

Algeria and the Belt and Road Initiative: Exploring China's Strategic Objectives and Shared Gains



Fella Arbi Aouda

University of Algiers 3, Algeria, arbifella@gmail.com

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Abstract:

This study examines the key objectives of China's global strategy and its mutual benefits with Algeria. It emphasizes Algeria's pivotal role in enabling China's access to African markets, enhancing trade, and promoting investments. Conversely, Algeria capitalizes on this partnership to develop its infrastructure, attract foreign investments, and integrate advanced technologies, thereby advancing its sustainable development goals. The analysis underscores the foundation of this collaboration in the long-standing and friendly bilateral relations between the two nations.

Keywords: International Cooperation; Sustainable Development; Algeria; Silk Road; China Partnership.

* Corresponding author: Fella Arbi Aouda, arbifella@gmail.com.

Introduction:

The Chinese Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), launched by President Xi Jinping in 2013, stands as one of the most ambitious strategies adopted by China to strengthen its global economic and geopolitical position. The initiative aims to establish an extensive network of trade corridors, including maritime and land routes, connecting China to various parts of the world. By facilitating trade, investment, and infrastructure development, the BRI seeks to expand China's influence on the global stage. While the initiative ostensibly focuses on economic projects, particularly infrastructure development and trade linkages, its underlying geopolitical dimensions have drawn significant attention and skepticism, particularly from major powers like the United States, which perceives China's rise as a challenge to its global dominance.

Algeria plays a pivotal role in the Belt and Road Initiative, owing to its strategic geographic location in North Africa and its access to the Mediterranean Sea. This positioning offers China a significant opportunity to extend the BRI's reach into both Africa and Europe through Algeria. At the same time, Algeria aims to leverage its participation in the initiative to attract Chinese investments, enhance its infrastructure, and establish itself as an economic bridge between Africa and Europe.

Despite the numerous opportunities presented by the Belt and Road Initiative, several questions remain regarding China's true objectives, particularly in its partnership with Algeria. This study addresses the following research problem: **What are the strategic objectives China seeks to achieve through the Belt and Road Initiative, and what mutual benefits can Algeria derive from this partnership?**

To address this research question, the study is organized into three main sections focusing on key aspects of the Belt and Road Initiative.

- The first section examines the general concept of the Belt and Road Initiative, with a focus on its economic, political, and cultural dimensions.
- The second section explores the goals China aims to achieve through the initiative, including its geopolitical and economic ambitions.
- The third section analyzes Algeria's potential benefits from the initiative and the opportunities for fostering sustainable development through Sino-Algerian cooperation.

1. Vision and Core Dimensions of China's Belt and Road Initiative:

The New Silk Road Initiative, launched by China in 2013, is among the most significant global economic projects of the 21st century. Despite its varying names, such as the "Belt and Road Initiative" (BRI), the "Silk Road Economic Belt," or "One Belt, One Road," its essence remains constant as a strategic Chinese endeavor to

revive the historic Silk Road. The initiative aims to establish a network of land and maritime corridors connecting China with numerous countries across Asia, Europe, and Africa, facilitating trade and economic cooperation. While the initiative primarily emphasizes economic dimensions, its wide-ranging geopolitical implications have garnered attention and acceptance from many countries, as well as international and regional organizations.

The term "Silk Road" refers to a network of land routes that historically connected East Asia to the Mediterranean via Central Asia. The German geographer Ferdinand Freiherr von Richthofen first introduced the term in 1877 to describe routes used to transport Chinese silk produced during the Han Dynasty (206 BCE–220 CE). These routes played a pivotal role in fostering trade and cultural exchange between East and West throughout history (Ali et al., 2018, p. 2).

The Silk Road consisted of two main routes: a land route and a maritime route. These facilitated the movement of goods such as Chinese tea, innovations like paper, gunpowder, and the compass, as well as cultural products like Buddhist texts and music. The Silk Road significantly contributed to the prosperity and development of ancient civilizations, including Chinese, Indian, Egyptian, and Roman societies. It also laid the groundwork for modern trade and cultural exchange.

