinese venture, aims to build the largest port in Africa and the Middle East within the framework of the Belt and Road Initiative. With an estimated cost of \$6 billion and a projected completion timeline of 7 years, the port is designed to integrate Algeria into the global trade network. It will be connected to a network of railways and the Trans-Saharan Highway - Algeria/ Lagos- a China-led project that extends deep into the African continent.<sup>2</sup>

The Algerian authorities have described it as the "lifeline of local and African development", with a strategic objective that goes beyond Algeria's borders aiming to break the isolation of landlocked African countries and transform Algeria into a global industrial hub The port consists of 23 docks and is designed to handle 6.5 million containers, with a total capacity of 25.7 million tons annually. It will also be capable of accommodating the world's largest ships, with a capacity of up to 240 thousand tons.<sup>3</sup>

- A project to build the largest phosphate plant in Tebessa was signed in March 2022 between "ASMIDAL", a subsidiary of the Algerian oil group "SONATRACH", and the Chinese company "CITIC". The project has an estimated cost of \$6 billion. The Algerian government expects the plant to generate annual revenues of up to \$1.9 billion and reach a production capacity of 10 million tons per year. The project is also expected to contribute to strengthening the Algerian economy.<sup>4</sup>

- A project to activate investment in the production and marketing of trucks was launched in partnership with the National Company for Industrial Vehicles in Rouiba, with a commitment to ensuring gradual local integration into the product.

- A project for the production of electronic payment terminals has been launched as a joint venture between the National Company for Electronic Industries "ENIE" and the Chinese firm "ZTE"

- A project for the development and exploitation of marble and tile quarries is being carried out in partnership with the public industrial group Mines of Algeria.<sup>5</sup>

In May 2022, China inaugurated another project in Algeria's petrochemical sector, valued at approximately \$500 million. Through this initiative, Algeria seeks to elevate its petrochemical export revenues to \$5 billion. The agreement was concluded between SONATRACH and the Chinese consortium LPEC/CNTIC. The contract entails the establishment of a production facility for "Methyl Tertiary Butyl Ether MTBE", an additive utilized in the manufacture of unleaded gasoline; a fuel whose nationwide adoption was mandated in Algeria starting in 2020.<sup>6</sup>

These projects illustrate the strengthening of Algerian-Chinese partnership, which has been further reinforced by Algeria's accession to the Belt and Road Initiative. This development underscores the depth and continuity of the bilateral relationship, as well as the high levels of mutual trust in the implementation and execution of joint development projects. Within a rapidly evolving international environment, Algeria's accession to the Chinese initiative represents a strategic step aimed at aligning with the dynamics of this shifting global context.

However, despite the positive aspects offered by the initiative; such as the strengthening of their strategic relations and the economic benefits it brings; the Belt and Road Initiative and the Sino-Algerian partnership face a number of challenges that may impact their future. Among the most significant of these challenges are the following:

<sup>1</sup> - Ahmed Ezzi and Wafia Tidjani, op.cit. p 400.

<sup>2</sup> - Yahyaoui Abdelhafid et al, "Opportunities for Algeria to join the Belt and Road Initiative, the case of Al- Hamdania Port," **Al-Riyada Journal of Business Economics**, Algeria: University of Chlef, Volume 08, Issue 01, January 2022, p 215.

<sup>3</sup> - Younes Bourmane, "In numbers how the Chinese dragon ended the legend of France's backyard in Algeria," op.cit.

<sup>4</sup> - "Algeria signs a \$6 billion agreement with China to build a phosphate plant.", on: <https://al-ain.com/article/algeria-china-phosphate>

<sup>5</sup> - Ahmed Ezzi and Wafia Tidjani, op.cit. p 398.

<sup>6</sup> - Younes Bourmane, "In numbers how the Chinese dragon ended the legend of France's backyard in Algeria," op.cit.

- International Competition: One of the primary challenges facing the Belt and Road Initiative and the Sino-Algerian partnership is the intensifying international competition over Africa in general and Algeria in particular. Notably, France continues to employ various means to preserve its influence in Algeria, this last remains one of the most strategically significant and sensitive regional frameworks from the French perspective. Historically, France's policy toward Algeria has served as an indicator of its international standing. Consequently, a French withdrawal from Algeria would signify a decline in the French economy, as it would lose access to vital natural resources and key markets for many of its products.

Moreover, French influence in Algeria is particularly evident through culturally and politically Francophile elite that seeks to shape public opinion and national policy in line with the orientations of the French administration. This influence is further entrenched through the widespread use of "the French language", which serves as a vehicle for cultural dominance and positions France as a soft power counterweight to Chinese expansion. In contrast, China lacks comparable instruments of influence, particularly in terms of effective cultural outreach and strategic communication.<sup>1</sup>

- The Rise of Sinophobia: The growing phenomenon of Sinophobia, fueled by direct and often tense interactions between the local Algerian population and Chinese laborers, poses another significant challenge. These frictions have at times escalated into physical violence against Chinese nationals, as exemplified by the incidents in Bab Ezzouar in August 2009.