In the 21st century, China sought to expand its global influence by leveraging economic and trade mechanisms. In 2013, Chinese President Xi Jinping unveiled the "Silk Road Economic Belt" during a lecture at Nazarbayev University in Kazakhstan, titled Promoting Friendship Between People for a Better Future. The following month, at the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) informal leaders' meeting, Xi proposed the creation of the "21st Century Maritime Silk Road." Initially known as "One Belt, One Road," the initiative's name was officially changed to the "Belt and Road Initiative" in 2016 to avoid misunderstandings linked to the term "One" (Zerkeen, 2020, p. 72).

Interestingly, Xi Jinping was not the first to propose such an initiative. In 1994, former Chinese Premier Li Peng presented similar ideas during a tour of Central Asia. Similarly, Japanese Prime Minister Hashimoto proposed a comparable vision in 1997 to enhance cooperation between Japan and Central Asia. In 2002, India introduced the "North-South Transport Corridor" to connect India with Russia via Iran and the Caucasus, reflecting the proliferation of regional initiatives aimed at fostering connectivity.

The European Union joined this trend in 2009 by proposing the "New Silk Road Program," which involved building a pipeline to transport natural gas from Central Asia to Europe to reduce dependency on Russian gas. The United States also proposed the "New Silk Road Strategy" in 2011, or the so-called "Iron Silk Road," which sought to establish a railway network to enhance cooperation

between Afghanistan, Central Asian republics, and South Asia (Maskhour, 2016, p. 8).

The clearest vision for establishing the BRI emerged from Xu Shanda, former Vice Minister of China's National Administration of Taxation, who proposed the "Chinese Marshall Plan" to the Ministry of Commerce. Inspired by U.S. Secretary of State George Marshall's initiative to rebuild Europe after World War II, Xu's plan responded to the global financial crisis and economic recession of 2008. It advocated leveraging China's foreign currency reserves to finance loans for developing countries to build projects executed by Chinese companies. Xi Jinping later institutionalized and expanded this vision, culminating in the BRI, now widely recognized in official discourse, studies, and intellectual forums worldwide (Shahrour, 2017, p. 3).

The BRI comprises two main components: a land-based "belt" and a maritime "road," forming the initiative's core structure. These are further divided into various corridors and sub-corridors, creating an extensive network connecting countries across three continents. This network strengthens economic and geographic linkages between East and West. Key corridors include (Al-Khatib, 2019, p. 117):

a. The Land Route:

The land route of the Belt and Road Initiative consists of several key lines established by the Chinese government, including:

1. A line connecting eastern China, Central Asia, and Russia to Europe: This line aims to strengthen trade between industrial hubs in eastern China and European markets, enhancing economic competitiveness.
2. A line extending from China through western and central Asia and the Gulf to the Mediterranean: This line facilitates the transport of goods and resources between China, the Middle East, and Europe, fostering trade and cultural ties.
3. A line starting in China and passing through Southeast Asia, South Asia, and the Indian Ocean: This line seeks to boost trade with Southeast Asian countries and India, while improving access to maritime markets.

In addition to these main lines, the initiative includes several corridors:

1. The New Eurasian Land Bridge Economic Corridor: Connecting China with Kazakhstan, Russia, Poland, and extending to Rotterdam, this corridor enhances trade transportation across Europe and Asia.
2. The China–Central Asia–West Asia Corridor: Starting in Xinjiang, western China, this corridor passes through Central Asia to Iran and Turkey, ultimately linking to the Arabian Peninsula and the Mediterranean.

3. The China–Mongolia–Russia Corridor: Strengthening connectivity between China, Mongolia, and Russia, this corridor facilitates cross-border movement of goods.
4. The China–Indochina Peninsula Corridor: Enhancing economic and trade cooperation between China and Southeast Asian countries.
5. The China–Pakistan Corridor: Focused on developing infrastructure and improving connectivity between China and Pakistan, this corridor fosters stronger economic relations.
6. The Bangladesh–China–India Corridor: Promoting collaboration among the three countries, this corridor encourages joint projects and enhances transportation networks.

This diversity of land routes and corridors constitutes a fundamental part of China's strategy to enhance trade and economic connectivity on a global scale (Ségi & Engelberth, 2018, p. 16).

b. The Maritime Route:

The maritime route of the Belt and Road Initiative encompasses a network of interconnected routes, including:

1. A route connecting China's coastline to the Strait of Malacca: Starting from China's eastern coast, this route passes through the Strait of Malacca, reaching India, the Middle East, East Africa, and eventually the coasts of Europe. It facilitates the movement of goods between China and European and Asian markets, boosting maritime trade and strengthening economic ties.
2. A route linking China's coastal ports to the South Pacific Ocean: This route enhances trade relations between China and the countries of the South Pacific. By developing ports and maritime infrastructure, it aims to increase trade exchanges and foster cooperation between China and these nations.

The maritime route forms a vital part of the Belt and Road strategy, as it facilitates trade movement and contributes to economic development among the countries involved.

These maritime pathways are designed to develop the infrastructure of participating countries, enhancing their economic capabilities and increasing trade levels. The strategic importance of these routes lies in the critical nature of the Indian Ocean, which hosts several chokepoints controlling access to and from the northern part of the ocean, known as strategic maritime "bottlenecks" (Ali et al., 2018, p. 6).

2. Strategic Objectives of the Belt and Road Initiative: China's Vision for Enhancing Global Presence:

The Examining the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) reveals China's multifaceted goals spanning economic, financial, geopolitical, and cultural dimensions. While some objectives are explicit, others remain more nuanced. Key strategic goals include:

a. Reshaping the Global Order to a Multipolar System:

China views the current unipolar international order, dominated by the United States since the Cold War's end, as unjust and unbalanced. The BRI aims to transition from unipolarity to multipolarity, positioning China as a leading global power. By advancing its economic growth and influence, China envisions a multipolar system as the pathway to global peace, security, and equity, benefiting international economic and political systems. This vision reflects China's response to the challenges of a unipolar world, particularly U.S. policies on global issues like counterterrorism.

b. Boosting Domestic Economic Development:

The BRI addresses economic disparities between China's eastern and western regions. The government seeks to reduce developmental gaps and alleviate challenges such as energy shortages and environmental constraints. Initiatives like the "Go West" campaign, launched in 2000, invested billions in the development of western provinces. Through the BRI, particularly its land routes, China aims to stimulate growth in regions like Xinjiang and Gansu, fostering balanced economic development and mitigating internal instabilities (Cheng & Li, 2003, p. 98).

The The New Belt and Road Initiative aims to support China's efforts in implementing its economic project known as "Made in China 2025," which seeks to transform China into an advanced economy characterized by high added value. This strategy includes relocating low-cost manufacturing companies to other countries in Southeast Asia. The main goal China strives to achieve is to make its economy a key driver of the global economy, in addition to promoting its products and brands worldwide. Through this initiative, China seeks to enhance its economic presence and expand its influence internationally, contributing to the realization of its economic and developmental ambitions (François, 2010, p. 7).

Alongside these objectives, the Chinese government aims to increase its exports, especially as Chinese exports witnessed a significant decline during the period from 2013 to 2016. Consequently, China views the New Belt and Road Initiative as an opportunity to improve its export growth rates, maintain employment levels, and explore new development opportunities for the participating countries. This initiative is also seen as a chance to create new markets for Chinese companies and institutions, as well as to develop a strategy to address the growing surplus in the production of essential materials, such as shipbuilding, construction materials, and steel. Additionally, the initiative will

provide opportunities for Chinese construction companies to invest abroad, particularly given the slowdown faced by these companies within China. This trend is evident in the increasing expansion of Chinese companies investing in various sectors, especially infrastructure and energy, which contributes to strengthening China's role in the global market (Garapon, 2017, p. 64).