- Concerns over the Practices and Performance of Chinese Companies Operating in Algeria; There are growing concerns regarding the conduct and business practices of Chinese firms active in the Algerian market.<sup>2</sup> China's model of state capitalism is, in some circles, perceived as a form of "neo-colonialism," particularly in light of Algeria's weak industrial base and the overwhelming presence of Chinese goods in its domestic markets. Additionally, Algeria's continued near-total dependence on the hydrocarbons sector for export revenues; particularly in its trade relations with China; the absence of sufficient productive diversification, essential for achieving self-sufficiency across various goods and services, remains a major obstacle to the emergence of a competitive and dynamic Algerian economic and commercial presence at both regional and international levels.<sup>3</sup> Consequently, the partnership between Algeria and China risks becoming confined; much like Algeria's traditional partnerships with Western powers; to a pattern in which Algeria serves primarily as a market for Chinese goods and a key supplier of raw materials and hydrocarbons.

- Global Crises: Global crises; regardless of their nature; constitute a significant challenge to the Belt and Road Initiative. Such disruptions may impact Algeria's long-term ability to benefit from the initiative and cast doubt on the resilience and sustainability of the Sino-Algerian partnership.<sup>4</sup>

## Conclusion

Based on what was stated in this study and after clarifying the nature and level of the relationship between China and Algeria, as well as an analysis of the 21st-century Belt and Road Initiative and Algeria's positioning within it, we reached the following results:

- There is a complementarity between the Algerian and Chinese perspective and strategic orientations, rooted in the historical depth of their bilateral relations; founded on cooperation, mutual respect for national sovereignty, and non-interference in internal affairs. Both nations share a legacy of having been subjected to colonialism and foreign domination, which has contributed to the evolution of their ties into a strategic partnership. This stands in stark contrast to the approach adopted by many Western countries, which continue to engage with developing nations through a strategy that reflects a "purely colonial" orientation.

- The Belt and Road Initiative represents a strategic milestone in the development and strengthening of the Sino-Algerian partnership, particularly if both parties remain committed to pursuing mutual benefit and fully leveraging the opportunities this cooperation presents, through the two parties' affirmation that their trade and economic relationship is based on the "win-win" principle.

<sup>1</sup>- Kadri Hussein and Birem Fatima, *Africa's Position in French Foreign Policy*, Algeria: Human Security Laboratory: Reality, Challenges and Prospects, 2019.

<sup>2</sup>- Hanina Rajouh and Atiqa Kouachi, *op.cit.*, p 227.

<sup>3</sup>- *Ibid*, p 222.

<sup>4</sup>- Khallaf Mohamed and Tawil Nassima, p 128.

- Algeria's accession to the Belt and Road Initiative is expected to consolidate a comprehensive partnership between the two countries and significantly contribute to the realization of major investment projects; particularly in the energy and public works sectors. In the long term, these developments are likely to generate substantial benefits for both the Chinese and Algerian sides. China is pursuing a set of objectives not only in economics and politics through this partnership, with particular emphasis on the economic dimension. This focus stems from its awareness of the critical importance of securing access to primary resources to sustain its resource-intensive economy. Moreover, economic engagement is viewed as essential to achieving its desired international standing, especially in light of the intensifying strategic rivalry with the United States. Conversely, Algeria seeks to maximize the benefits it can derive from the initiative in order to strengthen its economy and enhance its regional and international competitiveness. The Belt and Road Initiative indeed presents a promising alternative for integrating the Algerian economy more effectively into the global economic system; especially in light of the shortcomings and failures of all previous regional partnership frameworks. Therefore, it is looking for an economic alternative aiming to achieve a real cooperation and partnership in several fields. However, Algeria must not content itself with merely serving as a transit corridor for international trade. Rather, it should prioritize its national interests by formulating strategic plans aimed at economic diversification, escaping the trap of hydrocarbon dependency, strengthening the national industrial base, as well as developing the other economic sectors.

Consequently, if both parties are to ensure the sustainability and further development of their strategic partnership in the future, it is essential that they intensify joint efforts to overcome the key challenges confronting this cooperation; particularly international competition. This can be achieved by focusing on vital and forward-looking sectors, most notably collaboration in the field of renewable energy and the enhancement of cultural and civilizational exchange; an area that continues to receive considerable emphasis from traditional Western powers active in the region.

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#### Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this paper. All authors confirm that they have no financial, personal, or professional relationships that could inappropriately influence or bias the content of this manuscript.

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