c. Establishing the Yuan as a Global Trade Currency:

The BRI plays a critical role in the internationalization of China's currency, the yuan. Since its inclusion in the IMF's Special Drawing Rights basket in 2016, China has sought to increase its use in trade settlements, especially among BRI member states. As countries look to reduce reliance on the U.S. dollar, the yuan's growing role in global trade bolsters China's economic and political influence (Ayadi et al., 2019, p. 79).

d. Enhancing Trade Efficiency:

The various routes, corridors, and infrastructure included in the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) will contribute to reducing the time required to transport goods from China to global markets, with a particular focus on the European Union markets, which represent China's primary trading partner. For instance, maritime transport of goods from Shanghai, China, to Rotterdam, the Netherlands, currently takes between two and a half to three months. Therefore, the Chinese government seeks to shorten these transit times, thereby enhancing trade efficiency and improving the competitiveness of Chinese products in international markets. By improving infrastructure and opening new routes, China aims to accelerate shipping and delivery processes, positively impacting its economy and enabling it to meet global market demands more swiftly and effectively (Brardo, 2018, p. 102).

China has also established a railway line linking its eastern provinces directly to Poland and Germany, reducing the transportation time for goods by three weeks compared to sea routes. Additionally, the Polar Silk Road plays a significant role in shortening maritime travel times to Europe, cutting the journey by 20 days compared to the traditional route through the Suez Canal. As a result, the Belt and Road Initiative is expected to have a substantial impact on international trade flows and economic activity, particularly in remote regions of Africa and Latin America, where many countries are among China's largest trading partners. By improving infrastructure and increasing transport efficiency, China hopes to strengthen its trade relations with these nations and achieve mutual economic benefits (Garcin, 2024).

According to a World Bank study on the impact of the Belt and Road Initiative on trade volume and facilitation, both direct and indirect effects were analyzed for a range of materials and products. These include timber and metals, mechanical and electronic tools, chemical industries, iron, rubber, plastic, engines and spare parts, as well as seeds, fibers, mineral extractions, and more. These

findings highlight how the Belt and Road Initiative can enhance the flow of international trade and improve the efficiency of global supply chains, contributing to the economic efficiency of participating countries (Baniya et al., 2019, p. 25).

e. Activating and Enhancing Chinese Influence on Regional and International Levels:

Through projects under the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), the Chinese government seeks to expand its influence and present an alternative model to the Western one, relying on what is known as China's soft power. China is leveraging this initiative to assert its rise as a global power and a competitor to the United States. It can be said that China has drawn lessons from the experiences of traditional powers in their global expansion and influence, shifting from conventional methods that relied on hard power and violence to softer approaches welcomed by many nations, especially those in the Global South. This includes providing financial support and aid in the form of loans and grants, as well as establishing trade relations with other countries based on the "win-win" principle. Moreover, China promotes the role of its investment and trade companies to strengthen its control over projects and markets worldwide. These strategies enable China to enhance its economic position and political influence, allowing it to shape a new international system aligned with its interests and objectives.

The Belt and Road Initiative passes through many countries and regions that suffer from conflicts and internal unrest, necessitating the deployment of military forces to secure and protect the projects established under this initiative. Given the weak security capacities in many of these countries, particularly in Africa, numerous private Chinese security companies have started operating in these areas. For instance, these companies provide security for commercial ships and oil tankers passing near Somali coasts, protecting them from piracy threats. Additionally, the Dewei Security Group Ltd. plays a significant role in safeguarding Chinese companies working on road construction projects in Kenya, reflecting China's commitment to ensuring the safety of its investments and the success of its projects in unstable environments. These efforts demonstrate how China aims to strengthen its economic presence in these regions, focusing on creating a conducive environment for growth and development despite existing security challenges.

Some observers link certain BRI projects, particularly those related to maritime routes, to China's ambitions to enhance its naval fleets' ability to access broader areas worldwide. These projects are viewed by India as an attempt to encircle it, especially since some of the corridors China plans to build traverse waters traditionally considered part of India's strategic influence in South Asia and the Indian Ocean region. Additionally, China seeks to strengthen its presence in the Eurasian region through new BRI projects due to the geostrategic importance of this area. Eurasia, historically a battleground for power struggles, is geographically

strategic and rich in economic resources. It is seen by some geopolitical theorists as the "heartland of the world," making it a key hub for international competition and increasing the importance of China's presence there as part of its expansion strategy. These dynamics illustrate how China aims to extend its influence in critical regions, raising concerns among regional powers like India and highlighting the complexities of international relations within the framework of the Belt and Road Initiative (Tiezzi, 2024).

f. Strengthening Neighborhood Relations to Create Domestic Stability:

The Chinese government seeks to strengthen its relations with neighboring countries for security reasons, especially in the border areas adjacent to Shanghai, where these countries share ethnic ties with Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, and Kyrgyzstan. These ties could exacerbate instability problems, and increase extremism and separatist movements in the region. China sees the new Belt and Road Initiative as an effective tool to support regional stability and achieve economic development in these areas. Achieving economic growth and prosperity is an effective means of reducing tensions and disputes, which contributes to strengthening acceptance of the central authority. Moreover, many conflicts and chaos occur in countries close to China's borders, which gives China a greater opportunity to monitor and understand their internal problems. By strengthening economic and cultural ties with neighboring countries, China hopes to develop appropriate plans to achieve stability in various regions of the country, thus enhancing internal security and preventing the spread of unrest in border areas.

g. Enhancing and securing China's energy supplies:

China seeks to protect the stability of its economy by securing energy supplies, which enables it to avoid any crises that may arise as a result of these supplies being exposed to any emergency or obstacle. China is also working to search for new energy sources around the world, with a focus on diversifying its sources to ensure that it does not rely on a single source (Storey, 2024), as about 80 percent of China's energy supplies pass through the Strait of Malacca, which reflects the importance of this strategic point in securing the country's needs. Chinese President Xi Jinping expressed his concerns about this matter in 2003, referring to what he called the "Malacca dilemma". He stressed the need to reduce absolute dependence on this strait, given the danger it poses to the national economy as a whole in the event of any crisis. This comes in light of the great industrial development witnessed by the country and its continuous energy needs, which requires taking measures to ensure the security and stability of its energy supplies (Hamzah, 2024).

The Chinese government also seeks to diversify its energy suppliers in order to reduce its dependence on the Gulf and African countries. In 2014, China signed a \$400 billion gas supply deal with Russia over 30 years, starting in 2018.

The deal aims to increase shipments to 38 billion cubic meters per year. The pipeline, dubbed the "Power of Siberia," was inaugurated on December 2, 2019. It is 3,000 kilometers (Anadolu Agency, 2024), long and has created an oil pipeline between China and Kazakhstan and a gas pipeline with Turkmenistan. In addition to China's efforts to reduce its dependence on maritime shipping lanes, which suffer from insecurity due to the spread of piracy in the Strait of Malacca, the Strait of Hormuz, the South China Sea, and the Gulf of Aden, the presence of US forces in the Pacific and Indian Oceans is a major concern. This situation could lead to an escalation of tensions in the event of a serious dispute with the United States. Therefore, China seeks to secure its energy sources and corridors in preparation for any emergency or international crisis. China also relies on studies and research conducted by its research centers to build its strategies, which study past and current international crises to assess situations and develop plans in line with the goals of the Chinese government. It is also necessary to take into account the extensive US presence in Asia, especially in the South China Sea, and the tense relations between the two countries, especially in the recent period.

h. Boosting the activity of Chinese technology companies:

The Chinese government is working to support its technology companies through the New Silk Road Initiative. This is done by enhancing the role of these companies in establishing the infrastructure of the information and communications technology sector in many countries benefiting from the project. This support contributes to enhancing the ability of Chinese technology companies, such as Huawei, to expand into global markets and increase their market share in e-commerce. This strategy not only enhances the position of Chinese companies, but also contributes to the development of digital technologies and infrastructure in countries participating in the initiative, which contributes to strengthening economic relations between China and these countries (Ali et al., 2018, p. 4).

In addition, China is exploiting the "Digital Silk Road" announced at the 2017 Belt and Road Initiative Forum. This road includes the inclusion of digital sectors, including communications, internet infrastructure, and e-commerce. China aims to pump large investments into developing the largest fifth-generation (5G) mobile network in the world over the next decade, which will contribute to better enhancing data exchange. Through this initiative, China seeks to achieve significant gains in productivity and enhance innovation in various technology sectors, thus strengthening its position as a major hub in the global digital economy (Liangxianjiang & Janardan, 2024, p. 5).

i. Making Cooperation between Countries Along the Belt and Road Initiative Successful:

The China seeks to achieve effective cooperation between these countries in various fields, starting with policy coordination, which is the strategic

guarantee for cooperation between governments. This includes activating exchanges on macro policies, enhancing political trust, and integrating interests, thus promoting regional cooperation. The Chinese government is also working to improve business communication by strengthening investment and trade cooperation and removing barriers to trade and investment. In this context, China encourages its companies and institutions to participate in industrial and infrastructure investment projects in all countries involved in the initiative. In addition, China seeks to enhance cooperation in the field of financial circulation by deepening financial cooperation, building a monetary stability system, and expanding the volume of bilateral currency exchanges. Finally, understanding mindsets is a social goal par excellence, as the Chinese government seeks to create friendly communication between peoples by strengthening cultural, media, academic, information, and tourism exchanges (Maskhour, 2016, p. 197).

3. Algeria's Role in the Belt and Road Initiative and the Prospects of Strategic Partnership Between China and Algeria:

Algerian-Chinese relations are among the strongest bilateral relationships between countries globally, marked by political and diplomatic alignment on international issues. These relations are deeply rooted in history, especially in times when each country needed the support of the other. This was evident in China's support for Algeria during its liberation struggle, including its recognition of the provisional Algerian government as one of the first countries to do so. On the other hand, Algeria played a role in rallying support for the People's Republic of China to replace Taiwan in the UN Security Council and the United Nations, where China became a permanent member. These events laid the foundation for strengthening bilateral ties between the two nations, which have since expanded into various fields, particularly the economic domain. The economic aspect of these relations has become the most prominent, especially as China has experienced significant growth and development in this area, while Algeria aims to accelerate its own national growth. This dynamic was further enhanced by China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), which represents the starting point of Chinese economic influence worldwide, extending to Algeria, which officially joined the initiative in 2019.

Algeria's geographic location plays a pivotal role in its international relations due to its strategic position, as it connects four continents: Europe, America, Africa, and Asia. It lies at the heart of the Maghreb region, sharing borders with all the Maghreb countries, and is part of the Mediterranean space, being adjacent to Europe across the Mediterranean Sea (Friga, 2004, p. 14). This positioning has made Algeria a crossroads for diverse civilizations and a gateway to the African continent, facilitating connections to Europe (Al-Arouk & Bourima, n.d., p. 13). European countries view Algeria as a starting point for expansion into sub-Saharan Africa or West Africa. In this context, Algeria enables China to ease its investments in Africa, serving as a gateway to the continent, where Algeria ranks as

China's first partner. In 2017, trade exchanges exceeded 170 billion USD, a significant increase from just 10 billion USD in 2000.

China views Algeria's strategic location as essential for penetrating the broader African market, particularly in West Africa. The BRI is built upon infrastructure projects, including ports and railways, and one notable project in Algeria is the construction of a major port west of Algiers, specifically in the Hamdania area of Cherchell, Tipaza province. This port is expected to create approximately 200,000 jobs and is funded by China through a long-term loan agreement amounting to around 3 billion USD. This port will play a vital role in facilitating exports and imports, especially between China and Algeria. It could serve as a major transit point for trade between Africa and Western Europe, considering China's position as the leading trading partner for both Africa and Algeria. The largest share of Algeria's imports comes from China (Khalil, 2024), followed by France and other Western nations, positioning Algeria as a key player in Africa-China relations and expanding China's road and passage networks under the BRI.

Additionally, these infrastructures in Algeria allow China to collect raw materials and goods headed for China, whether from Algeria itself or other African countries. Algeria's proximity to Europe, particularly to Mediterranean coastal countries, also allows China to expand the BRI's road networks towards these nations through Algeria. Regarding Algeria's human resources, the country has a population of approximately 43.9 million, with more than 70% being young (ONS, 2024), which is a considerable advantage compared to European countries experiencing aging populations. This provides Algeria with a large, capable workforce for investment projects. Chinese companies operating in Algeria can leverage this workforce, despite challenges related to specialized and skilled labor.

The BRI and its associated projects can rely on local labor, reducing the costs of transporting workers from China and avoiding challenges that Chinese workers might face in adjusting to the local Algerian society, such as language barriers. This allows Chinese companies to hire local workers for tasks that do not require specialized skills, while utilizing Chinese technicians and managers for more sensitive and precise roles. Furthermore, Algeria's consumer market is open to Chinese products, making it an attractive market for Chinese companies.

Algeria also possesses significant natural resources, including non-renewable resources like oil, gas, and minerals such as copper, iron, and zinc, as well as renewable resources like solar energy in the Algerian desert. In 2019, Algeria's shale gas reserves were estimated at 24 trillion cubic meters, with over 10 billion cubic meters of natural gas and 6,000 billion barrels of oil (Bournane, 2024). Despite Algeria's diverse resources, the country still heavily relies on oil revenues, with over 93% of its income coming from the petroleum sector. Algeria's proximity to Europe makes it an important supplier of natural gas and oil. Additionally,

Algeria is considered a reliable energy supplier to Europe (Sputnik, 2024), as it maintained its energy exports, including natural gas, even during the turmoil of the 1990s, and continues to do so during the current European energy crisis due to the Russian-Ukrainian war.

In addition to these economic factors, Algeria benefits from political and security stability, making it an attractive destination for foreign investment. Compared to many countries in the region, particularly in the Sahel, Algeria enjoys political stability and security. Many countries in the Sahel and Africa suffer from political instability and internal conflicts, especially since 2011, when several countries, such as Egypt, Tunisia, Mali, and Libya, saw the collapse of their political systems. This instability has been exploited by terrorist and militant groups, which have disrupted the security of these nations and seized control of strategic routes and natural resources, as seen with groups like Boko Haram in Nigeria and Al-Shabaab in Somalia. Therefore, governments and multinational companies seeking to invest in the region prioritize security and prefer safe locations for their projects, employees, and operations. Algeria's stable security situation, backed by its strong military capabilities, offers confidence to Chinese companies implementing BRI projects in the country, as it guarantees protection for both the companies and their workforce.

Conclusion:

The relations between Algeria and the People's Republic of China reflect a high level of cooperation and friendship, extending across many political, economic, and diplomatic areas, from the colonial era to their collaboration in addressing global challenges such as the COVID-19 pandemic. Algeria plays a pivotal role in China's Belt and Road Initiative, owing to its strategic location, which positions it as a key partner for China in implementing this initiative, especially as a gateway for China into the African continent, thus boosting trade and investment throughout the region.

Despite the potential benefits, the cooperation between the two countries faces some challenges, including bureaucratic and economic barriers, as well as geopolitical risks that could hinder the progress of the initiative. Therefore, it is essential for both sides to coordinate their efforts and collaborate closely to overcome these obstacles and fully capitalize on the available opportunities. The "New Silk Roads" represent a significant opportunity for Algeria to enhance its economy and achieve sustainable development, provided it handles the associated challenges and risks with caution, while maintaining its sovereignty and independence in relations with major global powers.

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